



The CRAP! Collective  
Child Rearing Against Patriarchy



a feminist  
child rearing  
zine for  
everyone

## Welcome to 'Raise Some Hell!' our feminist childrearing zine...

This zine was conceived during a discussion group on 'feminism and childrearing' at the 9<sup>th</sup> March feminist gathering in Hackney, London, UK in 2008.

Our definition of feminism is solidly anti-capitalist/anarchist, and we view feminism as affecting all genders- not just women-born-women, and that feminist struggles cannot and must not- be separated from the struggles against racism, capitalism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism and ableism.

This was our original statement (edited):

*"We demand a feminist upbringing for the next generation. We want to actively challenge the tirade of sexist (etc) literature that is written for children, empower and inspire the role of parenting caring and educating, and combat patriarchy in all its forms, within our children's lives. We hope this zine will be part of the growing consciousness surrounding the issues of how children are being raised in our society, and internationally. We would like to create networks to support and discuss feminist childrearing issues and push childrearing issues in feminist activist circles."*

This zine is intended to provide a safe space for people to comment, subvert, create, reflect, rant etc on issues relating to childrearing. This zine is for everybody, not just parents. We all have a stake in ensuring the next generation grow up free from oppression. Rearing, care and education of children are feminist issues.

We believe that to completely transform society and banish sexism, and all forms of oppression, we need to transform the lives of this and future generations of children. We want 'Raise Some Hell!' over these issues so that our voices are heard; And active, creative, and positive ways forward can be found.

One main aim of the group was to actively combat patriarchy in children's literature, via offering kids an anti-capitalist/anarcha feminist alternative to the stories, poems, wordgames, activities, toys, artwork etc, provided by the mainstream. We created 'Spratz!' our kidzine for this reason.

Both zines were compiled through contributions. This is a massive subject and obviously there are many important issues we haven't touched on yet, and many essential voices haven't been heard. We are hoping to produce future editions so if you want to contribute to the next 'Raise Some Hell!' zine, or if you are interested in creating fun feminist stuff for the kidzine 'Spratz!', then email us at:

[feministchildrearing@riseup.net](mailto:feministchildrearing@riseup.net), visit our blog: [www.feministchildrearing.blogspot.com](http://www.feministchildrearing.blogspot.com) or join our email list at [www.riseup.net](http://www.riseup.net) (search for feministchildrearing under lists).

Born by  
The CRAP! Collective  
Child Rearing Against Patriarchy

## LIBRARY

This is just a brief selection of some of the resources around feminist childrearing: some are anarchist, some more mainstream, some we haven't read yet, some we maybe don't agree with! We encourage you to search out the resources that you resonate with, and let us know: [feministchildrearing@riseup.net](mailto:feministchildrearing@riseup.net). Some can be found in the Feminist Library in elephant and castle, London, UK: [www.feministlibrary.co.uk](http://www.feministlibrary.co.uk).

### Kids:

- Robin Morgan- "The Mer-Child" "A legend for children and other adults", 1991, published by The Feminist Press, [www.feministpress.org](http://www.feministpress.org). ISBN 155861054-5.
- Jackie Smith- "Planet Earth" and "The Green Moss and the Greedy Gobblers" (Space Seven Series)- 1982 Sheffield Women and Education Group ISBN 0946063028.
- Judy Bathie - "The Witch of Grange Grove", Women's Movement Children's Literature Co-operative LTD, 1974, R.A.M Press, Australia.
- Judy Bathie- "Alison and the Bear", Women's Movement Children's Literature Co-operative Ltd, Melbourne, Australia, 1975
- Peter Lamborn Wilson (ed)- "wild children- a zine for kids aged 0-18", autononmedia press, 2007 (originally compiled in 1980s).
- Astrid Lindgren- "Pippi Longstocking"
- The CRAP! Collective- "Spratz!" a feminist kidzine, out 2009
- Barbara Danish- "The Dragon and The Doctor", Feminist Press, 1995
- Robert Munsch- "The Paper Bag Princess"
- Barbara Odanaka- "Skateboard Mom"
- Phillip Pullman- "The Firework-makers daughter"

### Adults:

- Alfie Kohn- "Unconditional Parenting" 2007
- Andrea O'Reilly- "Engendering change- mothers as feminist activism"
- Bell Hooks- children's literacy essential to progression of feminist movement
- Bob Dixon- "Catching Them Young" vol. 1 and 2.
- Carrie Carmichel- "Non-Sexist Childrearing"
- China Martens- "The Future Generation: Zine-book for Subculture Parents, Kids, Friends & Others" (Atomic Book Company, March 2007).
- Jessica Mills- "My Mother Wears Combat Boots" (AK PRESS, November 2007).
- Judith Arcana- "Every Mother's Son- the role of mothers in the making of men", and "Our Mother's Daughters".
- Isaac Balbus- "Emotional Rescue: theory and practice of a feminist father" (thinking gender, 1997).
- Red Mother- "Billedroman" 1976, Demos ISBN8787337673
- Ruthann Mayes-Elma: "Harry Potter, feminist friend or foe? (Sense Publishers, 2007)
- Individual authors and Attic Press- "Fairytales for Feminists": "Rapunzel's Revenge" and "Ms Muffet and Others", 1986, ISBN 0946211183 and ISBN 0946211272.
- The CRAP! Collective- [www.feministchildrearing.blogspot.com](http://www.feministchildrearing.blogspot.com)
- Blue Milk/Feminist Dad/We will not be pacified!/Breeding Ground/Bunnies on strike
- [unassistedbirth.com](http://unassistedbirth.com)/[messirap.org](http://messirap.org)/[hipmama.com](http://hipmama.com)/[Yomamasays.org](http://Yomamasays.org)/[mamasquilt.com](http://mamasquilt.com)/[Girlsnotchicks.com](http://Girlsnotchicks.com)/[mamaphonc.com](http://mamaphonc.com)/[Association of Radical Midwives- radmid.demon.co.uk](http://Association of Radical Midwives- radmid.demon.co.uk)

**The CRAP! Collective postscript: some of the pieces in this zine are copyright/unstated and so please respect authors wishes & email before use, others are copyleft/anticopyright and so please respect their wishes and copy/distribute/plagiarize as much as possible!**

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**We love feedback! [feministchildrearing@riseup.net](mailto:feministchildrearing@riseup.net)**

## Concrete Things You Can Do to Support Parents and Children in your Scene

- 1- Give Children Attention. Say something to them: just be your true self, whatever you are thinking, they are open to that. Children act better when they get attention. In the beginning of a meeting if a group gives the children some attention, they are often happier and better behaved for the rest of the meeting.
- 2- Develop childcare as an ongoing relationship with a child - it takes some time to get to know a child before they are comfortable with doing stuff with you away from their parents.
- 3- Offer a slot of time, to spend time with a child on a weekly basis
- 4- Integrate children and adults: it's more pleasant to watch children with other adults to talk to; it's more pleasant for the children to see adults enjoying each other and not feel a burden to them.
- 5- Include children in the planning of any activity, like a sewing workshop for instance.
- 6- Doing something child-friendly? Ask a kid if they want to come along. (Lizxnn has been taking Siu Loong for critical mass rides for three years and she loves it.) Children can benefit from activities their parents don't do and parents can benefit from the time to themselves.
- 7- If a baby is crying because it needs to be held and the parent has their hands busy and can not hold it; offer to hold the baby.
- 8- If a child is making a disturbance in an area, offer to go outside with the kid so the parent doesn't have to leave the event.
- 9- Meet parents at their level: come visit them at home or where ever their spaces are. Let parents talk about being parents: realize having a child is like having the most intense love affair you have ever known (says one parent. Another says - not.)
- 10- Acknowledge children: don't treat them like they are invisible
- 11- To announce that we are OK with children making noise (at meetings we wish to make parent-w/small children-friendly), we can talk over them, and value mothers and children sticking around. The announcement can help put mothers at ease.
- 12- Give us a smile!

ALSO - When providing child care at political events (and every event should have child care!)

- 13- Visit the children and childcare providers in daycare - and say "Hi!" Childcare providers can feel isolated from others at the event. Have a cup of tea with them! (suggested by Siu Loong, age 5)
- 14- Parents with different aged children have different needs. Parents with younger children or children who aren't comfortable leaving their side yet would benefit from childcare that was off to a side of the same room or more central to the main events. Parents with older and more independent children benefit from having them in a different room or floor. Either way, childcare must be assessable.
- 15- Parents need to give more input to the day-care providers, about their and their children's needs during the planning of the event, in order for the childcare provider to better assist them. At least tell them you are coming and the age of your child/ren.
- 16- It's comforting for parents to know childcare is available, even if they don't use it

AND - Contemplate

- 17- How much work/consuming being a parent is: 24/7; in the beginning years it's hard to even think straight: one is still adjusting to being a parent and young children's needs are very intensive
- 18- That radical parents don't fit in at mainstream places, like their children's schools - so when they go to an anarchist gathering and don't feel supported by their own culture - how bad that feels.

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These suggestions are from the "Don't Leave Your Friends Behind: Anarcha-feminism & Supporting Mothers and Children" workshop at La Revolta! To get a copy of the 22 page workshop handout: you can download it from: <http://benjal.missouri.edu/%7EEmaxwellr/Don'tLeaveYourFriendsBehind.pdf> or send a dollar to Vikki Law P.O. Box 20388 NY NY 10009 or China Martens P.O. Box 4803 Baltimore MD 21211 USA

## Children and Parents in Feminist Activism

"We expect to struggle against the world; we don't expect to struggle in our own community." Radical Anarchist Mom and Baby League

In this vast metropolis that is London, it is sometimes hard to feel a sense of community. Caught up in the rat race that is survival in this city, we can sometimes feel isolated from our near neighbours and may not feel a sense of belonging to the area in which we live.

Fortunately there is a strong feminist community in London. We share some common values, we struggle together, we socialise together, we look out for each other, we care for each other and it is a community that I feel privileged to be part of.

However as a mother of young children I've got to say that I do feel that just like I struggle in the wider community, I also struggle in this community of ours.

I don't know how many times I've raised the issue of childcare when we organise, I don't know how many emails I've sent asking whether there will be childcare available or whether children are welcome at certain meetings and events, I don't know how many meetings or actions I've just not gone to because I feel that I can't bring my children, I don't know how many workshops I've walked out of coz my children start getting loud and I can see that it's just not appreciated. But the thing I notice most is that, unlike most other communities, within the feminist community there just

As I see it, the domination of kids is not just a horror because of the sheer lack of autonomy, respect and dignity that all these unique young human beings experience, it is also an integral part of the greater social system of domination, control and alienation - civilization itself. The domination of kids breaks the wills of people and inserts authoritarian programming so that they can later reproduce institutions such as the state, capitalism and gerontocracy when they get older themselves. The domination of kids contains within it the very same fundamental dynamics of authority and control that as anarchists, we should actively be opposing. The very act of being subservient, the very act of compliance and submission, the very act of rule and bossing are all at play within the dichotomy of "parental authority figure" and "child", and it is because of this that we need to decisively condemn and attack this horrendous relationship in favor of relations based upon mutual respect, autonomy and free association.

Striving for the liberation of kids is not just some single-issue cause, it is not some guilt-ridden "identity politics" thing, and it is not some radical past time totally disconnected from the greater struggle against the System. The domination of kids is a form of real-life slavery that goes on all around us, it acts to reinforce and reproduce the state, capitalism and other institutions of control, and it contains within it the same fundamental relations of authority and domination that are entirely antagonistic with anarchy and true liberation. If we are serious about bringing down this disgusting global system of control and hierarchy then we need to attack it wherever it manifests itself - and this includes within our own relationships, lives, behaviors and mentalities as well as the more traditionally "political" arenas.

Youth liberation is not a new idea, a lot of people have written about it and articulated it in different ways. There are already a number of people out there practicing, or at least trying to practice, autonomy respecting ways of relating with kids. Something new that I would like to see is a consistent, coherent and passionate defense of kids by the anarchist community. Every person goes through being a kid and that's usually the first time the spirit is broken by authority. With this being the case, it only makes sense for anarchists to have youth liberation fully integrated with the rest of the anarchist perspective.

Gerontocracy needs to be right up there with capitalism, the state, patriarchy, and white supremacy as institutions of social control that, as anarchists, we aim to destroy.

*\* I use the word "kids" in this article because "young people" can mean people over the age of 18, a group of people which do experience prejudice and discrimination but does not have to deal with the out-right slavery that those under 18 face. I do not use "children", because I see that word as being an equivalent to the N-word in this context. "Childish", "child-like", etc. usually have very negative or derogatory connotations. "Kids", however, usually refers to those under 18 and has positive connotations; hence, I use that word here.*

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## Youth Liberation

### (I) An-ok Ta Chai

You can tell a great deal about a society if you look at how they treat their children and their elderly. In our society both children and the elderly are often disconnected from other age groups and forced into institutional settings; schools for children and nursing homes for the elderly. Children are brainwashed into the system and the elderly are forgotten and faded out once their ability to produce and spend capital wanes.

It is because of this that I believe in radical youth liberation. Some people have a hard time fully understanding this. "How does ageism compare to the brutalities of imperialism/capitalism/the state?" they ask me. "Ageism", the mere prejudice and discrimination of people based on their age, may not be as big a problem as capitalism/the state, I agree. To look at youth liberation in terms of just "ageism" is to miss the point. "Gerontocracy", or, the ongoing and systemic domination of kids\* by those older than them is my focus.

One important thing to always keep in mind is that kids are human beings, just like the rest of us. People do not suddenly become human when they turn a certain age - they are born that way. With this being the case, kids have the inherent human ability to learn, grow, develop and direct their own lives as they see fit, just like anybody else. Kids do not understand everything, kids make mistakes, and kids need help and support but all of this can be said of every human being.

The often unspoken notion that adults are omniscient, infallible and not dependent upon the help and support of others while kids are very much the opposite is a distortion of reality necessary to construct the social hierarchy of adults over kids. This all becomes very apparent if one reflects on how a proposition to systematically dominate people who are physically ill, injured, ignorant, ill informed, or intoxicated (all of which are also temporary conditions) would be universally laughed at and dismissed.

With this being the case, let's call it like it is - kids are slaves in this society. Kids cannot freely disassociate without fear of their parents or the state somehow hunting them down and dragging them back. Kids are forced to go to concentration camps (we call them "schools"). Kids cannot deny or receive medical care at their own will - an adult has to decide for them. Kids do not have ultimate say over their own time, bodies, activities, behaviors and choices - some parental or other adult figure has to determine it for them. This is slavery, pure, systemic, out-right slavery. It is slavery based upon the widespread use of violence, the threat of violence, and by emotional manipulation, intimidation and brainwashing.

The spirits of kids are continually beaten down by authority, particularly adult authority, in order to crush their wills, to break them of their individuality, spontaneity, creativity, curiosity and comfort with their own autonomy. Kids are constantly faced with various kinds of parental authorities, school authorities, state institutions, and a mass culture all intended to mold them, to get them to jump on command, take orders, and do what they're told.

aren't many children around. Maybe it's just I'm going to the wrong meetings, but I don't think so because I speak to other mothers and they seem to feel the same way too. We want to spread this movement of ours yet we don't make our activism accessible to parents. Many of the women in this country are mothers yet we don't provide childcare at our meetings. Is feminism for everyone or just for a small clique of childless women? We rally en masse for abortions rights (rightly so!) but where are the rallies to protest against single-parents being forced back to work, for better childcare for working parents, for better maternity services, for recognition of the unpaid work parents do raising children and what exactly are we doing in our activism to facilitate parents attending?

Sometimes I feel like we've fallen for the idea that mothers should be home, tied to the kitchen sink, cooking and changing nappies, voiceless and uncomplaining and that children should be seen and not heard. I suppose it's so ingrained in all of us that there is a time and place for children that meetings aren't seen as one of those times or places. I think like that too sometimes, but its ageist against children and sexist against mothers and we all need to address and confront it within ourselves and as a group. Maybe a meeting isn't the most suitable place for young children but if parents are going to be there we need to accept that children will be too and sort out ways to deal with it.

Everyday as mothers we challenge patriarchy; a system, society and culture that sees us as just women with children, needing and worthy of little space besides the home, school and playground. We're not welcome in the workplace, in education, on public transport, in the pub, yet we still go there. Capitalism places no value on our work, but we know the true value of what we do, and as such we see the fallacy of capitalism, we feel its injustice in our bones. Even though its difficult we leave our homes to work, we educate ourselves, we realise the value of the work we do raising children and we celebrate it, thus challenging false notions of true fulfilment through career, we find ways to support each other, we find solidarity through motherhood, we know in a very real way the strength of women and we know true exhaustion yet keep on going. Many of us became feminists at the same time as we became mothers, because it was then that we truly collided with patriarchy. Feminist parenting is a truly political, radical and effective form of direct action and is an everyday form of feminist activism. That's why I find it so weird that feminism in London does not seem to be welcoming parents with children or addressing our needs or campaigning for our wants. Parents are political, passionate, caring, strong, organised people, used to working for free and dealing with frustration, we are an asset to any movement. Mainstream feminism like mainstream society and culture is (I think) hierarchical, with value, respect and power being given to

Which ones do you think were drawn by women,

and why?



If you were to draw an image of a woman during pregnancy/motherhood, how would you portray her?



Here are some art images of women as mothers from around the world.



What do they say about how the artist/culture views women, pregnancy, motherhood, childrearing?



those who are the most "active", the most educated, with the best jobs, the loudest voices, the most money, and unfortunately mothers are near the bottom of this hierarchy. Sexism isn't just something that exists out there in the big bad world; it also exists in each one of us. It isn't our fault but it is something we must accept and try to unlearn and dealing with sexism in activism in this context means recognising the value and needs of parents and children.

We also need to think about children and the benefits they gain from being involved with feminism and what we gain from them being involved. Personally I am so glad that my children know feminism and feminists. It's all very well me talking to them about gender roles, stereotypes and sexism but for them to actually see feminism in action, positive female role models and alternative ways of working and being together privileges them and reaches them on a much deeper level. I want my children to understand feminism on a day-to-day level, so that for them it is the norm. Feminism has so much to gain from children being involved. Children can bring creativity, imagination and freshness to activism and a definite impetus to dissent, protest and organise against the status quo. Why are we feminists if not for future generations! At the end of the day if we really want to end the cycle of sexism and sexist oppression then socialising our children in a non-sexist way, as well as educating them about feminism and showing them how it can work is the only way.

Single Mum organising resistance to  
patriarchal capitalism



Red Mother, 'Billedroman', 1976

I Want To Be A Rabbit

Her teeth are weird and edgy  
Wonder if they bite  
Or nibble up the stirring  
Glinting in moonlight

Her shadowy undergrowth  
Wonder what I'll find  
Delving in that darkened pit  
Sight will be refined

Her eyebrows look delinquent  
Wonder if they'll raise  
My pupils too will dilate  
Should she catch my gaze

Her feet stand their ground firmly  
Wonder what's her plan  
Knows no obstacles no nose  
Can point higher than

Her breasts stick up for themselves  
Wonder if I'm licked  
She lets herself grow on up  
Won't be pushed or picked



Then about six months ago sister fate played her hand and provided a solution for my family that was so simple yet so effective. One night, thank the goddesses, our tv died. It choked, it spluttered and before our very eyes, it passed away. I admit at first I was gutted, what would I do without my almost daily dose of Eastenders, and Neighbours, and Home and Away, but then almost immediately I felt better. Molly cried for a while, but she quickly got over it, after all there are so many things for a five year old to do. She still loves pink, and dresses, and glitter and all that, but maybe that's just what she likes. But instead of sitting in front of the tv, she spends hours drawing, or reading, or just playing. I have no more or no less time than I had before, but we are all a lot happier doing the things we want to do.

For a practical and immediate solution to the nightmare that is the television just throw the bloody thing out, after all the television will not be revolutionised!

lost in a linguistic appearance (R)

11:20 30 Rock Kiz ar gets and but changes made to the show (R)

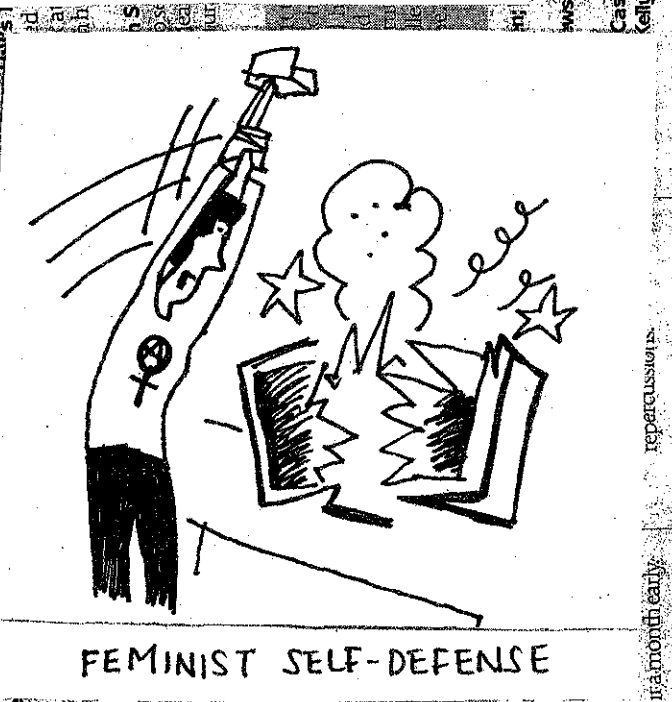
11:15 Film: The Family Stone (2005) Premiere Comedy Drama with Sarah Jessica Parker and Debra

The full report can be found at [http://www.bronline.de/jugend/izi/english/publication/televizion/21\\_2008\\_E/21\\_2008\\_E.htm](http://www.bronline.de/jugend/izi/english/publication/televizion/21_2008_E/21_2008_E.htm).

7:30 The Good Life Mings and Jenny are forced to spend Christmas with the Coode's - a special from 1977 starring Richard Briers and Penelope Keith (y)

7:00 Emmerdale show away at Christmas

7:50 Coronation Street 60th anniversary special



repercussions

11:00 TOP2 at Christmas Steve Wright presents some of the defining records from the 60s and 70s

11:10 London Ambulance The Paramedics treat a 64 year old man who says he has a heart problem

In 1976 and 1990 Bob Dixon, researched in detail, and wrote on the way that children's attitudes to sex, class, race, are shaped by the publishing and the toy industries, through the toys, games and puzzles they play with and the fiction they are given to read[1]. The subject has been given quite a lot of coverage during the intervening years and come to be dominated by the effect of TV and the Internet. But much of this seems to have been very superficial. And examination of the role of 'nature vs. nurture' and the excuse that toys and stories etc. "only reflect society, and do not influence it" - has been thoroughly explored and found wanting.[2]

Of course none of us can escape our conditioning, and one cannot always be alert to slips into obsolete ways of thinking picked up in childhood, and always be fighting battles on behalf of others, but surely, women are not so stupid that they do not recognise sexism and the effects it has not just on 'unlucky' individuals, but on all women!

In the first chapter 'Sexism: Birds in Gilded Cages' of his book 'Catching Them Young', Bob Dixon wrote:-  
 "In fiction for the very early years, we saw the cage being built. More and more now, women will take the task upon themselves, in fiction as in life. Most grow up believing that the role society has set out for them is a 'natural' one, innate and inborn. This process, by which the oppressed takes on - internalises - the attitudes of the oppressor, is a well-known one and we'll see it working strongly when we come to consider class and race. In the rest of this chapter, we'll be looking more closely at the construction of the cage" p6.

It seems that women not only allow their boys to be fed these stereotypes, but their daughters as well. We all know that some women collude with sexist men, and flirt with sexism - against other women, in what they think are their own best interests (to impress men) but do they do it knowingly?

## The Next Generation?

It must have occurred to many feminists, that it is an anachronism that gender stereotypes, and sexist attitudes that are so detrimental to women, persist, when it is women themselves, who are or should be the major influence in children's lives. especially when very young - their most formative years. Mothers, grandmothers and women relatives nursery and primary school teachers and friends are the major carers of young children, and their role is crucial in shaping their later attitudes.

So while there has been some improvement, particularly on personal issues, I suspect that on gender stereotypes and attitudes, class and what Bob calls 'the war culture' of machismo and militarism in boys is little different now than it was in the past.

It is not enough (IMO) to deal only with the consequences and the damaged individuals. If we are to make changes in society and confront the attitudes to women that excuse domestication, inequality, discrimination and physical and sexual violence, surely we have to recognise and root-out the causes - where they come from - and who still perpetuates them, even if unwittingly.

#### Questions for Feminists to ask:-

- \*Is this still a problem?
- \*Do toys games, TV, the Internet and books still instil reactionary attitudes?
- \*If so, is it on the radar of women - mothers, aunties and grandmothers and FEMINISTS ?
- \*What research has been and is being done and what is being done with that knowledge?
- \*Is part of our job to bring together 'educational research' with feminism?
- \*Do we (feminist organisations) have members who are considering the impact of this issue into the future and are we making use of their experience of the current situation, in homes, in pre-school facilities, schools, retailers and in the media?
- \*Is the effect of this manipulation of children being relayed to politicians and anyone else in a position to help change?
- \*What is being done to spread awareness ?
- \*Is it the business of feminists to keep the issue high on women's agenda? - I think it is. And it is also relevant to peace campaigners, anti-racists, those whose priority of fighting poverty in its many forms. In fact it should be the business of all the progressive causes because it subverts all our efforts to gain the autonomy, freedom and equality we demand.

Sue M  
August 2007  
(The London Feminist Meetup Group: [feminism-196@meetup.com](mailto:feminism-196@meetup.com))

[1] 'Catching Them Young' vol 1 & 2 & 'Playing them false'  
[2] see the Conclusion of 'Playing them false'  
Links to the above on [www.peace-workshop.freeuk.com/Bob\\_Dixon.htm](http://www.peace-workshop.freeuk.com/Bob_Dixon.htm)

Matthew Kelly

10.40pm: Forensic Casebook With...

10pm: Father Ted Christmas Special

6.00 Lo... Tonight And

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The researchers found that girls and women account for only 32% of lead characters compared to 68% for boys and men. In some series girls and women are almost absent. Animation programmes have 87% male characters as compared to 13% female and this leads the researchers to conclude that "the reality of children's television proves. that today gender equality is still a long way off", but hey we already knew that!

6.30 IT

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And this is just the gender bias, the report found that children's tv is also racist. A shocking 72% of all main characters in children programmes around the world are white. It is also clear to me that there is little or no representation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people in children's programming, as well as people with disabilities and I don't think that I have ever seen any representation of any other family structures other than that of the traditional nuclear family.

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Basically this report backs up what many of us have observed, the media, in this case children's media, as a cultural vehicle only presents an extremely limited, sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist view of society where women and girls are portrayed as beautiful, underweight, sexualised, modest, tidy and moral beings who are motivated by a romantic interest and are dependant on males who, in their turn are leaders, heterosexual, able-bodied and white!

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What are we saying to our children? In particular what are we saying to our daughters? We're saying to them that they can't be builders, or postmen, or astronauts, or whatever they want, that they can merely aim to being feisty yet fashionable. Little girls are presented as only valid as princesses, pretty in pink, secondary to males. Our daughters are not secondary, they are the primary characters in their own lives, and so should be represented as such.

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I hate it on so many levels, for what it does to me, my children, women, and the world. I got so fed up of shouting at the telly, of trying to critique the propoganda with my daughter, of seeing little fairy princess dvds, of seeing advertisements aimed at parents through their children, where girls wear pink and play with dolls and boys wear blue and like transformers!

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I was going to try to write a letter to the heads of broadcasting for children at the various tv channels, but I reckoned we're too far gone for that. This rubbish has become an institutional part of our life and we just accept it. Even if I did complain, nothing would change.

Crime

12.30

Night

watch

With Steve Scott  
Emergency (R.S) 1.25 Nightwatch With  
Steve Scott, Mystery (R.S) 1TV News  
Headlines 2.20 Moving Day (R.S) 3.10

11.0 Blue Christmas (R) 1.25 4Music:  
Spectacle: Elvis Costello With Lou Reed  
And Julian Schnabel (HD) 2.25 4Music:  
4Music Presents: Linkin Park (R.S)

network  
a blind  
12.15 301  
(R.S) 1.35

4.00 Beatha Christmas Hour (R) 5.45 Come Dine With Me Lina  
6.00 London Tonight and Weather Portraits 4.15 Deal or No Deal  
6.30 TV Evening News  
3.25 Flight (R) 4.25 Escape to the  
Country 5.10 Ready Steady Cook  
5.55 Film: Find the Neverland

sexist, they're so 2d, strong, clever, they work hard in traditional male roles, they don't show emotion, etc. Even if the programme is a factual magazine type programme, or a quiz, it will still have a man presenting it. There are practically no women in children's tv!

Where are the programmes with girls or women as the stars, where are the female role models? Although few and far between there are programmes where girls and women star such as Peppa Pig, the Little Princess, Bratz, Fifi and the Flowertots. But then these types of programmes are even more disturbing than the overtly sexist ones mentioned above. The female characters in them are kind, caring, passive, spoilt, and immature, they love cooking and ballet and very little more, and they're all bloody pink!

And it's not just me with my "warped" feminist mind making problems where there's none, last year a comprehensive study of children's television was done and it proved rather conclusively that it is a biased media representing a biased world.

The International Central Institute for Youth Educational Television (better known by its German acronym IZI apparently) released findings on gender representation in 19,664 programmes from 24 countries in what was according to them "the worlds large quantitative media analysis of children's television so far". The survey showed very clearly that there IS a gender imbalance in favour of male characters in television programming for children in public and private programmes, domestic and international programmes and in animated and real life formats and that this is the trend all over the world. Surprisingly public and state broadcasters have a worse gender balance ratio (31%:67% female to male representation) than their private counterparts who stand at 33%:67%. The reports authors consider this a remarkable result "since public broadcasters - with the public mandate - have the responsibility for representing reality in a balanced way. The reality of human life is 51% female to 49% male (unfortunately the report does not consider those people who are trans, intersex or do not identify as male or female), which could not be found in children's TV anywhere".



# Bustin' the BOUNTY-pack Blues

**New mum-to-be? Stuck for ideas on how to decorate baby's nursery? Here's some handy steps to achieve that ready-for-baby look.**

**Step 1)** As advised by your GP, carefully flick through the shiny new book of adverts disguised as impartial advice- The Bounty-pack magazine. Marvel at the unbiased section on Nappies (sponsored by-ahem- Pampers), the Baby Skincare section (provided by well-known skincare experts Persil), and the Educational Reading Tips pull-out (brought to you by "Disney's Wonderful World of Reading"). Priceless.

**Step 2)** Stop when you get to the inevitable section on 'Doing Up Baby's Nursery'. Do the flowing white chiffon curtains, the cutesy Disney characters that adorn the picture rail, and the stark cleanliness of the room offend you? Is this meant to be a room for a baby or a mental health institution? Has the fear got to you? Have you finished puking? Good! Then its time to get to work.

**Step 3)** Look in the bucket. See the puke you've just made? Look at the colours, the texture, and...be inspired! You will see a lot of puke made by your baby through the years, so why not utilise it as a piece of creative flair? This is the philosophy for Beatin' the Bounty-pack Blues.

**Step 4)** Rip down anything that resembles a curtain in baby's room. It will be bejewelled with chocolatey finger marks in just a couple of years time, so why not start now? Put a bar of Milk Chocolate in your back pocket of your trousers. Sit down for a while, if not yet gooey enough, rub it between your hands or hold over a naked flame. Once it's at its sludgy-best, smear it all over your hands and get to work on the curtains. Eat your heart out, Mothercare!

**Step 5)** Look at the carpet- apart from a bit of soiling, it's looking particularly bare don't you think? What was it that magazine advised? Accessorize, accessorize, accessorize! So we shall. By the time your child is two that carpet will have more piss-stains than your local alleyway. So why not pre-empt this, and create some of your own.

If you're lucky, then you won't even mind or notice when baby slips his nappy! Make a pot of tea, and carefully slosh it in patches all over the carpet- random patches look more authentic, but do it in orderly lines if you prefer.

**Step 6)** Well, I think you have enough inspiration by now. Don't you feel more at home than in that stark Disney-psychotic world? The baby certainly will. Of course, there's still the issue of what to do with the bucket of puke you cleverly made earlier. Hmm, well we haven't painted the walls yet...

**Disclaimer:** "Input and advice from individuals or organisations does not imply endorsement for any products. All information is believed to be correct at the time of printing. Nevertheless 'Bustin' the Bounty-pack Blues' Ltd and its agents can accept no responsibility for errors or changes in our omissions from the details given. In no instance is the information in this guide to be treated as a substitute for professional or medical advice" (Way to get out of that one, Persil!)

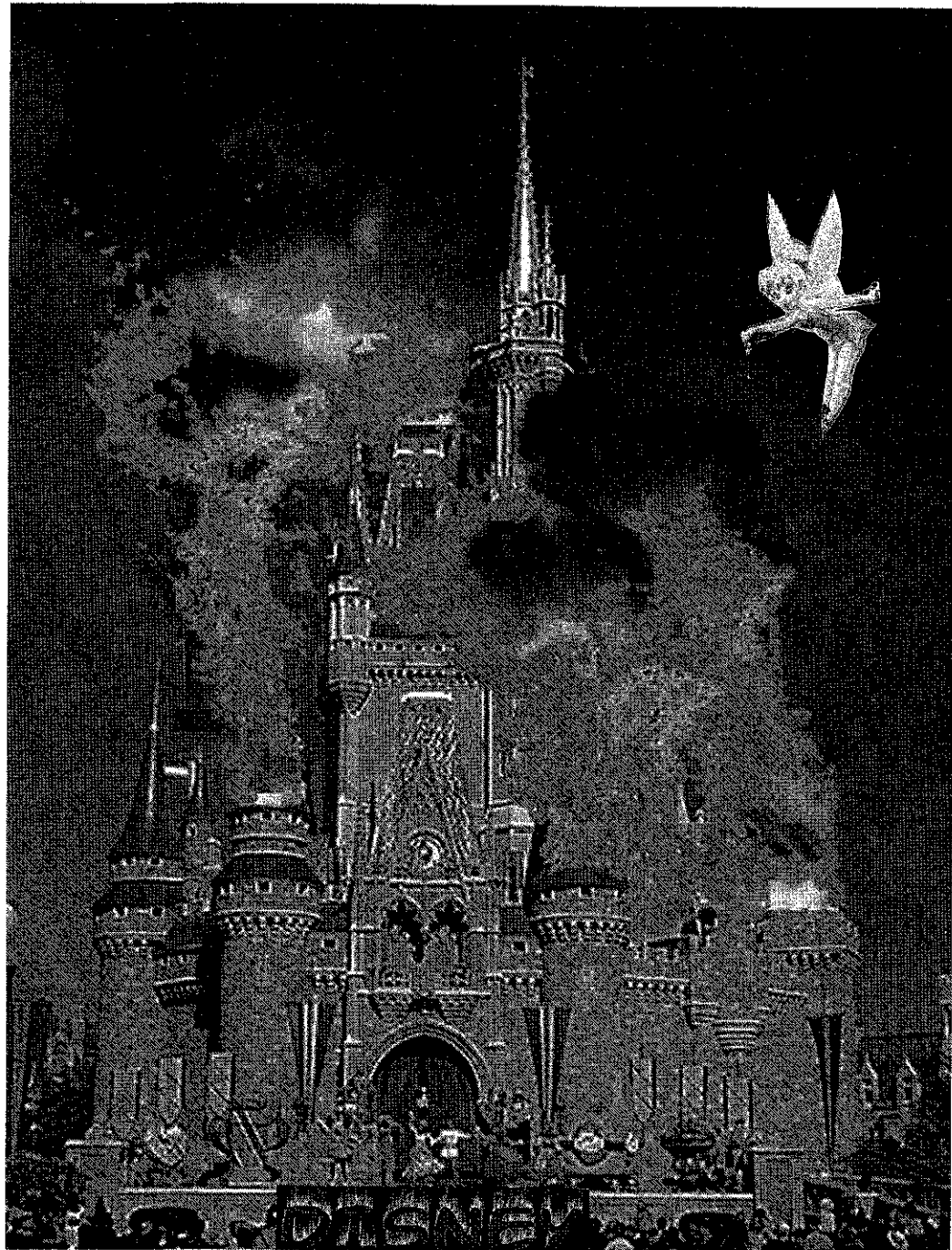


7:30 The Good Life... 7:00 Emmerdale... 7:00 Game 4 News... 7:50 Rough Guide to Exotic...

11:20-30 Rock... 11:15 Film: The Family Stone... 11:10 London Ambulance... 11:00 Top 20 Christmas News...

mothercare... baby... milk teeth... Aggfresh... Disney's Wonderful World of Reading... Persil... Calpol... Comfort... Toy...

10... 11... 12... 13... 14... 15... 16... 17... 18... 19... 20... 21... 22... 23... 24... 25... 26... 27... 28... 29... 30... 31... 32... 33... 34... 35... 36... 37... 38... 39... 40... 41... 42... 43... 44... 45... 46... 47... 48... 49... 50... 51... 52... 53... 54... 55... 56... 57... 58... 59... 60... 61... 62... 63... 64... 65... 66... 67... 68... 69... 70... 71... 72... 73... 74... 75... 76... 77... 78... 79... 80... 81... 82... 83... 84... 85... 86... 87... 88... 89... 90... 91... 92... 93... 94... 95... 96... 97... 98... 99... 100...



## Children's Television – Sexist media representing a sexist world!

Special

**6.30 ITV Evening News (S):**  
Weather

For Louise, the...  
startling discovery, Mandy decides  
to confide in Tony, Carmel becomes  
jealous when she hears Louise's

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I'm the first to admit that I am at times a slack mum. What with two children, two jobs, a partner, activism, a social life, a flat, a garden and the rest, I wasn't going to beat myself up for leaving my daughter in front of the telly, sometimes for hours at a time so that I could just get on with it. However it wasn't something I often admitted to others and I did used to feel guilty. I knew it was bad parenting but the quiet time it gave me was precious and necessary, I thought. Molly loved tv, and could literally watch it for hours, leaving me time to have a cigarette, send some emails, tidy the house, sit and chill for five minutes, whatever! It did however come as a shock when, surprise surprise, despite all my best efforts at feminist parenting, age four my daughter transformed from a happy-go-lucky confident unselfconscious grubby child into a pristine pink princess with a "passion for fashion". Her sexist utterances were even more surprising, "girls don't have short hair", "boys can't play fairies" and her refusal to wear anything that wasn't a dress and pink or sparkly ensured mornings were traumatic for all involved.

Although I tried to deny it for a while, I knew it was my fault, after all mothers are the primary passerons of patriarchal values. My slackness, my desire for a few quiet moments, had left my daughter vulnerable to the brainwashing. I knew the risks, I knew the danger of the mainstream media, its power to corrupt, and I deliberately sat her down in front of it. I thought I could beat it. I couldn't!

Its sexist, its racist, its homophobic, its classist, it twists reality, it makes us feel insecure, it pushes consumerism down our throats, it promotes violence, competition, vanity, selfishness, and that's just the children's programmes, never mind all the rest.

Bob the Builder, Postman Pat, Underground Ernie, Lunar Jim, Gordon the Gnome, Bottletop Bill, Mr. Men Show, Thomas the Tankengine, Roary the Racingcar, eh hello, say no bloody more! Its obvious what the problem is, isn't it? The whole plotline is based around boys and men and the main character is always male. There are sometimes female characters but they're always the sidekick. Even when the main character is an inanimate object, like a train or car or robot, or an animal, its still blatantly a male character. Even these representations of males are deeply

Emergency co...  
Steve Scott, Mystery (R,S), ITV News

And again, Scannab...  
4Music Presents: Linkin Park (R,S)

(R,S) 1.3

400  
Musical (2003) Fresh (cont.)  
2.50 Film: A Christmas Carol (The  
Musical) (2003) Fresh (cont.)  
3.45 Come Dine with Me Extra  
Perkins 4.15 Deal or No Deal  
4.00 Agatha Christie's Poirot (R)  
6.00 London Tonight and Weather  
3.25 Fog It! (R) 4.25 Escape to the  
Country 5.10 Ready, Steady, Cook  
n the Hat  
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environmental awareness, outdoor activities + nature experience. Andi became frustrated by caring for these young children inside a dingy classroom, with them playing with plastic Bob-the-Builder toys and re-inacting sickening gender stereotypes that they had memorised from TV. All this whilst the sun was shining outside + untold amounts of real natural experiences and self-learning could be had, if only the curriculum, bureaucracy, society + state would allow it! I became involved in environmental education + was exhilarated + energised by working with kids outside the 4 oppressive walls of classroom + curriculum. I felt not only could kids learning take on a whole new level, but that other forms of oppression could be tackled, such as sexism + racism which - althou the curriculum is forced to embrace 'multiculturalism' + 'gender equality' - I found it was so entrenched - within the teachers' attitudes, language, literature, subject bias etc, that nothing had changed deep down. It was shocking + depressing. What on earth are we teaching our kids?! I have just started training to

**Calvin, baking is fun and all,  
but we can make a rad drum set out of  
these pots and bowls.**



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## Faery Earth Mother

I am come to slay your puerile dreams  
From Cinderella's humble cellar, up to Repunzel's tower

I will drag all back to Earth

There is no flight of fancy that can sprout a small house wings

No ladies are waiting just to dote upon your locks

No princes are trotting up to perv upon your heels

Dosey beauty when will you wake up

Coniferous plebeian

You will never be a princess

Disguised as infants, idle gazes

Grown women with periods and hair

You need no guard from spiders at your age

Face reality

Or drift out on a woolly cloud, further with the current

To keep playing the game, but never learn the aim

Gives odds against you written in the rules

Cancelling out doesn't change proportions

Equations, not possessed shoes solve problems

What you need is more self confidence

To calculate like adults do, blueprint and implement

Lone instinct dreams are ineffective

But you have thoughts; you can collectivise

To move from one hand onto many, is a kind of conjurey

Where groups find life in individuals; individuals find it magically

From meridians of miracles, that circulate the Earth

Where live faeries closely sharing energy

You are part of our realm already

Helen 2007 ([helmets4mice@hotmail.com](mailto:helmets4mice@hotmail.com))

## FOREST SCHOOL:

### TOWARDS FEMINIST, ANARCHIST + ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING?

Having been involved in childcare since i was teenage

(babysitting/nanny/crèche worker/nursery nurse) i've always been

interested in kids, education + curriculum. Having hated school

myself, i was fascinated by alternative education + styles of

learning. After working in a state nursery school, i was

shocked to see how the national curriculum begins at

the tender age of 3 months old. I previously had

thought that kids just 'played' freely in nurseries.

However there are set learning goals + outcomes, as

as nursery workers we must obey the curriculum

standards + closely monitor + record the child's

every developmental advancement/perceived

failures. The paperwork is endless, + obviously

takes time away from us being with the kids.

Home-education seemed like the only way for me to provide my own child with the education i saw to be true

and feminist/anarcha-feminist. The national

curriculum lasts throughout childhood, and

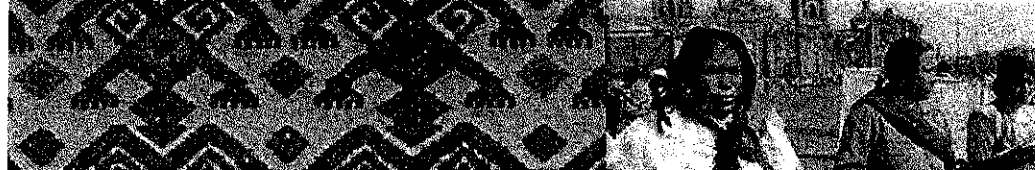
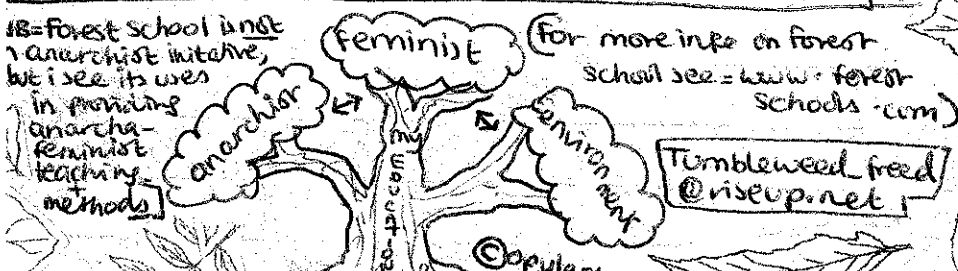
also did not put enough emphasis on



lead forest school programmes/activities.

Forest school originated in Scandinavia + is a unique form of woodland based environmental education, which has high emphasis on building self-esteem, alternative learning methods + reawakening the child within, that may have been repressed thru' modern lifestyles + teaching structures. A child bullied in the classroom has the opportunity to thrive in the woodland environment + this ethos is huge part of forest school - it goes beyond mere environmental education. Its been used to reduce prejudice eg- from the settled community towards travellers, to rebuild self-worth + esteem of women from refuge projects fleeing domestic violence, integrate the excluded into the community + raise confidence in kids labelled as 'adhd' or 'behavioral problems' (of which the outdoor environment often ameliorates such 'problems'). I see forest school + other similar initiatives to be a starting point to really tackle sexism, racism, ableism + the like, in kids, adults + education. And all with an environmental basis. Girls are encouraged to use saws, build shelters, light fires - just as boys are encouraged to make petal-perfume, listen to bird song + make leaf-forests. And vice versa! There should be no divisions based on

gender, and no kid fails at forest school. Ideally, even the leader adult should be in a co-operative position encouraging equal learning simultaneously of teacher + pupil, rather than an authoritative figure. To me, feminism, anarchism + environmentalism are all one of the same, + one cannot be without the other. The national curriculum is not providing the real learning that we should all want our kids to absorb thru'out their precious childhoods - and despite feeble attempts at ungendering, eg: 'firefighter' instead of 'fireman', society is still sexist at its core + so is the education being fed to our children. The scary thing is - sexism is accepted in our society as a 'norm' + so majority of people see no harm in our kids being constantly fed these sexist messages - on CBBC, bedtime stories, school history lessons + dress-up clothes. Nothing is perfect - but, for me, the forest school initiative is a welcome leap towards more feminist, anarchist + environmental learning.



importance of their participation. Some women do not want to send their children to the autonomous school because there is so much responsibility at home and they don't understand the concept of collectivism."

For the mothers who do participate in the struggle, their children—both boys and girls—learn from their examples. They teach their children by modeling what women's participation looks like and shows them how this is important.

The lessons for us visitors should not be that our communities are relieved of the responsibility of providing childcare or otherwise supporting the specific needs of mothers and children. Rather, we have witnessed how the zapatistas incorporate children into their struggle, how they include mothers and children rather than shunting them into a corner or onto the outskirts. And, fourteen years after the uprising, we see that those who were small children in 1994, who grew up in the movement, now entering and continuing the struggle for dignity and liberty.

Now, when we return home to organize ourselves, we need to find a way to do the same in our own communities and movements.





Integrating mothers has been crucial to continuing the struggle. This sentiment was repeated again and again as women from the different caracoles spoke their experiences:

“As mothers, we set examples for our children,” stated Elizabeth, a mother from La Realidad. “We teach them that unless you fight, you are fucked. As mothers, we show by example, by taking on responsibilities and participation in the EZLN, in the region, in the CCRI. We teach our children not to contaminate the earth with chemicals so that it will continue to provide for us and for future generations.”

“When our children are small, we talk to them about what they’d like to do when they are big,” stated Elena, a mother from Oventic. “We talk about options in the military, in the community, and in doing political work. We tell them that they have the same rights as the Ladrones [light-skinned landowners]. We talk about the resistance and why we resist. We teach them why we don’t receive help from the bad government.”

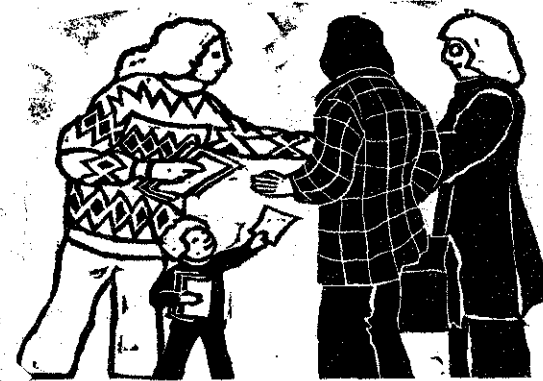
Some women spoke about the difficulties of actively participating in the struggle. Some husbands do not understand the importance of women’s participation, fearing that if their wives are active in the community, the work at home is left undone. Other husbands agree to their wives’ public participation provided that they continue do all of the housework and childcare.

Zapatista mothers are actively raising the next generation to combat these entrenched oppressions and gender expectations: “We teach the boys housework so that when they are bigger they can help. This creates a sense of equality between boys and girls. We teach [all our children] to defend ourselves and our community when the army comes in to try to evict us,” said Elena.

Gabriella, another mother from Oventic, explained that, without the participation of the mothers, the struggle falters: “Sometimes mothers will say they can’t participate because they don’t understand the

## **Involve Children in your Activism**

**They**  
**are the future**



**You**  
**are their inspiration**

**Together**  
**we must fight**  
**for a better world**



## Mama Revolution!

The radical environmental movement in the US is losing the next generation of families by labelling family issues as irrelevant and failing to see how parenting is a part of the revolution and kids are the next revolutionaries. We're frustrated when the movement for social justice steals our ability as mothers to continue to work as organizers and artists, while whining that not enough parents care about social reforms. We're tired of activists wondering where all the parents are when we're sitting at home with no money, no transportation and no childcare. That is why we have formed the Revolutionary Anarchist Mom and Baby League (RAMBL) to address these issues.

While many of us are struggling for daily survival--looking for living wage jobs, affordable housing, quality childcare and healthcare for our families--the indignity from people who should be our allies has been particularly difficult. We expect to struggle against the world; we don't expect to struggle in our own community. This article is just a baby step in creating a community that is actively pro-family, pro-kid and pro-woman. In turn, we believe that we are crawling toward creating a more humane and just world.

While the issues raised below impact all moms, moms who are women of color, queer, young, disabled and/or poor face disproportionately more oppression. Our collective voice in this article reflects experiences of individual RAMBL mothers. Our intent is not to provide your affinity group with a connect-the-dots solution. Rather, our intent is to open your eyes to our experiences. It is your responsibility to analyze and change privileged assumptions and exclusionary behavior.

### Parenting in Our Scene

When we became mothers, our lifestyle options were reduced. At times members of our activist community criticized us for utilizing the very few resources available (like welfare), while doing nothing to broaden options for activist mothers or create alternatives that are transformative and empowering for both parents and society as a whole.

It bothers us that people have offered support but have never bothered to follow up. We don't want to have to beg people for help, but we do want offers of support to be real. We're tired of seeing other parents as the only people interested in baby-sitting or childcare.

We also have a major problem with someone who doesn't have kids judging our parenting or methods of discipline, especially while failing to recognize the narrow bandwidth of "acceptable" parenting. A mom is called too lenient if she doesn't publicly castigate her child for "misbehaving" (i.e. talks at a meeting). However, this same mom is called too strict when she "makes" the child say please and thank you.

Sure it's great to use cloth diapers, but as a stressed out single mama, it isn't always possible. Holier-than-thou purist advice about things like diapers is something we can't stand. Instead of commenting on how gross you think it is that a mom uses disposable diapers, why don't you help her get a washing machine so that she can wash reusable diapers. Instead of judging, try taking the burden off of her shoulders.



Having heard stories from their parents and grandparents, children, particularly the girls, understand the significance of what they now have. Marina stood before thousands of women from around the world and, in the clear words of a girl just about to turn nine, stated what the revolution means to her:

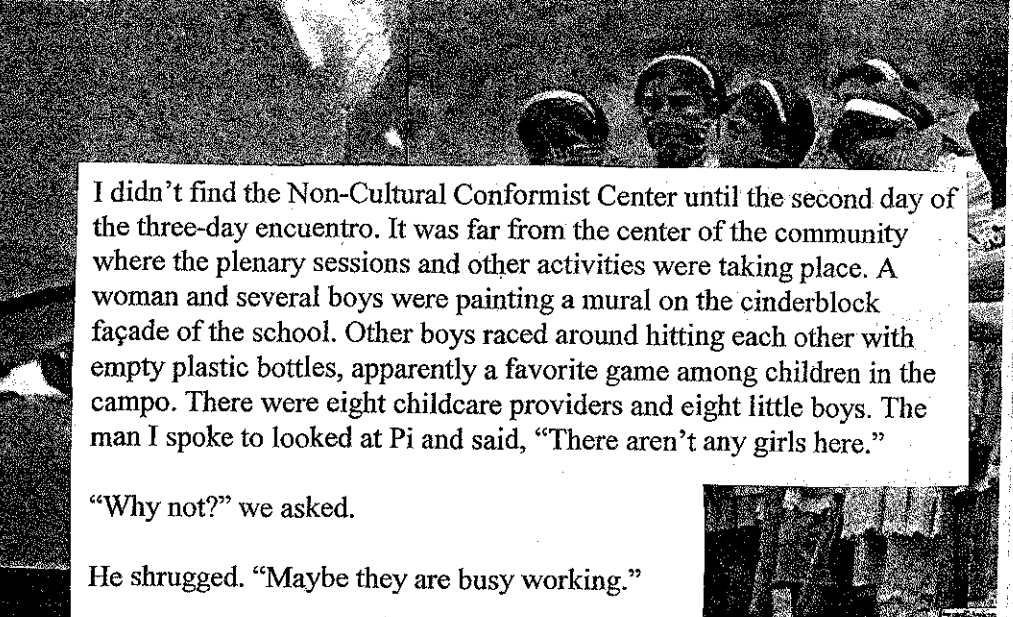
I want to tell you about my life. I study in an autonomous zapatista school because I have rights. My parents respect my right to dance, to sing, to have fun. In my autonomous school, sometimes we don't have school supplies and we don't ask the government because we are part of the resistance. My father works in his fields and sells his harvest so that we have money to buy my school supplies. We are zapatistas and we don't take crumbs from the government. I am very proud to be a zapatista; we won't be discouraged because we are used to resisting.

That evening, a woman from our delegation wondered aloud about the girl's speech: Could a nine-year-old really have come up with these words and sentiments on her own?

Raising a child of my own in the struggle and having seen how her older peers talk and think, I defended the girl's sincerity. When children are taught and included from an early age, they absorb these teachings. They ask questions about experiences and realities and, if their questions aren't dismissed or silenced, their understanding and consciousness grows.

Mothers both in and out of the zapatista movement are the primary teachers of their children. For many women, the zapatistas were the first to encourage them to think, question and learn:


Before the EZLN, we [the mothers] didn't have this education. We didn't know that we could fight a just fight for the well-being of our children. We dedicated ourselves to working in our homes and in the homes of the landowners. Our children were raised like animals. We didn't educate our children [before] because we didn't know these things. The landowners didn't teach us so that they could keep us as workers. --Maribel, a zapatista mother.



I didn't find the Non-Cultural Conformist Center until the second day of the three-day encuentro. It was far from the center of the community where the plenary sessions and other activities were taking place. A woman and several boys were painting a mural on the cinderblock façade of the school. Other boys raced around hitting each other with empty plastic bottles, apparently a favorite game among children in the campo. There were eight childcare providers and eight little boys. The man I spoke to looked at Pi and said, "There aren't any girls here."

"Why not?" we asked.

He shrugged. "Maybe they are busy working."



Only much later did I begin to realize that the concept of organized childcare—of separating children from the adult activities—is a western capitalist concept. In other cultures, children are integrated into daily life, not shunted into a corner or separate room far from grown-up eyes and ears. The zapatistas didn't need the kind of childcare usually expected by those of us north of the border. They incorporated their children into the struggle, teaching not only with stories and words but also by example. After all, the children (and their children and their children's children) is who the struggle is ultimately for. To emphasize this point, many of the t-shirts and gas sold during the encuentro depicted small children growing out of corn stalks.

Throughout the plenary sessions, children ran in and out of the auditorium to see and sit with their mothers or to be hugged before dashing off to resume playing outside. Babies sometimes cried, but no one took much notice and, unlike meetings and events in the north, no one even dared suggest that the mother leave. Masked girls sat beside their mothers, listening to the stories of what their lives might have looked like had they not been born into the movement.

"Before, only the men and boys could have fun," Comandanta Rosalinda said on the first day. "Girls had to take care of the babies and never had time to go to school or even to play."

## Responsibilities and Relationships

Being proactive and investing in women before a child is born seems like a good idea. Why isn't equal financial support from a baby's daddy an issue of social justice? Why is a father praised for doing anything with his child, but when a mom spends the same amount of time with her kid, she's criticized for not doing enough?

Our scene fails to hold deadbeat dads in the movement accountable. The unpaid organizing work done by a baby's daddy is viewed by him and our scene as being more important than caring for his own kid. People have said that because a baby's daddy is an activist, he shouldn't be made to pay child support. Because many don't think of the work that a mother does--the invisible work of caring for another person and the wage work she does to survive--as important, no one thinks how the father's not paying child support oppresses the mother and her child. Many of us would love to be able to have the privilege of continuing unpaid work as an organizer, too. But most don't have the time or the money to pay for babysitting.

We're tired of our community not recognizing emotional abuse or a partner's drug or alcohol abuse as valid reasons for ending a relationship. We continually fight against this idea that if we're really anarchists, we should stay in a bad relationship in order to make ends meet.

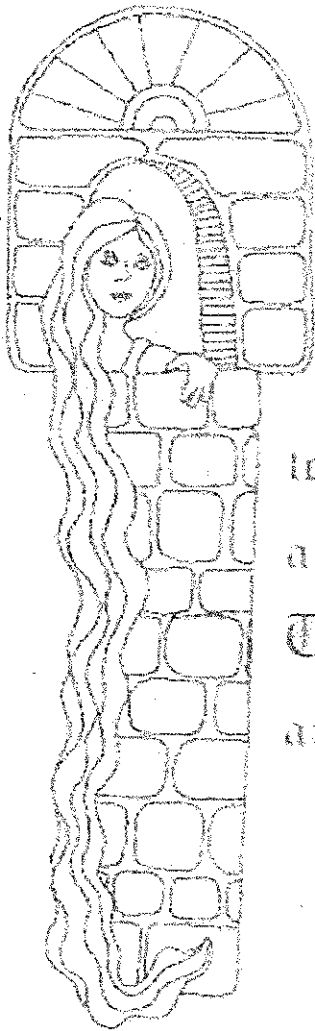
## Birth Control and Reproductive Freedom

We wish that there was more information about effective birth control and that the responsibility to pay for and use birth control fell equally on men and women. We feel that the community as a whole needs to respect individual choices about birth control, from Depro Provera and birth control pills to natural family planning methods.

Especially, when there is so much pressure for women to use the natural family planning method because it's "natural" and it doesn't support pharmaceutical companies. At the same time, everyone we know who got pregnant was using this method. This method fails as a reliable birth control. It is specifically contraindicated for women who are very young and have unpredictable and stressful lives--like every woman in the scene--because these factors affect the regularity of our menstrual cycles. I wish that the risks of the natural planning method were talked about more openly because this misinformation disproportionately impacts us girls.

Men need to take an active role in lobbying for male birth control. Where's the goddamn male birth control pill? It's not okay that men are pro-choice, as long as it's pro-their choice. We want the community to support women who chose to be parents and women who chose abortion.

By RAMBL (Revolutionary Anarchist Mom and Baby League): anti-copyright.  
rambl@yahoogroups.com.



This time,  
she had some power  
tools, a pair of scissors,  
a roll of duct tape, a  
Tina Turner album  
and a bus pass.

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Continuing the Struggle: Lessons to Be Learned from Mothers and Children in Zapatista Communities  
(written by Victoria Law with lots of input from Terry Rodriguez)

I had originally been inspired to go to the Women's Encuentro by the call to volunteer at the Non-Conformist Cultural Center. Recognizing that an encounter of women required a safe (and fun!) place for them to leave their children while they attended meetings, plenaries and workshops, volunteers from a solidarity group put a call out for people around the world to help put together not just childcare, but a Non-Conformist Cultural Center whose activities would reflect the plenaries and sessions that their mothers were participating in.

As a mother who pushes for the social justice movement to support the parents and children in the struggle, I was excited. For the past year and a half, I had attended (predominantly white) anarchist and feminist events to present "Don't Leave Your Friends Behind," a workshop outlining the need for the radical community to support the mothers and children in their midst. My daughter, at ages five and six, accompanied me and had a chance to experience each event's childcare (or lack thereof). At some, such as the Children's Social Forum at the United States Social Forum (USSF), she had participated in activities reflecting the social justice themes of the day, discussing concepts such as gentrification, war and gender in ways that she, and other children her age, could grasp.

Reading about the plan for a Non-Conformist Cultural Center, I was intrigued. What would radical childcare in a zapatista community look like?

Then I got a call from Terry, a mother I had roomed with at the USSF. She and her now-three-year-old daughter Pi were members of a delegation of women of color (and white allies) who were going to the encuentro. Was I interested in coming? My answer was an unequivocal YES!<sup>1</sup> I joined the delegation<sup>1</sup> and really became excited about the adventure we were all about to embark upon.

1 My own daughter Siu Loong chose to go to her grandparents' house for their annual Christmas celebration.

ZAPATISTAS POR LOS DERECHOS Y LA CULTURA INDIGENA



## 21<sup>st</sup> Century feminist view on classic tales told to children/girls from a young age

**Caution! Includes references to real life problems including eating disorders/ drug taking, which are not perceived in any way desirable but a crucial to the storyline and serve a purpose of realizing that even less than perfect people get to be heroines and ideally get over their problems. It also is reflective of the age. Whatever.**

### *SLEEPING BEAUTY*

*Aurora couldn't understand why her father was so uptight about needles. It wasn't as she didn't have any piercings, most of which he knew about. It was still a far cry from intravenous drugs, if that was what he was afraid of. She only smoked a little pot whenever the maids smuggled some in exchange for a night off.*

*Maybe he was worried that the more rebellious she looked, the more possible the usual fears for teenagers come true. We all know the rates for teenage pregnancies in Europe, don't we?*

*She was, of course, a catch. Beautiful, singing/dancing/drawing/songwriting/flower arranging/dj'ing little devil. Her parents really didn't have much to do with their time, did they? Well taking care of their precious daughter, it made her go mad sometimes. But with her good sense of humour even belonging to the royal family didn't feel too much of a burden most times and being first in line for the throne just*

made her laugh. Her parents should've been happy, the girl was now legal and still not pregnant, why couldn't they relax a bit? Of course they remembered the last fairy's curse and disposed the kingdom of spindles and just to be on the safe side. Of sewing machines and knitting needles as well (This had had the craftsmen and men demonstrating long and hard, they said it was a disgrace to let the old skills to die.)

What the family didn't take into account was that in the attic, forgotten by them but fed and cared for the staff was the great aunt Maud that happened to love spinning yarn and crocheting.

So arrived a day when the parents were out of town on business and the princess wanting a little time alone with the kitchen porter. She stumbled across the deserted part of the castle and skilled little thing she was, opened the lock with a hairpin.

There was the matron, sweet and smiling with biscuits laid out for visitors that finally this one time had arrived. Aurora took a bite and got chatting. The elder woman hadn't had a smoke for about 15 years, so Aurora rolled a fat joint and they continued cosily their uptake on modern world.

About an hour into this she remembered what she was supposed to be doing and being desperate to keep her aunt suggested a session in the crafts since being the same family both of them should be pretty handy, and the next thing they knew, being a bit tipsy, was that the needle slipped right in the middle of Auroras arm. Oh no, that's gonna look so suspicious, she thought before dosing off.

And like a giant spliff from the sky everybody and everything in this kingdom fell to the endless slumber as the flesh-eating hybrids of flytraps grew around the castle and the living seized.

## Polly put the megaphone on

The musical score is written on five staves in a 2/4 time signature. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is simple and repetitive, with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: "Polly put the megaphone on, Polly put the megaphone on, We'll all have a riot Sukey switch it off again, Sukey switch it off again, Sukey switch it off again, The pigs have gone to lunch".

Polly put the megaphone on  
Polly put the megaphone on  
Polly put the megaphone on  
We'll all have a riot

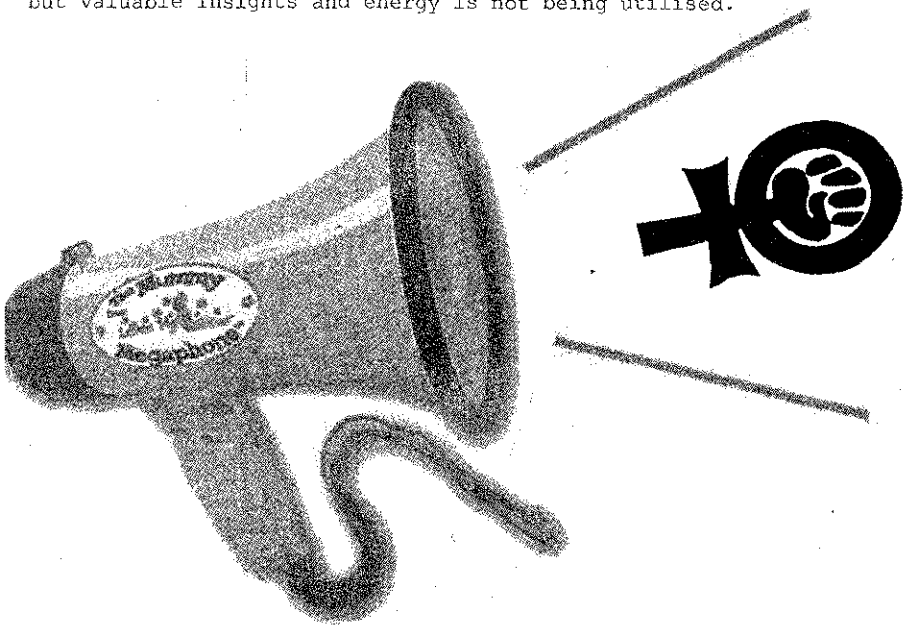
Sukey switch it off again  
Sukey switch it off again  
Sukey switch it off again  
The pigs have gone to lunch



I scrutinised every aspect of literature, information, advice and the norms of how women should behave during pregnancy, how they should allow unknown doctors, gynaecologists, midwives and Pampers' Baby Dry adverts to dictate how the experience should be for them, and how it is best turned out. My opinions, faiths and beliefs were attacked by all professionals on every angle (even though myself and my baby were as healthy as we could possibly be, throughout pregnancy/birth/postnatal). My GP: "homebirth?! That's why women died in childbirth in the eighteenth century!" He spluttered in disgust. "Your tummy is abnormal, look how it sticks out- pregnant women aren't meant to look like that". The midwives: "I've booked your labour induction. Your baby is too late and if you refuse, is twice as likely to die". My health visitor: "here are some condoms. I would make sure you use these next time (laughs)". In general: "let's just strap you to this machine...and this machine and this machine and this machine...."

In reference to Emma Goldman's statement above, all of the issues she is describing relate heavily to the often oppressive experiences of pregnant women/mothers. You would think that despite all the prejudice, patronising attitudes and ignorance from state and mainstream society, the anarchist/feminist/activist community would have the capacity to support what the mainstream cannot. In fact I encountered many shocking reactions. As a single mum, I needed state benefits to tie me over until I became sorted on my own. Anarchists chided me for receiving handouts from the state that were linked with the oil industry and war, feminists questioned the need or want to have children over abortion: "we are beyond biology now", and one so-called 'radical midwife' announced that she'd been watching me closely, my baby was underweight (he wasn't) and started questioning my competency as a mother. Activist meetings and workshops often were non-child friendly, and I felt a nuisance for bringing my baby everywhere with me.

Children are the future. For us to continue anarcha/feminist activism there has to be a realisation that ignoring or sidelining women who are mothers not only is conforming to the capitalist and sexist model, but valuable insights and energy is not being utilised.



*In the nearby village they had heard stories of this and one son of a gardener was particularly keen to go and sort this problem and meet the great beauty that this girl was supposed to be. He prepared a magic potion to get rid of the plant and set for his journey. Himself a bit weedy he didn't want to take any chances with the foliage armed only with the inherited old sword.*

*After a successful navigating session the boy arrived at the scene, got to the princess and thought: "A redhead, no way I'm kissing that."*

*What he didn't realize was that the Sleeping Beauty had dyed her hair flaming red mainly to annoy her parents and that colour had now faded to less than flattering mess. Eager to win his place in the history, the boy reached for a bucket full of cold water and woke the princess up and suffered a fair amount of swear words for it. Eventually they managed to struck a deal, the princess being happy for being awake again awarded the boy with some particularly potent breeds of certain illegal plants and he in turn arranged her a date with his sister.*

By Emilia 2008 (London Feminist Meetup Group: feminism-196@meetup.com)

## Some thoughts about body image, being a mum, parenting and feminism

I'm a new mum and I feel fairly positive and comfortable with all aspects of my body- not on a superficial level only- as in what it looks like- but everything else too. I used to feel really negative and had low self esteem and was very sexually repressed. I don't want to blame any one or anything for that as I think it's really complex but I don't think my dire sex education helped. Lots of things have helped me start the ball rolling to get over all of that, especially having such a great anarchist, feminist boyfriend of ten years also:

I've been inspired by the women's health collectives I've been part of and work done by women in the 70's in this area. 'Cunt positivity' I think it's called!

I had a really good pregnancy and labour experience with a Doula.

I'm half Peruvian and into other cultures such as Indian ones that have images of the vagina or Yoni as a powerful, positive symbol and also native Celtic culture, especially depictions of the Shelanagig- the Celtic warrior Goddess who is shown holding open her cunt in carvings on medieval churches. I went on a pilgrimage to see one in Herefordshire. She's my totem.

I've have been in Brighton six years and for that time have been part of a group called The women's health collective and through being part of that I've learnt loads about my health and thought a lot more about body image and my body as a woman in general. I'm really pleased to have been around in at time when lots of women of my generation, who've been politicised, have done loads of exciting, unpaid, work off their own backs to spread the message that we need to accept, understand and love our bodies in the face of the bullshit marketing which wants us to think otherwise. A highlight of this time for me has been running a few workshops on my own, one on feminist sex education, and also doing my own zine on breasts ( although it needs a new chapter now I've breast fed!). I'm especially proud of myself because I've had M.E for 10 years and it's been a struggle to just get through the days a lot of the time.

I had a really positive experience giving birth because I had my own Doula- which is the name for someone who is working as a birth partner, a spiritual mind wife if you like. I met him at the Radical Mid wives stall at a festival. He's training with the NHS now so he can be an independant mid-wife and in my opinion is one of the most qualified people in the country to help women have a positive birth experience where they feel empowered about their bodies and themselves. I was really 'cunt positive' when I gave birth and it made so much difference. I had a caesarian and it was full on but I came out of it thinking this scar here is a symbol of my strength as a woman. I was a bit gutted that I didn't have a vaginal birth or a home birth but in the end it didn't matter.

## Feminist Women who Choose to be Mothers

"Her development, her freedom, her independence, must come from and through herself. First, by asserting herself as a personality, and not as a sex commodity. Second, by refusing the right of anyone over her body; by refusing to bear children, unless she wants them, by refusing to be a servant to God, the State, society, the husband, the family, etc., by making her life simpler, but deeper and richer. That is, by trying to learn the meaning and substance of life in all its complexities; by freeing herself from the fear of public opinion and public condemnation."  
(Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, p. 211)

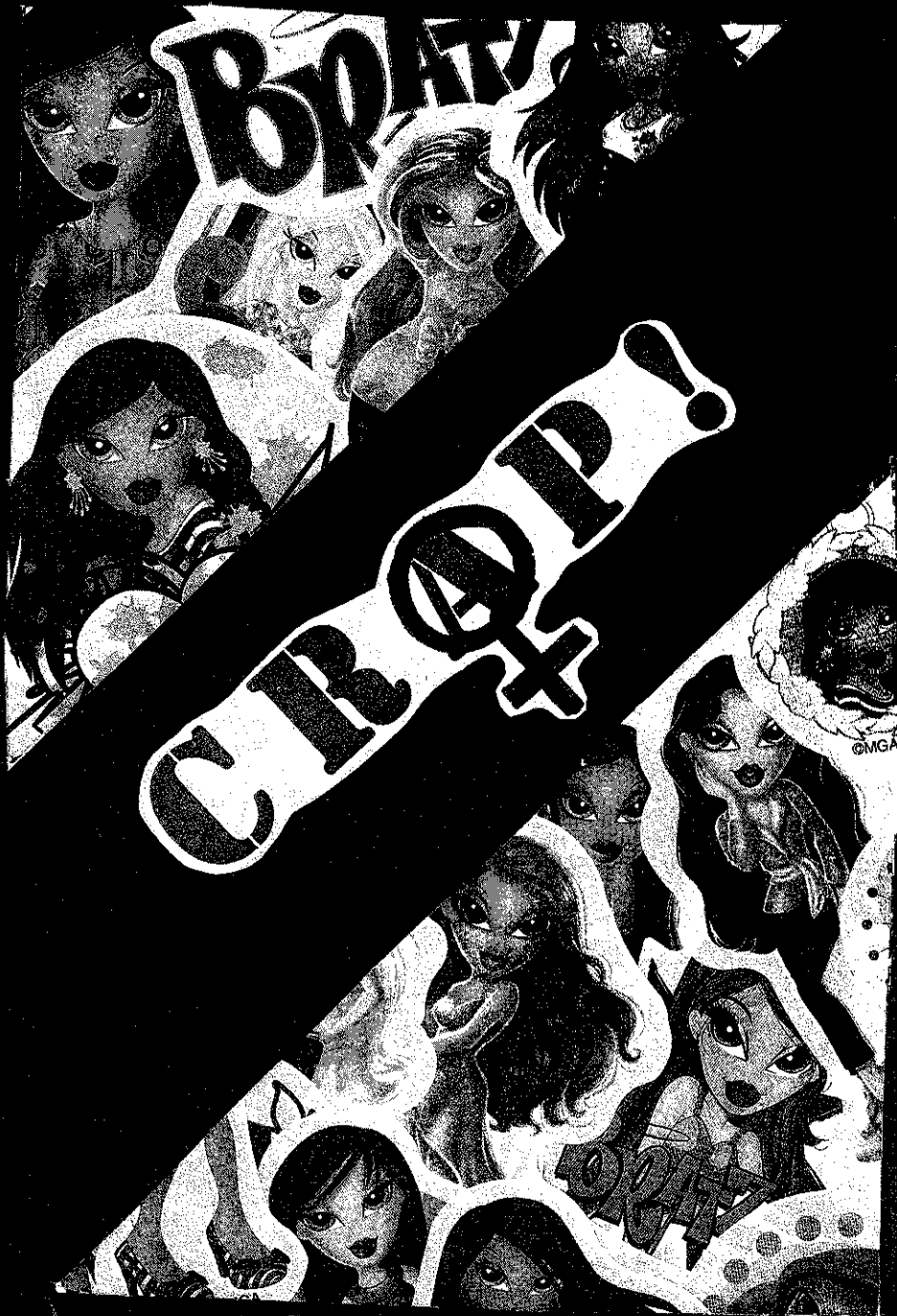
I often feel that the general consensus seems to be that feminists, especially radical feminists/anarchists/anarchafeminist etc, need to reject the traditional role of mothering, and demand their freedom from oppression by their choice not to have children. Indeed a lot of feminist literature, activism and support is concerned with issues of abortion rights- and so it should be, as this is what has been lacking within mainstream society, and narrow-minded 'pro-lifers' still have a huge presence over legislation and societal values. But, abortion rights is pro-choice, it's the woman's body and so it's her right to choose whether to carry on with the pregnancy or not. Can a woman who chooses to carry on with the pregnancy and become a mother in the 'traditional' sense call herself a feminist? Is abortion the feminist choice? I feel that feminist support of other feminists who choose to have a baby in less than ideal circumstances is hard to find. Is parenting, or caring for children, not a feminist issue? Do they think that women who carry on with their pregnancy have enough support already so it is not a gap to be filled by feminist activism?

I think that feminist women who carry on with having a baby need to be supported, not only in the more usual nurturing ways, but also supported in their feminist and political approach to pregnancy, childbirth and childrearing. These are huge feminist issues.

Just as women are suppressed in other aspects of their life, it often is felt so much stronger during pregnancy. It is noted that a lot of cases of domestic violence by men towards their female partners start or worsen once the woman becomes pregnant. So at a time in their lives that is meant to be 'special', 'spiritual', 'life-changing' and an 'emotional rollercoaster'- tragedy and control are felt even stronger. Pregnant women can feel more vulnerable now than ever before in their lives. If the woman does not have a partner, the stigma of 'single mother' still hangs over her, and she is judged by all who see her pregnant form. Of course, women who don't fit into the ideal of traditional motherhood- lesbian, transgender, older women, women with mental health issues, to name but a few, may feel their life being scrutinised by state and society as never before. Of course there are other issues of race, religion and disability that are judged by society to be unacceptable to have a baby together.

With all these factors arising once a woman has found herself pregnant and choosing to have a baby, how can it not be a feminist issue? Once you become pregnant it feels as if every aspect of your character, your past histories and your lifestyle come under scrutiny, and they are asking: Is she fit to be a mother? Should she be *allowed* to have a baby? It sometimes comes down to the authorities' decision- the woman is on trial. Her baby is not part of her body, it's not her child- it's state property. How much of it actually is down to the child's rights, and how much of it really is down to society's prejudices, and the traditional 'values' that it still holds dear.





**The CRAP! Collective**  
**Child Rearing Against Patriarchy**

About parenting, I would say that what I've found hardest has been not feeling I get recognition for all my hard work as a mum and keeping my relationship happy. Moving in with a bloke gender-politicises your relationship, having a child together does that times a 100! On a daily basis sometimes, as well as organizing what stuff I want him to do in the house, I have to have a little chat to myself about not putting too many expectations on him in terms of being domesticated in an instinctive way (i.e. in the way a lot of, if not all, the women I know are and some men-but not mine!).

It's really hard as I enjoy being practical- cooking, cleaning, child-care etc. but not when I'm multi-tasking my tits off like you have to when you're a mum-It's exhausting! I need to have a non mum/ house wife life too, of course, or I start to get depressed and the low self-esteem creeps back in. I also start to get neurotic and controlling, like many other women I know, then I become a caricature of the nagging wife and he the slob husband.

I also sometimes get very resentful because although he does many many tedious, lobotomising tasks as part of his work for schnews, my boredom quota is used up in the house and I think to myself, at least

he's getting some recognition and non parent identity. Now I'm part of a parent support group with some women from the health collective things are easier. Also I've started performing again. Sometimes when I get all that hand clapping on stage it's like all the recognition I don't get as a mum I get then for doing stand-up comedy.

The reward in the end though is the love you get from your child, the spiritual growth you do and the pride you feel from holding your family together.

I've got a beautiful baby boy. All the feminists I know have boys-what's that all about! Boys broom broom their way through life, bless their little cotton socks. What a relief and a joy it is in some ways, what a night-mare in others. Two males to pick up socks for and they're not so cute later on...

Here's a poem I wrote about the type of mum I am and most of the women I know are. I live in the muesli belt of Brighton and spend a lot of time fantasizing about torturing Yummy mummies- those mums that jog around the parks with their state of the art buggies and lattes hanging out of their arses. I'm not a yummy mummy, I'm a crummy mummy!

*by Sharon Tyas*

## *I'm a crummy mummy !*

*I'm a crummy mummy*

*I have no money*

*I've got vomit on my shoulder*

*and it isn't funny*

*I'm a crummy mummy*

*I used to be a bit of crumpet*

*now I leak when I hear sea-gulls*

*like some kind of sea gull suckling, strumpet*

*I'm a crummy mummy*

*I'm a wet nurses wet dream*

*insomnia queen*

*the unsung star of an all singing, all dancing*

*24 hour entertainment machine*

*I'm a crummy mummy*

*multi tasking my tits off*

*I can simultaneously have sex, hang the washing out and clean up poo*

*but I can't remember when I slept the night through*

*at the cat side in seconds like a flying phalanger*

*I'm stocked up on Calpol, biscuits and Ganja*

*I'm a crummy mummy*

*I'm tired and I'm smelly*

*Hook down and I see my jelly pot belly*

*see my crazy, chaotic, loved-up family*

*I'm a crummy mummy*

*I'm not a cummy mummy*

*Or a yummy mummy*

*I'm a crummy mummy*

*and I'm proud!*

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