The University of Sydney Women's Collective presents

WOMEN'S HOI

2021

Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Sydney Women's Collective meets and organises on the stolen, unceded land of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, who were amongst the first to suffer and survive the violence of colonialism. Beyond campus, our collective's members live and helped piece together this edition on many other sovereign First Nations lands: Dharawal, Bidjigal, Gandagara, and Cammeraygal, to name a few. We pay our respects to elders past and present.

First Nations knowledges have existed on this land for tens of thousands of years. For those of us who are settlers at this university, we bear an active responsibility to do anti-racist and anti-colonial work within the institutions we occupy, as discomforting or confronting as it may be. As an intersectional feminist collective, we stand against colonial violence in all its forms, wherever it may exist in the world, but most importantly here in so-called 'Australia'. Indigenous justice and feminist justice are inextricably linked and we recognise the vital importance of Indigenous and Bla(c)k knowledges and organising in feminist movements. We acknowledge the strength, power and resistance of staunch First Nations women whose work and politics shape our own.

This colony is inherently and continually violent and dehumanising for those it tries to disappear. In our fight to liberate all people from misogyny, we must remember it is First Nations women who are at the forefront of gendered violence. First Nations women experience higher rates of sexual and domestic violence, are constantly criminalised and deemed unfit mothers, have their children continually forcibly removed by the racist foster care system (continuing the ongoing Stolen Generations), and are the fastest rising prison population. Issues such as the right to sacred womens' sites and one's own children are not additional to feminist organising, but central. Dismantling the colony is a feminist act.

We must reject silence and interrogate our complicity in the context of settler-colonial repression even if we ourselves are marginalised in other ways. When we, as a collective, say "decolonise", we mean to abolish prisons and police, to end the forced separation of families, to collapse the lie of 'Australian' statehood, to return land, and to work towards true healing and justice. We mean to not only actively challenge racism and white supremacy, but to dismantle these structures piece by piece and build anew.

This land always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Contents

Editors in chief:
Amelia Mertha & Kimmy Dibben

Cover art:
Camille Ayre

Editorial collective:
Amelia Mertha, Amelia Raines, Alana Ramshaw, Ariana Haghighi, Claire Ollivain, Hannah Rose, Jessica Page, Kimmy Dibben, Kowther Qashou, Lia Perkins, Monica McNaught-Lee, Priya Gupta, Roisin Murphy, Shani Patel, Talia Meli

Contributors:
Amelia Mertha, Alana Ramshaw, Ariana Haghighi, Anya Doan, Claire Ollivain, Clara Suki, Hannah Rose, Jazzlyn Breen, Jessica Page, Jo Engelman, Julia Rose, Kimmy Dibben, Kira Trahana, Kowther Qashou, Mayla River, Misbah Ansari, Melissa Sukkarieh, Maddie Clark, Monica McNaught-Lee, Reham Zughair, Roisin Murphy, Talia Meli, Zoe Coles

Artists:
Amelia Mertha, Alev Saracoglu, Bonnie Huang, Camille Ayre, Claire Ollivain, Ellie Wilson, Kritika Rathore, Monica McNaught-Lee, Shania O'Brien

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Hello!

This year's edition of Women's Honi, just like the one before, has been the hard work that has culminated across the bedrooms, backyards, kitchen tables, and desks of the Women's Collective during yet another COVID-19 induced lockdown. Compiling ideas in long-distance community with one another has given us hope and strength throughout a difficult time for us all.

During this time, we reject the bullshit 'all in this together' narrative, and recognise how once again the elite is surviving off the backs of the working class during this pandemic. We send our solidarity to under-staffed, underfunded, and overworked nurses and midwives whose conditions are worsening under lockdown, but who are unable to strike because of it. We send our solidarity to all workers deemed essential enough by the government to continue working, but not essential enough for safe workplaces, adequate vaccine access, or paid pandemic leave. We send our solidarity to the people of colour and First Nations people being more over-policed than ever, particularly in Western Sydney where many essential workers continue to just try and survive below circling police helicopters. We send our solidarity to survivors of domestic and family violence, to those stuck under higher surveillance from their abusers, cut off from social support, unable to leave unsafe situations. Under new

We reflect on our year so far.

As we flooded back into the streets this year after restrictions eased, a national conversation on sexual violence and sex education was emerging. This kicked off our year and semester as usual, with a rally against sexual violence on campus. However, this time it was echoed across high school campuses too, as well as in parliament and in workplaces. Together, we demanded safer campuses, schools, and workplaces.

After the decriminalisation of abortion, we have focused onto a more holistic view of reproductive justice. This year, working closely with Grandmothers Against Removals, we fought for an end to the racist foster care system which continues the Stolen Generations. Reproductive justice includes not just abortion access, but access to one's own children. It includes access to safe births, to traditional birthing practices. We stand in resistance against the colonial project of generational genocide, as a tool of gendered state violence.

As the horrific violence and dispossession in Palestine grew this year, we watched on in horror as the terrorist state Israel attacked Sheikh Jarrah. WoCo joined the thousands who turned out in the streets week after week demanding land back to Palestinians. As we united against the Israeli settler-colony, a powerful culmination of communities came together between First Nations people and Palestinians, marching together for an end to all imperialism; 'from Gadigal to Gaza'. The cease-fire since these marches does not end the ongoing violence of Palestinian dispossession. As always, WoCo stands with indigenous people across the globe, demanding the abolition of Israel, Australia, and all settler-colonies. FREE PALESTINE!

It has been awe-inspiring to watch movements come together, and critically reflect and refine their politics particularly as many focus on anti-imperialism. This includes WoCo, as our campaigns evolve, and our community continues to grow and strengthen. Our ability to organise may be limited, but community and mutual aid are creative pursuits that we are ever-evolving.

We hope to join you again in the streets soon.

Your favourite dykes,

Amelia and Kimmy

what is the Women's Collective?

The Women's Collective is a horizontal autonomous organising space for radically left-wing feminist activism. We are one of the most radical and active campus feminist collectives in the country. WoCo has organised at the University of Sydney for over 50 years, primarily focusing on activism against sexual violence on and off campus, and for abortion access and reproductive justice. We fight for the liberation of all from misogyny.

As a collective which meets and works on the stolen land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, in a colonial state of ongoing racial violence. As such, we must centre Indigenous justice in our fight for feminist justice. WoCo aligns itself with the First Nations struggle to decolonise the illegitimate settler society of so-called 'australia.'

Indigenous women are at the forefront of colonial and patriarchal violence as the fastest growing prison population in the world, and face deeply gendered state violence as mothers and community caretakers of children who are incarcerated, brutalised, or murdered by the racist police and prison systems, or stolen by the foster care system that continues the Stolen Generation to this day. First Nations women also bear the brunt of state sanctioned destruction of sacred country, such as the sacred birthing trees of the Djab Wurrung people. There is no feminist justice without Indigenous justice and decolonisation.

We are an unapologetically abolitionist and anti-capitalist collective that fights for true liberation from police, prisons, and capitalist exploitation. It is at these intersections where the worst patriarchal violence resides. WoCo does not settle for neoliberal or reformist incremental reforms, and actively organises against carceral feminism in our fight for true liberation from patriarchy, imperialism, and capitalism.

What is carceral feminism?

Carceral feminism seeks to expand the power of police and prison systems in response to sexual violence and domestic violence. Carceral feminism seeks justice for victim-survivors in the colonial criminal system that is itself a site of gendered violence. Police are often perpetrators of violence, and prisons are inherently violent, themselves having high rates of sexual violence. A focus on punishment does not centre victim-survivors' healing, and ignores the underlying issues driving gendered violence. WoCo rejects carceral feminism for these reasons, instead pushing for the destruction of structures of harm through abolitionist feminism.

WoCo and the university institution

The university will not stand after feminist liberation from capitalism and colonialism - this type of knowledge production and learning is far too entrenched in these systems. As feminists, we do what we can to work within them whilst also working towards more liberatory and non-hierarchical means of knowledge formation and learning. Those most affected by patriarchy are often excluded from the university and campus organising. That is, working class and Indigenous struggles are often a blind spot of campus organising, but it is these struggles which are central to the liberation of us all.

WoCo is a place of activism and radical change, and an integral part of this work is community building and liberatory education. Alongside our individual pursuits of knowledge, we seek to learn and care as a communal space together. Liberation is achieved through community, and it is a community that we are building. To care for one another is a radical act.

WoCo is an autonomous collective, which means that membership and entry to meetings is open to anyone whom is not a cisgender man. Our events, however, are generally open to all.

The Women's Collective meets weekly to discuss the current landscape of feminist issues, and to strategise and organise our activism accordingly. We host many rallies and organising events, as well as community education events such as panels, reading groups, and open discussions. We work to build and strengthen our collective as a community and have various social events throughout the year.

Please don't hesitate to get involved. Our main point of contact is our closed Facebook group (USYD WoCo 2021), just answer a few short questions first!

FACEBOOK PAGE: facebook.com/usydwoco
INSTAGRAM: @usydwoco
TWITTER: @usydwoco
EMAIL: usydwomenscollective@gmail.com

The Nurses and Midwives Campaign

by Mayla River

Despite the fundamental role nurses and midwives play in our society, they are consistently overworked, overlooked, and underpaid. Under the Liberal government, health workers across New South Wales have seen increasing attacks on wages and working conditions. The New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association [NSWNMA] is currently running a campaign fighting for fair wages and safe working conditions. The key demands of the campaign include a wage increase of 4.7% and safe nurse-to-patient ratios of one-to-four on ward floors and one-to-three in emergency.

Early June saw nurses and midwives organise a series of strikes to call attention to their situation and highlight their demands from the government. The protest saw over 300 nurses and midwives across New South Wales walk out of hospitals. This strike came off the back of the recent protests by paramedics in NSW who stood down for 3 hours on the 3rd of June, only answering life threatening emergency calls. Similar to the nurses and midwives campaign, NSW paramedics are demanding higher wages that would mirror rates in other states.

The government initially offered allow 1.04% pay rise offer for the public sector, which was rejected at the end of May by members of the NSWNMA. Most recently, on the 22nd of July, the state government proposed a 2.04% pay rise for the public sector which was approved by the NSW Industrial Relations Commission [IRC]. However, this pay rise was not even close to the 4.7% requested by the NSWNMA. Additionally, the government is still yet to address concerns over staffing numbers, with unsafe staff-to-patient ratios still in place. The General Secretary of NSWNMA, Brett Holmes states, "The NSW government knows we've got a staffing crisis in our hospitals and is putting lives at risk by neglecting to adopt shift-by-shift ratios."

As the COVID-19 Delta variant spreads through the community, the public is once again turning to nurses and health workers for guidance and medical assistance. During these times, critical issues, such as the demands made by the campaign, get 'put on hold' as our attention is drawn towards a new obstacle. However, the issues that these health workers face are not going anywhere.

What can we do as a community to support nurses and midwives?

Although current public health orders mean that we can not attend strikes and protests to support health workers, it is still fundamental that we as a community continue to show solidarity with nurses and midwives during these times. You can keep up with the campaign by following NSWNMA and APA|NSW on social media or sign up at ratioslifeordeath.org.au to receive updates through email. Use #PayOurNursesAndMidwives and #CareForOurHealthCarers on social media to make your own post supporting health workers and bring attention to the campaign.

Coercive Control under COVID-19

by Ariana Haghighi and Alana Ramshaw

CW: Domestic violence, abuse

Ensconced from the public limelight, the nature of domestic violence and its prevalence is largely misunderstood by governments and policymakers. The use of criminalisation in response to domestic violence is particularly misguided given the concurrent worldwide conversation on police and prison violence, sparked by the BLM movement. The violence of the criminal punishment system has been ignored as non-physical domestic violence has garnered public attention amidst the rise of domestic violence incidence under COVID-19 lockdowns. Since last reported in Growing Strong, New South Wales' concerning efforts to criminalise coercive control have been adopted by other states.

Tasmania is the only Australian state to criminalise non-physical forms of domestic violence, encompassing financial abuse and intimidation. The NSW government has followed with a draft Bill outlining coercive control as inuring a partner to subordination, isolation, hyper-surveillance and arbitrary restriction of freedoms. Although South Australia's Intervention Order Act 2009 surrounding abuse includes clauses that tacitly reference coercive control, there is still a push from the Marshall Liberal Government to create a Bill that overtly refers to this form of abuse. There is a similar impetus in Victoria, however the Victorian Family Violence Protection Act already includes coercive control in its definition of family violence. These pieces of legislation allow individuals to apply for intervention orders on the basis of coercive behaviours; the breach of such orders constitute a criminal offence. This form of criminalisation is a reactive measure with no proven effect in keeping victims safe. This legislative trend in Australia follows those in the United Kingdom. Yet, comparative laws in the UK have neglected most cases of coercive control. In 2020, a paltry 4.86 % of recorded coercive control instances led to prosecution. This statistic itself neglects the physical and emotional barriers associated with reporting.

In October last year, the NSW Government established the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control. The committee released its report in June, the recommendations of which included "criminalising coercive control", "improving current domestic violence laws", and "improving the policing of domestic abuse", among others. The report has since been the subject of criticism from Indigenous women who believe that the recommendations, if acted upon, will only aggravate the over-policing of Aboriginal communities.

Noting that law cannot be applied retroactively, this solution also does not deliver justice to prior survivors seeking redress. Carceral approaches to resolving such a complex issue also obfuscate justice in many ways, considering many demographics of women are historically mistreated and abused by the police force; this further inhibits them from pursuing effective support. Many survivors who seek help from the justice system speak of being 're-traumatised a second time.' Punitive approaches are also largely ineffective and not conducive to the rehabilitation of perpetrators, hence why legislation is not sufficient in protecting victims and preventing further violence.

Rather than investing in punishment processes, we need to increase funding for domestic violence services. During lockdowns, womens' shelters also remain open to provide support in a variety of forms to survivors; this is a testament to the tenacity of tireless workers. Ultimately, community-based infrastructures designed to support coercive control survivors bring us one step closer to the goal of a safer environment for everyone, demonstrated by its pernicious escalation during COVID-19. The past two years have seen significant funding cuts to domestic violence shelters and services, with DV West Chief Executive Cat Gander citing the experience of having to turn away 1280 women and children in 2020 in resource slashes that have been felt across the sector.

Ultimately, it is a focus on victim-survivor healing, not retributive punishment, that make local communities, domestic violence and crisis shelters, and other services more holistically effective than criminalising responses. Reliance on the community and its services is crucial where many survivors still face significant barriers to recognising the nature of coercive control, in a world that paints a one-faceted picture of domestic violence and solutions to address it.

If you are in present danger, call 000. You can contact the National Domestic Violence hotline on 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) or use the 24-hour chat service, https://www.1800respect.org.au. For crisis assistance and shelter for women and girls escaping domestic violence, visit https://www.wagec.org.au/get-help/.

Reproductive healthcare access under lockdown

by Roisin Murphy

Since the Abortion Law Reform Act passed the NSW Parliament in 2019, activists have been working tirelessly to improve access — something that is not at all guaranteed by decriminalisation.

For people in rural and regional New South Wales, reproductive healthcare is still too often hard to come by. In many cases, terminating a pregnancy not only means the cost of the procedure itself, but also travelling into either regional centres, bigger cities, or across state borders. If there are services in regional areas, the waitlists often mean prolonging an already difficult process, or missing the window for a medical termination, the medications for which are only licensed for prescription up to nine weeks.

Last year, many people became conscious of "border communities" — communities where people live, work and access services on two sides of a state border. What hard border closures also exposed is the issue they pose for reproductive rights: oftentimes, when hard borders are closed, accessing abortion services also means a 14 day quarantine.

In a 2020 *ABC* report, regional health services were noted as having a heightened number of requests for abortion services, which providers said they were crediting to an increase in domestic and family violence.

These issues are particularly impacting migrants and people on visas, for whom access to Medicare is limited . They are also much more likely to be in the casualised workforce, whose where jobs are most precarious under the first to go when lockdowns strike.

It's clear that the pandemic and hard lockdowns have laid bare the inaccessibility of lack of access to reproductive healthcare in NSW, at a time when people are needing it mostmore. What it's also shown is that the solutions to abortion access in lockdown are much the same as out of lockdown. By widely offering medical abortion services via telehealth, investing in more rural and regional clinics, significantly removing financial barriers and providing wider-reaching education, access to reproductive healthcare in NSW would be greatly improved - both now and once the pandemic has passed.

Victoria to decriminalise sex work

by Paola Ayre and Priya Gupta

The Victorian Government has announced it will be decriminalising sex work, after an industry review initiatated in 2019 by MP Fiona Patten.

The sex industry will now be regulated by standard business and OHS laws, instead of Victoria police. A variety of public health and anti-discrimination reforms will also be introduced over the next two years. Once complete, Victorian laws will resemble those of NSW, which decriminalised its sex industry in 1995 after the Wood Royal Commission revealed entrenched police corruption. Most recently, the NT voted for decriminalisation in response to a dedicated campaign led by the Scarlet Alliance and a grassroots collective of sex workers.

Decriminalisation is an enormous win for Victorian sex workers, who have long suffered under a flawed two tiered legalisation model which legally excluded all but an economically privileged few. All workers can now report violence and unfair management practises without fear of prosecution.

WIN: Safe access zones legislated now mandated in across every state

by Ariana Haghighi

This week, another barrier to abortion access has been abolished. Anti-choice hecklers have utilised social stigma against abortion to shame and prevent people from accessing abortion clinics for years. But now, Safe Access Zones have become national. State governments have implemented laws banning protests within at least 150m of a clinic, creating a safe zone in which individuals cannot be harassed or harangued. As of the 12th August 2021, Western Australia was the final state to pass legislation banning picketing near a clinic. Only three LNP Upper House members opposed this Bill, highlighting its positive reception. Although it is a landmark step for all states to legislate safe access zones, other obstacles remain which still prevent many individuals from accessing safe abortions. Pervasive stigma, criminalisation in certain states, and other barriers mean there remains significant work to be done. However, today we take comfort in this powerful win.

Sexism in the campus left

by Kimmy Dibben, with contributions from many currently and formerly involved in left-wing organising

CW: Sexual violence, abuse

Disclaimer: This piece is written as a constructive critique of the leftist spaces I am a part of and adjacent to. My examples draw mainly from my own political spaces, but these criticisms encapsulate all left-wing spaces on campus. I write this in the hopes of better experiences for Women's Officers and women in the left after me. I also recognise that this article is unfortunately one of many, continuing an ongoing critique.

As proven in multiple high-profile cases in Federal and State Parliament this year, sexual violence and sexism are rife in politics. This is not limited to right-wing political organisations, as was shown in the Greens case in 2018. Nor is it limited to political parties. We need not look further than our very own campus to recognise that under the progressive veneer of left-wing activist organisations are structural issues of sexism, misogyny, gendered labour and abuse. There is not one such organisation on USyd's campus that is free of this. Imperialist, sexist, racist and classist structures are replicated in spaces where we organise against them, and reconstitute themselves endlessly in individual interactions by default.

Misogyny runs perniciously throughout the campus left. One woman who has been isolated and socially expelled by such a culture, writes that misogyny in the left manifests as "everything from unequal distributions of labour to the full blown espousing of Incel ideological world views. It became clear that even multi-year membership within an ostensibly progressive faction on campus could fail to meaningfully circumvent a lifetime of learned sexism as well as classism, an inherent and tragic outcome of elite private boys school education."

Leftist men of higher social capital have used such advantage to get away with everything from publicly belittling and casting doubt against female activists' abilities, to sexual coercion preyed upon younger, less experienced women. Known rapists and abusers are routinely invited to parties and social events, their victims the ones left off the invite list while other members still invited remain silent and complicit. Anonymous contributors recount bystanders who follow abusers to parties to 'keep an eye on them', afraid of their behaviour towards women in private, all the while bolstering their character in public.

One reason why abusive behavior, including sexual violence, is ubiquitous amongst the campus left is the desperate desire of these groups to protect their external reputation. With groups jockeying for support in elections and factionally-driven campaigns alike, what emerges within the group is a culture of unaddressed conflict, 'justified' as to keep the faction united. Even more galling is the insinuation that the 'negative peace' created is in service of the greater good of activism, rather than to protect the reputation of a faction and its most prominent figureheads. The glamourising and self-important lens through which each group sees itself makes it easy for the safety and respect of activist women and people of colour to be overlooked. The cycles of silence created force such people to face the difficult decision of ignoring their own grievances and remaining in a space that is hostile to them, or leaving their own faction, leaving them without personal and political support, and in most cases, pushing them out of activity. The uneasy silence around abusive behaviour have caused dozens of women to ignore their own grievances, disengage, or leave altogether.

I spoke to one survivor whom had chosen leaving altogether:

"Despite there being a general knowledge amongst our peers of the hurt that my ex had caused, there seemed to be no precedent to address it, at least from my perspective. Everywhere I turned, I saw the people I was looking up to, seemingly complicit in his behaviour, which only seemed to be continuing on its steady trajectory.

I was aware of the fact that there were grievance processes in place to address issues such as these. However, no matter how much I longed to feel as if I could call the space my own, it had gotten to the point where I did not feel as if there could be any possible outcome to the accountability process that would make this my reality. Too much time had passed, too much more had happened, I felt that I had no right to still be hurting, no right to disrupt the bonds and allyships that had formed long before I entered the scene. I believed then that I was being shown that it was not the right place for me if I could not move past this history. I decided to leave the space.

There is something so deeply rotten about this culture within the left. It is not a new story, for activist spaces - supposedly 'safe' spaces - to be the very ones which turn a blind eye to the pain being inflicted by their own members, to the misogynistic manipulation, abuse, and sexual violence that runs deep within its core. The cracks have always been there in the facade - it's past time that we gutted this rotten culture, and lay a new foundation of genuine accountability, and radical healing for survivors."

It is no coincidence that there is both a lack of leftist men at feminist rallies and a structural issue of sexism in leftist organising. I can count on one hand the number of male comrades that turn up to consent workshops, rallies against sexual violence on campus, or other WoCo events. Men don't run grievance processes, men don't check in on struggling comrades, men don't step in when other men make sexist remarks. This is un-glamorous, unseen, difficult work done largely by women and non-binary people; not always because we want to, but because it otherwise won't be done at all. When men do take this work on, it is after our own pleading and head-kicking. In these rare instances it is lauded as exceptional and a reflection of good character, though not when women or non-binary people do it.

Men do not show up in the streets, and they do not show up interpersonally. The disparity between praxis and one's so-called politics is most obvious when it comes to men in the left not proving the anti-sexism they claim to believe in. It takes constant and active self- reflection to unlearn ingrained sexist behaviour - yes, even from leftists. Anti-sexism is not just a political identity, but a continuous call to action. These left-wing spaces can hardly claim such a title if the basic tenets of feminism are ignored.

Feminist organising on campus is not respected, nor are the Women's Officers who lead it. Our specialised skills and knowledge in the intricacies of trauma, gendered violence, and feminist activism holds little value in the left. This has to change. Our specific knowledge and experiences are irreplaceable. Our work has spanned decades and positively impacted the lives of thousands of students. However, factional support has never been extended to women's officers the way it has to many other major SRC positions. This is not unique to my term, but a trend that Women's Officers before me can attest to.

What more do we need to do to gain respect? No other group or person on campus is criticised from the right and management quite like the Women's Officers. Women's Officers over the years have received countless disclosures of sexual violence, been doxxed by right-wing extremists, spat on and swung at by Nazis, threatened with violence and death, gone through many misconduct processes, suspended and expelled from campus, and rolled from their position by Liberals (only to continue to convene WoCo unpaid all year). This would be hard enough but the difficulty and isolation of this position is magnified by the attitude of the Left. Looking at recent history alone, Women's Officers have been publicly belittled for making political critiques, have had their anti-sexual violence work deemed 'irrelevant' to 'more important' campaigns, and been met consistently with apathy when asking for help combatting direct far-right violence. This position is incredibly difficult and isolating, and needs more support from the comrades around us.

Many have contributed directly to this article, all remaining anonymous for their own wellbeing. However, I have truly compiled this article from months and years of more conversations than I can count, over many dinner tables, at the back of bars, after WoCo meetings, in hushed tones, in the raised voice of frustration, and through teary eyes. These are not just my encounters, but those of so many of us. I thank every person brave enough to share these experiences.

I believe mass organising of the student left which prioritises feminist liberation is possible, if only the feminists leading it are respected and supported like they deserve. This week, both Women's Officers will leave our faction due to structural sexism, just as the Education Officer, Maddie Clark, left hers for the same reason only months ago. I hope this article does not spur gossip, but sparks deep reflection amongst the campus left. I hope my comrades look around and reckon with the behaviour of their male comrades, notice the lack of female comrades — particularly women of colour and working class women — and ask themselves how their very own behaviour is impeding, or even opposing, the liberatory work we aim to do. Because without accountability, harm will only continue to shatter community, and "without community there is no liberation".

Academic housework

the gendered effects of precarity

***Claire Ollivain** speaks to staff about how precarious employment exacerbates other aspects of oppression.*

Art by Claire Ollivain

Despite the lengths management will go to cover up their unscrupulous tracks — even weaponising the language of feminist theory against protestors — it is no secret that exploitation is built into the bedrock of the corporate university business model. From the existence of elite colleges to inequity in staffing, universities reproduce the gender, racial and class oppressions of wider society. In the face of ever-decreasing federal government funding, universities have become over-reliant on exorbitant international student fees for revenue, while maintaining an underclass of precariously employed workers to reduce expenses. Often overlooked is how gender intersects with precarity in this exploitative system, to the effect of what philosopher Robin Zheng calls 'academic housework.'

The pandemic has laid bare the structural inequalities of capitalism; every step of the way workers have been forced to suffer enormous financial stress at the hands of the ruling class. Women, who are overrepresented in casual and part-time work, have been more likely to lose their jobs as a result of COVID. Because 58% of workers in Australian universities are women, massive nation-wide job losses have had disproportionate gendered effects. The disciplines most targeted in austerity measures have also been the 'feminised' ones, with humanities departments under particular threat. Unsurprisingly, analysis of publications shows that the number of research articles written by women has declined since COVID, which will have long-term ramifications on the progression of their careers.

Precarity is a feminist issue. The mass casualisation of university staff over the past two decades has subjected thousands of women to unlivable conditions with no job security, systemic underpayment, and few employment rights. This is especially true in a workforce where women make up the majority and are more likely to be concentrated in lower classified positions. At the University of Sydney, almost 55 percent of casual staff and almost 61 percent of fixed-term staff are women. Even at universities where the majority of casuals are not women, precarity still has specific gendered effects. These negative impacts are even further compounded for women of colour, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, disabled women and working-class women.

Sharlene Leroy-Dyer, Chair of the NTEU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Committee, spent 18 years in precarious employment at universities before gaining a full-time ongoing position. She tells me she has heard from numerous casually-employed Aboriginal women who are no longer being offered work in the wake of COVID, as well as full-time staff who were made redundant, which came at the loss of Indigenous specific programs: "[This has] had a real impact for our families and in our communities. Loss of income means there is less money for families, to put food on the table, and to pay bills, to assist our communities and make us more welfare dependent." She believes that by refusing universities Jobkeeper, the government has widened the disadvantage that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face.

Wage theft is embedded in the university model, a standard practice that exploits the most vulnerable workers by failing to pay them for their time. The USyd Casual's Network's *The Tip of the Iceberg* report provided evidence that mass underpayment of precarious workers disproportionately affects women. On average, women had 1.5 times the amount of wages stolen compared to men, and were underpaid at a higher rate. Georgia Carr, a casual staff member who co-authored the report, tells me that "being insecurely employed contributes to and exacerbates all of the usual issues faced by women at work: the gender pay gap, greater employment instability, unequal superannuation, unequal opportunities for promotion and more." She fears that university managements will wind back these hostile conditions even further in enterprise bargaining.

High up on the list of staff's demands for the next Enterprise Agreement at the University of Sydney is an end to casualisation itself and improved access to leave for precarious workers. The absence of *paid* parental, sick and domestic violence leave for casual staff means that — for those who cannot afford to miss a week's pay — they will choose to work even when it is unsafe for their wellbeing. Being denied this right is exploitative and dehumanising for all, but the impacts are felt disproportionately by "women and non-cismen [who] are more likely to be primary carers, are more likely to be victims of domestic violence and are over-represented in casual work," Georgia tells me. "As long as those things continue to be true, disadvantaging casual workers will be synonymous with disadvantaging women."

Domestic violence cases have spiked globally since the pandemic, with victim-survivors forced to spend more time with their abusers, increased situational stressors and decreased social avenues to seek help. Most at risk are women with disabilities, Indigenous women, young women and women experiencing financial hardship. As we are in lockdown again and patterns of violence and coercive control escalate, it is clear that access to paid domestic violence leave is critical for *all* university workers.

Furthermore, the financial insecurity of precarious employment, particularly for PhD students, often coincides with a time in life where many people want to have children. This is the case for Georgia, who tells me she can't imagine she'll find secure work before she wants to have kids. "If I want to stay in academia my only option will be to start a family — a famously stressful and expensive enterprise — while on casual contracts. To land a permanent job I will have to equal or outperform my peers while on shorter contracts with less pay and worse conditions, all while taking unpaid parental leave and raising young child/ren."

Elizabeth Adamczyk, the casual representative at the University of Newcastle, says that as a casual "you're likely to forgo the linear steps in the social conventions you might track your life by: getting married, having a child." In her experience "women are not necessarily disproportionately affected, just differently" based on deep-seated social expectations. For some of Elizabeth's male colleagues, not having job security or being able to 'provide' for their family impacts their identity in a different way: "precarity takes away your ability to feel you are fulfilling those types of norms … It pervades your sense of self."

Another detrimental impact of how gender and precarity intersect is the gender super gap, which is leaving almost half of retired single women in poverty. Research shows that women, who provide unpaid childcare and receive lower salaries, retire with on average 42% less superannuation than men. The NTEU is demanding that casuals have access to equal 17% superannuation, as well as super for staff on unpaid parental leave, to bridge the gender super gap in the education sector. Casual staff member Dani Cotton wants to see not only fair entitlements for precarious workers, but an end to casualisation itself which has meant that "a feminised workforce is being stripped of their rights."

Dani is one of the rank-and-file unionists fighting to enshrine rights for transgender workers in the EA, advocating for a total six weeks of paid gender affirmation/transition leave including social and medical steps. "It would make a very small difference [in expenditure] for the University to agree to this, but for trans people it would make an enormous difference," Dani says. Trans staff at the University have had to take unpaid leave for several months to transition, been forced to dip into their sick leave, or even had to delay affirmative steps for years to save up enough annual leave. "The University likes to put up a 'progress flag' to say it supports trans rights, but we've already seen a senior academic speak to the media dismissing gender transition as 'one of life's challenges,'" Dani says. In this arena, The University of Sydney is lagging behind UNSW and Deakin University, which both provide paid gender transition leave.

In *Precarity is a Feminist Issue: Gender and Contingent Labor in the Academy,* Robin Zheng identifies two ideological myths that distract us from organising against the injustice of precarity: the myth of meritocracy and the myth of work as its own reward. She argues that even while most would not endorse the idea that academia is meritocratic, institutional rankings and benefits granted to permanent staff are felt as merit-based, "cultivat[ing] the implicit notion that better working conditions are to be gained through individual talent and effort — rather than, say, collective bargaining." Casual academics face a highly competitive job market where there are far more candidates worthy of jobs than there are jobs. As a result, "going 'above and beyond' – really just code for performing unpaid work – is a necessary prerequisite," Georgia tells me. The problem is structural rather than a failing of individuals, and it can only be tackled through organised collective resistance.

While we tend to perceive research and teaching as intrinsically gratifying and done out of personal interest, Robin Zheng argues this glosses over the reality that "academics — particularly women — experience considerable stress on the job, due to income insecurity as well as higher workloads imposed by neoliberal measures." Zheng suggests that it is seen as *bad taste* when academics demand better conditions or compensation for doing *something they love.* Tracing the myth of work as its own reward to the gendered division between waged and unwaged labour, she concludes: "growing casualisation means that increasing members of faculty, both male and female, are now subject to the precarious, low-prestige piece-work conditions long endured by women and workers of colour."

It is imperative that students stand in solidarity with staff on the picket line when they go to strike for their rights and for an end to the injustice of casualisation. Our casual tutors work tirelessly to provide us with a quality education, yet are not paid for the majority of the time they spend answering emails, preparing classes, formulating assessment feedback and supporting us with pastoral care. Those who do the core work in higher education are treated as disposable — the first to be dismissed by management when revenues take a hit.

Despite the existence of University initiatives aiming to promote gender equality, its neoliberal practices are fundamentally antagonistic to equality for the most vulnerable women it employs: overworked and exploited precarious workers. We don't want to see women elevated to managerial roles in existing university hierarchies so that they can become the ones exploiting workers. We don't want a seat at the table, we want to break the table by organising from the margins to radically transform how education and knowledge production are done.

"A feminised workforce is being stripped of their rights."

The strike that won a feminist philosophy department

***Maddie Clark** revisits the radical beginnings of gender studies at USyd.*

In June 1974, a small group of feminists and leftist activists took on the historic fight to set up the first women's studies course at the University of Sydney and the second in the country. What began as an administrative fight to implement the course "Women and Philosophy" turned into a month-long strike. The result of which was not only the successful implementation of the course but a second Philosophy Department that was fully autonomous and under the democratic control of students and staff. As student activists today, looking at the success of the strike can give us hope and inspiration for what collective action can achieve.

From the mid 1960s, universities in Australia followed the global trend of rapid expansion. Instead of exclusively educating the country's elite, universities opened up to middle and working class students. Although many of these students embraced the counterculture of the post-war era, the ivory tower remained a pillar of conservatism and chauvinism. Students filled lecture halls to capacity but were unsatisfied by the teaching content, particularly as issues such as the anti-Vietnam War movement began to take hold and student left wing clubs became hubs of activism and resistance. Students also began to criticise the role of universities as "degree factories" where education was, and continues to be, transactional and designed to produce productive workers. Academics and students alike began revolting and pushing through alternative forms of education. Occupations, free lectures, and protests for the formal introduction of new courses were all methods to change what was the stifling nature of university education.

In the US, the fight for radical education merged with the Women's Liberation Movement as women began criticising how university was a male dominated space - both physically and academically. Although women were entering university in significant numbers, women who were academics were few and far between and there were hardly any courses, let alone studies, that prioritised the experience and oppression faced by women. After a year of intense organising, the first women's studies program was established in 1970 at San Diego State College, and this campaign spearheaded the fight for women's studies courses around the world. During the early years, setting up these courses and departments took extremely radical action. Many courses were taught in unofficial ways before they became formalised - with faculty members often going without pay to teach students and non-student community members alike.

Taking inspiration from these events, Flinders University became the first university in Australia to follow suit, and in 1972 they began the process of setting up a women's studies course under the Philosophy Department. This course would be self-managed, group-assessed, open to members of the community, and with an emphasis on practical knowledge and activism. One of the feminist academics involved in this fight, Jean Curthoys, moved to Sydney University the year after and so began the process of replicating the success of the course there.

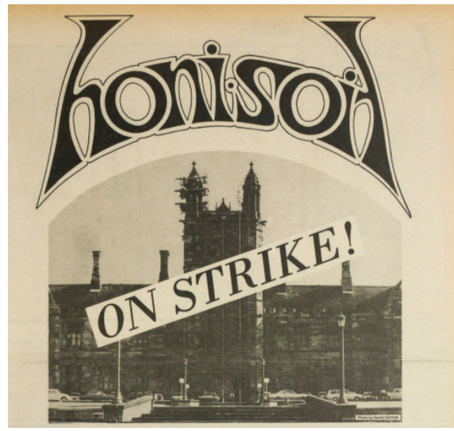
It's worth noting how revolutionary these actions were. The Women's Liberation movement had only just arrived in Australia. With groups setting up in 1969 and 1970, their work focused on spreading awareness and coming to theoretical conclusions on women's oppression. It was also a time in the movement where the women involved had come from other activist groups and left wing spaces and so tied their experience of oppression to other forms of injustice. Setting up these courses was also a fight to rethink education, to get rid of the divide between students and teachers, and to give education a practical grounding.

At USyd, management were failing in their attempts to stifle their students' radicalism. Although the "Women and Philosophy" course proposal was accepted to be taught under the Philosophy Faculty by faculty members, the head of the Department, Professor David Armstrong, refused. In a meeting he presented a detailed list of objections to the course and questioned the validity of the course in the university and in the Department of Philosophy.

Students did not give up easily. On June 28th, a general meeting of over 300 students and staff gathered in the Quad to pass a motion in favour of Jean Curthoys and another academic Elizabeth Jacka teaching the course "Philosophy of Feminist Thought". This group invaded a private meeting of the highest decision-making body at the University, the Professorial Board, and presented the motion and a list of hundreds of petition signatures for the course. While this didn't sway the Board's decision, it did spur on another General Meeting to decide whether or not to strike.

It was voted two to one that a general strike of unlimited duration would take place until the Professorial Board accepted the course. A month-long strike erupted. Numerous staff and students in Philosophy were the first to strike but were quickly joined by other departments, including Italian, Government, Fine Arts and History. Activists picketed classes that were not on strike. A 'Women's Embassy' was set up in the quadrangle and was used to talk to and leaflet passing students. As the weeks passed, the strike received media attention and amassed more support.

The Builders Labourers Federation banned all work on construction on campus, and Jack Mundey declared that building would only resume when the "university altered its sexist policies." The Clothing Trades Union and the Shop Assistants Union — both female dominated unions — gave their support and highlighted the importance of launching women's studies courses. Although feminists spearheaded the fight, other left groups and particularly socialists gave support. This reflected the solidarity that was present between left groups during this time. It also reflected how this fight was not only about setting up a course that discussed feminism, but also for student democracy in education.



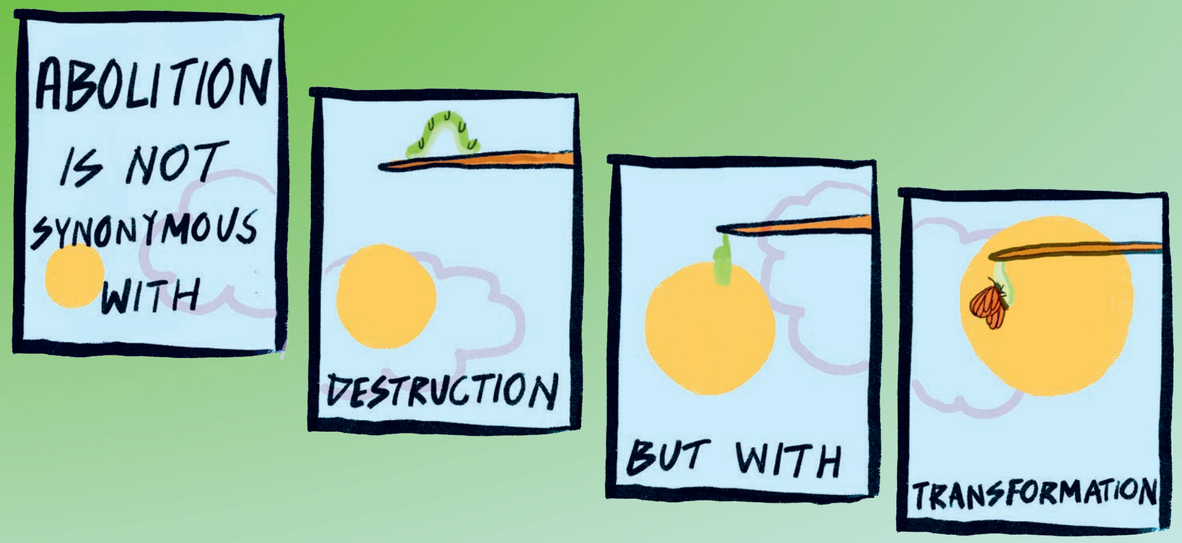
The strike was an absolute success; the protestors won not only the implementation of the course, but additionally the splitting of the Department of Philosophy into two departments. The Department of General Philosophy was born, departing from the cultures and practices of the pre-existing Department of Traditional and Modern Philosophy. It's not surprising that enrolments to the second Department tripled those of the first. Not only did the course teach feminist subjects, but it also strove to be fully democratic. Both staff and students had the right to speak and vote on matters of course content, assessment and appointments. Meetings of up to 500 students were not unheard of, and exams were eliminated. In some subjects, students even assessed themselves.

Because of the democratic nature of the course, there were many highly charged debates about what the course should teach and what it should represent. In a paper reflecting on the experience, Jean Curthoys explains how after students won, the department and their different political currents had opposing ideas of how it should progress. Many wanted to push the fight to democratise the university into other departments, while others wanted to focus on consolidating their efforts. This reflects the split of the Women's Liberation Movement itself, as it would soon rebrand as the Women's Movement and fight to win professional equality for some at the expense of liberation for all. Regardless of the issues the department had, the success of the strike cannot be denied. It also correlated with other wins in women's studies which would proliferate by the 1980s.

In the context of 2021 and unprecedented attacks on university's staff members and arts courses, this 1974 strike is illustrative of what student power can achieve. Through collective action, it is entirely possible to transform and reclaim education for the majority.


Elizabeth Jacka and Jean Curthoys.


Departmental meetings held in the quad voted overwhelmingly to support the strike.



ABOLITION IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH DESTRUCTION, BUT WITH TRANSFORMATION

Art by Amelia Mertha

In this introduction to the concept, abolition is a process, writes ***Jazz Breen.***

I would like to preface this article with an acknowledgement that the concepts contained within this text are the result of a continued accumulation of knowledge over decades, with key contributors being predominantly Black women and others at the coalface of carceral violence. Abolition is a process of change and transformation, and can not be attributed to one person nor claim to be a 'finished' concept.
I could not possibly hope to fully explain abolition within this short article, so I have listed a number of key abolitionist texts at the end which I recommend as further reading.

The rise of the Black Lives Matter movement on a global scale in 2020 brought with it increasingly popular calls to 'defund the police' and 'abolish the prison industrial complex'. Abolitionists, activists and hyper-policed communities around the world welcomed this, as the broader public openly discussed the ideas of abolition for the first time. Within Australia, Indigenous activists organised some of the largest demonstrations against police brutality in decades, highlighting that over 470 Indigenous people have died in custody since 1991. However, as is natural with social change, increased discussion of new topics brings about misleading information and active opposition. This article is an attempt to counter this by providing an explanation of the core ideas of abolition.

What is abolition?
The basic premise of abolition is that the use of carceral control and surveillance as a way to address deeply ingrained and often systemic social issues is not only inadequate, but exacerbates violence and harm. The abolitionist argument is that resources must instead be re-allocated towards dismantling systemic sources of violence and harm within society; poverty, racism, patriarchy, ableism, and all other forms of structural inequality. Abolition is not an argument for ignoring social unrest and violence. It is an argument for addressing the root causes of these issues. Rather than punishing people for systemic processes which impact their environmental circumstances, we need to radically transform the negative environmental circumstances which lead to social unrest and harm. Abolition means not only abolishing the existence of prisons and police, but developing processes of transformative justice, and creating the environmental conditions to allow communities to thrive.

The systemic issues acknowledged by abolition are rooted within the violent processes of colonialism, capitalism and imperialism, and thus prison abolition is inherently anti-colonial, anti-capitalist and anti-imperial. This means acknowledging how states control and police marginalised groups while neglecting to provide adequate resources to sustain healthy and safe environments. It also means acknowledging the power imbalances which see white Western cultural hegemony undermine the importance and value of non-Western ways of understanding health, justice and community.

Abolitionist thinking also acknowledges that those who commit what is seen as crime — violent, non-violent and everything in between — are not experiencing violence or injustice for the first time when they commit these crimes. Experiences of trauma, poverty, and exploitation are not simply fixed by locking up those who react negatively within their environmental circumstances. The underlying causes of violence and harm do not disappear once someone has been relocated into a prison cell. Nor does placing someone in prison undo what has happened, or necessarily stop it from happening again. Considering that 46% of Australian prisoners return to prison within two years of being released, it is clear that the current system does not adequately end cycles of violence and harm. What is needed instead is a response which addresses the underlying causes of crime and social unrest. Abolition calls for a transition away from a societal preference for punishment before prevention and transformative justice.

Police, prisons and other forms of carceral control are tools of the state, and work for those who run it

Why not reform?
Alongside calls for the abolition of prisons and police have been calls for carceral reform, for diversity training, improved surveillance of police actions and tighter restrictions on the extent of allowable force. If the goal was to fix a broken system then these might be good ideas, because reform is used when something is broken and can be incrementally fixed in order to work 'properly'. But the carceral system is not a 'broken' system, it is working in the exact way it was set up to work; to control and police the citizens of a state to act in the interests of the state. Under capitalism, and especially within colonial states, this means the hyper-policing of Bla(c)k, brown, disabled and poor bodies to conform to a system which exploits them. Even if police themselves were completely unbiased and removed from omnipresent racist, ableist and patriarchal attitudes (which is not possible), they would still exist as an arm of the state which works to uphold laws to protect economic interests and the ever-increasing profits of capitalists.

The carceral system is intrinsically tied to the processes of capitalism and colonialism, with the first police forces invented to serve the interests of slave owners and capitalist bosses. Prisons today still work in the same way, with the existence of highly profitable private prisons showing just how linked capitalism is with carceral control. Police, prisons and other forms of carceral control are tools of the state, and work for those who run it; capitalists who rely on exploitation, such as prison labour, to gain profits. It is for this reason that we can not simply 'reform' the police force, the state will always work to uphold market interests, and the threat of carceral control is necessary for continued capitalist exploitation.

No amount of diversity training will stop police officers arresting Indigenous activists fighting against mining companies, because the police force will always serve the interests of the capitalist state, and the state will always serve the interests of the market. No amount of surveillance of the actions of police would stop bosses legally using the state to crush union strikes for conditions and pay. The police, and subsequently prisons, do not and will never work for anyone but the state and the capitalists who run it, and no amount of reform can change this.

But what about justice?
The absence of prisons is not the absence of accountability when harm occurs. It is necessary that responses to harm do not continue cycles of violence by perpetrating further harm. The reality of the carceral system is that it does not reduce harm; rather, prisons are sites of state-enacted violence, used in place of providing real care to those who need it. Those who enter the carceral system and are lucky enough to leave bring with them higher levels of lifelong poverty, increased levels of mental illness and suicidality, and poor physical health. Prisons are not places of safety, support and rehabilitation.

Those with experiences of addiction will not find the rehabilitation they need within a prison cell. Someone with a history of childhood trauma will not find the mental health support they need within a prison cell. Instead of providing the care needed by people struggling, prisons punish in the name of deterrence away from what is defined as crime, but deterrence through fear does not end the causes of social unrest.

Prisons are seen as the 'answer' to issues faced by systematically marginalised groups, while medical care, therapy and access to support is the answer for those with higher levels of privilege. The difference between receiving adequate care and being placed into a prison cell is directly related to your class and racial identity.

But what about violent crime?
One of the most common rebuttals to the ideas of abolition is the need to address domestic violence, sexual assault and violent crime. This is a fair point, there is absolutely a need to address the existence of these acts within society. However, how does prison stop these acts of violence from being committed? Does the existence of prisons undermine the existence of the patriarchy? Does the threat of jail time meaningfully impact the actions of perpetrators of domestic violence? When conviction rates are so low and victims are rarely able to achieve justice within courts, should we not be looking towards addressing these crimes at their root cause? Similarly, does the threat of jail time stop someone who is starving from jumping someone to steal their wallet? Clearly these acts are still committed, despite the existence of prisons. The only way to stop these actions is to end the circumstances which lead to them: to end poverty, destroy patriarchal gender dynamics and ultimately create the circumstances where these acts do not occur. It is therefore imperative that resources are allocated into initiatives which seek to address, and eventually end the existence of these violent acts, and that money is not simply spent on increasing prison capacities for when crimes are eventually committed.

Practical steps forward
While the goals of abolition: to dismantle prisons, abolish police and radically transform society in the process may seem impossibly large, this does not mean that small yet tangible steps cannot be taken to get there. Abolitionists work not only to undermine the carceral system, but also all facets of systemic racism, patriarchy, and capitalist exploitation. Abolitionists seek not only to destroy the systems, institutions, and laws which cause harm, but also to build alternatives which empower and transform individuals and communities. This means taking actions such as fighting for an increase in welfare support, secure housing, access to education, and a prioritisation of culturally specific and community run services.

Abolition is a process, and is something that we must constantly work to further and improve. It is something that we can work towards every day, through the way we interact with others, engage within our own communities and involve ourselves in social movements. In the process of achieving abolitionist goals we need to build new ways of engaging with the world, on every level of social interaction. The social relationships which exist to shape the societies we live in are enacted by people, and thus can be changed by people. The way things are now is not simply the natural state of things, and it has not always been this way. In order to achieve the just and fair world abolition calls for we need to restructure society in a revolutionary way, and nothing less than the destruction of capitalism, patriarchy and systemic racism will get us there.

Resources
Angela Davis | Are Prisons Obsolete? | YouTube: "Angela Davis: Abolishing police is not just about dismantling"
Ruth Wilson Gilmore and James Kilgore - "The Case for Abolition" (online article)
Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha and Ejeris Dixon | *Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement*
Mariame Kaba | *We Do This 'til We Free Us*

IN DEFENSE OF MUTUAL AID

Words by Kimmy Dibben and Melissa Sukkarieh

Art by Alev Saracoglu

"Survival work, when done alongside social movement demands for transformative change, is called mutual aid." - Dean Spade

As quoted from his book *Mutual Aid,* Spade defines mutual aid as the culmination of survival and revolutionary work. It is political praxis: the '*doing*' of leftist ideology. It is the making of an alternative to capitalism; or, rather, to return to the ways of communal living that predate colonialism and capitalism.

Recently, mutual aid has come under scrutiny, with critics taking issue with it as a concept, those who support it, and individuals and organisations who claim to practice it. Simultaneously, mutual aid has become an urgent need within our communities due to the recent COVID-19 lockdown that has left many already financially precarious people unable to support themselves. Working class people across so-called 'Australia' are struggling to survive due to deeply insufficient structural support from the state. For those of us engaging in this work, it is now, more than ever, that the value of mutual aid is clear in bettering the conditions and centering the experience of the working class.

The recent criticism from Black Flag and Socialist Alternative alike have argued that mutual aid is not 'radical enough,' cannot see the difference between mutual aid and charity, and do not understand the aim of mutual aid to itself become obsolete. It is one thing to theorise a better world, but the actions of mutual aid groups are creating that new world as we speak. To discredit the work of mutual aid is to discredit the importance of working class power. Without it, the revolution will be nothing but an idea tossed around over the coffee tables of rich, white armchair leftists.

Mutual aid is the *action* of anticapitalism. It is about "meeting people's needs and mobilising them for resistance" (Spade, 2020). Mutual aid projects don't aim to just fill in the gaps of government or private aid and charity, but to work against, rather than with, the state to more directly address the immediate and structural needs of the working class. These projects recognise that the most marginalised peoples cannot access charity-style services that operate on a baseline of 'deservingness,' as if all people don't deserve access to their basic needs and joy. Charity models of aid focus too narrowly on the individual, as to continue the status-quo of capitalism. The charity model uses only short-term, band-aid solutions, and gaslights people in crisis by encouraging them to believe that structural issues are their fault, and that only the 'more fortunate' can save them. Mutual aid, on the other hand, aims to meet one's immediate needs (e.g. giving a hungry person food), recognise why these needs have not been met (e.g. stark economic inequality, money as a barrier to food access), and use this as an entry point to involve someone in the greater movement for liberation.

Ideals of community, caretaking, and cooperation over individualism, profit, and meritocracy are central to mutual aid. These aren't simple, individual, apolitical acts of compassion. Central to anarchism, prison abolition, and anticapitalism is building communities autonomous from the state. Mutual aid builds community, and enables people to engage in struggle. Capitalism purposefully restricts people from engaging in liberation by forcing the working class to spend so much of their time simply trying to survive. One is both materially poor and time-poor. This also isolates one from the wider community.

Mutual aid alleviates this immediate struggle, enabling one to connect with a community and engage in wider struggle. This alleviation is crucial to bringing working class people to the centre of liberation. People cannot organise if they cannot meet their basic needs, or are alienated from community.

Caretaking is central to feminist organising and demands. Many have said that 'the revolution starts at home,' and feminists are at the centre of that sentiment. Feminists for a long time have recognised that you cannot combat sexual violence, for example, without supporting survivors' experiencing trauma in the immediate present. Nor is it foreign to feminists to have their organising work depoliticised and undervalued, for it is often the menial, mundane, unglamorous work that is done by women in the left. Mutual aid is not just an essential part of political praxis, but to feminist organising specifically.

An example of mutual aid close to the hearts of many WoCo members is the abortion clinic escort project. In 2018, WoCo set up a regular weekly schedule of members and friends of members to stand together outside the Devonshire Street abortion clinic, escorting people from their cars or down the street to their appointments, safely getting them past the heckling of religious pro-lifers. We would stand for hours, operating for as many of the clinic's opening hours as we could manage. The collective at the time was small, with only a few dedicated people usually returning day after day, week after week. Though critics of mutual aid may have seen this as menial, it was a crucial part of the Safe Access Zones campaign. Whilst the work was tiring, it meant people who needed abortions urgently could access them without being pushed into fake pro-life 'crisis centres' or guilted out of a personal choice during a vulnerable time. The work met the immediate needs of people needing abortion, and was supported by WoCo's work simultaneously fighting for Safe Access Zones as a structural response to permanently protect patients visiting clinics.

As we have defined mutual aid — as a short term solution addressing marginalised peoples' present reality — clinic escorting was a mutual aid project. It worked to achieve greater change in reproductive justice — including Safe Access Zones and the decriminalisation of abortion — whilst recognising the immediate need to access safe abortions. Through the dual approach of addressing immediate needs and fighting for broader demands, WoCo brought new people into the movement and held the experiences of those struggling the most at the forefront of our long-term goals. Safe Access Zones were instated later that year and abortion was decriminalised in NSW the following year. This short term, laborious and intensive work was not done in isolation, but as part of a broader strategy to achieve the greater goal of safe abortion access. This work continues through community abortion funds to ensure that people can pay for the abortions they need now, whilst we continue to work towards the long term goal of free, safe, and accessible abortions for all.

Another example is the Black Panther Party's survival programs which politically engaged communities through mutual aid. The survival programs were the politics of the party put into action. The Panthers' ten point program demanded reparations, the destruction of the capitalist system, health care, radical education, and access to basic necessities. These radical demands were reflected in the way the party aimed to serve their communities with their whole 'body and soul,' recognising the need for survival pending revolution.

Survival programs were an active and communal response to racial and class injustice. These programs provided meals, education, medical services and legal advice. The Panthers' Free Breakfast for Children Program is especially noteworthy in establishing a blueprint for current mutual aid projects, at its peak feeding tens of thousands of children before school daily. Feeding children was recognised as liberation in practice, "black children who go to school hungry are organised into poverty"(Cleaver, 2006). Not only did this act address the instant need for food and nutrition in black communities, but it also contributed to the popularity of the party and its militant anti-state, anti-capitalist, and pro-black liberation politics.

The Panthers' various survival programs addressed the need of survival while actively building community and working towards liberation. Setting up these mutual aid structures meant that people were able to turn to their communities when failed by the state. There is a shift in power dynamics when individuals are able to turn to their comrades and understand they won't go hungry, unsheltered, or uncared for. This dynamic works against the exploitative nature of capitalism where you rely on your exploitation for survival, and is the reason these survival programs meant increased support of the party's radical politics.

Mutual aid will always be political. Empowering and caring for your community will always be radical, as it acts in direct opposition to the exploitative and individualistic nature of capitalism. One of the many differences between charity and mutual aid is that mutual aid acts in a two-pronged approach to meet one's immediate needs and fight for a structural response, rather than offering only an individual bandaid response. Bail, for example, is a driver of mass incarceration, and the inability to make bail means more people in prisons and more people forced to plead guilty to avoid jail time. Bail funds, such as the one run by Sisters Inside, acknowledge the violent systems disproportionately keeping Indigenous women within the prison system, and the violence of the prison system itself. While the goal of these funds is abolition, we can't deny the need for services that keep women out of the prison systems and within their communities and families. Many women who receive bail are then brought into the greater collective fight towards abolition. These bail fund projects acknowledge that the structures that create prisons and the need for bail funds should not exist, and in this sense they aim to become obsolete, whilst also recognising an immediate need.

Mutual aid and feminist organising alike have always been grounded in material conditions, as much as they both have been over-critizised, depoliticised, and undervalued for such. What is unclear is how meeting the immediate needs of the working class and enabling them to engage in greater struggle is in opposition to any kind of leftist ideology. The revolution cannot happen if the working class dies of hunger, or of a backyard abortion — for what is a revolution without those most affected by capitalist exploitation? We do not need anything from the theorybros, armchair leftists, and those generally unaffected by the violence of capitalism, except your solidarity. And yes, at times, your money.

AI AND CODIFIED SEXISM

***Clara Suki** on challenging biased algorithms.*

In 2015, software engineer Jacky Alciné drew attention to the fact that Google Photos' image-identifying algorithm classified him and his black friends as "gorillas". Google was "appalled" at its mistake and promised to rectify the issue. However, more than two years later, WIRED investigated whether any fixes had been made and instead found that Google had censored searches for "gorilla", "chimp" and "monkey". It is difficult to imagine how an internationally leading corporation in commercial artificial intelligence has been unable to fix this error. This unfortunate situation emphasises the ease and scale at which AI codifies discrimination.

As technology is built by humans, it should come as no surprise that artificial intelligence systems inherit our biases. With most black box AI systems being trained with biased data, it is clear that the growing use of AI programming can threaten the equality that women worldwide have worked so hard towards. Essentially, algorithms that learn from discriminatory data will exhibit these same patterns in outputs.

If there is sexism embedded within data, AI systems will not only display the same prejudice in their output, but also amplify these patterns of oppression with their computational powers. As most tech entrepreneurs, programmers and computer scientists are men and/or white, it is no surprise that women, particularly women of colour, are left marginalised in datasets. For example, according to Caroline Perez, a British feminist journalist and activist, seatbelts, headrests and airbags in cars have been designed using data that refers to male physicality, leaving women 47% more likely to be seriously injured and 17% more likely to die than a man in a similar accident. Similarly, with the use of biased AI in facial recognition systems, resume hiring tools and the consumer credit industry, outputs only reinforce the gender bias in society. It is also important to note that AI systems are optimised for efficiency and that being 'antisexist' and 'antiracist' is extremely difficult to code for, and more importantly, in the well-oiled machine of capitalism, unprofitable.

This issue of codified inequality has also come to the attention of cyberfeminists such as Joy Buolamwini, a computer scientist and digital activist. Buolamwini's MIT-based research brought attention to racial and gender bias in AI services used by mega corporations such as IBM, Amazon and Microsoft. More specifically, she found that the input of various facial recognition algorithms consisted of images that were 80% white persons and 75% male. As a result, the system had a high accuracy of 99% in correctly recognising male faces. Black women, however, were only recognised 65% of the time. This study highlights the ingrained and complex nature of bias within AI. It becomes clear that focusing only on gender is not likely to address other intersectionality biases that it is so closely intertwined with.

Fortunately, all is not lost. There are certain measures that we must take in order to limit the prejudice that can emerge. First, Buolamwini suggests creating more inclusive coding practices. According to the World Economic Forum, only 22% of AI professionals are women. Equality and accessibility is important — those who code will determine just how effective an algorithm is, and more importantly, who it works best for. Having a diverse team that is able to check each other's blind spots, and that is dedicated to breaking cycles of oppression, is crucial, especially if we are to change the current trajectory of AI bias.

If there is sexism embedded within data, AI systems will not only display the same prejudice in their output, but also amplify these patterns of oppression with their computational powers.

The next step involves considering how we code; what data scientist and author of *Weapons of Math Destruction* Cathy O'Neil calls a data integrity check. This ensures that context is taken into account and unbalanced data sets are not used, preventing AI from widening the gender gap. Let us take Amazon's recruiting tool as an example. The system was designed to use AI to find the best job candidates, giving resumes a rating ranging from one to five stars. Using data from past patterns of resumes submitted to Amazon and which were successful sounded like reasonable data to input. However, failing to take into account men's dominance within the tech industry, and perhaps their bias in choosing successful applications, meant that Amazon's system had taught itself a gendered preference and punished resumes that included the word "women's". Thus, a data integrity check involves consciously considering context and how input data, whether it be pictures or previous credit scores or criminal offences, are influenced by ongoing marginalisation within society.

Another issue to address is the definition of success within an AI system. Does the output take into account equality and freedom or is it only optimised for the most efficient and profitable end result? Along with this, O'Neil raises the importance of accuracy. Black box AI systems do not show their internal processes and thus there is little to no accountability for their outputs. It is especially destructive when these results are taken as objective, particularly because they create life-threatening realities for people based on proxies and data that may not even be related. Judges in Idaho and Colorado for example, have resorted to using machine-generated risk scores to determine guide sentencing decisions. This LSI-R model used includes a lengthy questionnaire for prisoners to fill out. Whilst some questions such as, "how many previous convictions have you had?" are directly related to the criminal offence and circumstances of the individual, others such as, "the first time you have been involved with police", are discriminatory towards minority groups, who we know are overpoliced. The inclusion of questions asking about a criminal's upbringing, family or friends are not relevant to the criminal case or sentencing. Unfortunately, this is then used to gauge recidivism risk, which then can create new feedback loops of incarceration, poverty and ultimately raise that same recidivism risk if they ever again encounter the legal system.

The creation of these feedback loops seems obvious, and yet nothing is done to change them. This is simply because there is much money to be made from inequality. It is clear that corporations cannot be trusted to keep themselves in check and thus we see that the role of keeping AI transparent and accountable lies first with us. This is not to say that AI cannot be used for good. Consider the work of Mira Berstein, a mathematician with a PhD from Harvard University. She created an AI model for a non-profit company called Made in a Free World that detects slave labour. Its goal is to help companies detach themselves from slavery-built components in their products and services. The key element here is that the model only points to suspicious places and leaves the rest to human investigators. Then, whatever is discovered comes back to Bernstein so she is able to continuously improve the model with this feedback. What we see here is a good AI model, one which does not overreach and create destructive realities for vulnerable individuals.

Ultimately, we see that there is much progress to be made and that the role of cyberfeminists, data activists, and politically-aware mathematicians within the AI sphere is becoming more and more crucial. The virtual internet world is not the neutral utopia it presents itself as and it is evident that it is inextricably intertwined with the sexist oppression of the physical. Failing to interrogate the biases inscribed within cyberspace only hinders the ability of cyberfeminists to challenge the patriarchy. It is through the web that feminists can continue to connect women from all over the world and work to overcome the male landscape of the physical and the internet.

BUILDING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN PALESTINE

***Kowther Qashou** discusses the importance of building sovereign food systems as a solution to combat food injustice.*

Food insecurity remains a global problem leading to the impoverishment and malnourishment of underserved and disadvantaged communities. This is especially pertinent in the Global South where corporate food industries and neoliberal regimes continue to control land resources and food production, profiting from local agriculture. In Palestine, food injustice is the product of an ongoing relentless Israeli occupation on Palestinian life, land, and economy. Food sovereignty is proffered as a method of achieving food justice as a solution to rising poverty and food insecurity.

The beginnings of the food sovereignty movement were sparked by the struggles of peasant and Indigenous farmers in Central America. Carolyn Sachs describes the key components within food sovereignty as the "right to food, valuing farmers and farmworkers, local production and control, and environmental sustainability." It is inextricably linked to many social justice struggles and is particularly tied to the feminist struggle. Women are disproportionately affected by food insecurity and face undernourishment, constrained access to land, and significantly less pay, despite producing the majority of the world's food. This also frames the issue as one inherently of labour and the apparent gender divide present, however, it does not affect all women, nor does it impact women alone. Disparity trends in food access tend to be more prevalent in regions that have been devastated by colonialism and imperialism and their impacts on local food systems.

Israel's ongoing military occupation over Palestinian land and life has deeply affected the state of food production, strangling the Palestinian economy in the process. Palestinians have been stripped of their own land for the benefit of Israeli use, leading to resource inaccessibility. For example, water shortages occur as a result of Israeli companies who control 85% of the West Bank's water resources, diverting it from Palestinian towns to Israeli settlements. The lack of Palestinian self-determination, human rights violations, and theft of land and resources has resulted in inadequate infrastructure, water shortages, and other such limitations which have made food production difficult to sustain. Prior to the occupation, Palestine had a bustling food industry, producing an array of different crops and produce. Today, the olive industry forms the backbone of much of Palestine's agricultural industry, which still faces obstacles due to the destruction of olive trees by settlers and lack of export markets. Olive trees serve as a significant cultural and political symbol for Palestinians, representing their roots and livelihoods. Additionally, they are a primary source of income for many families. The agricultural sector has also gradually deteriorated over the decades. It contributed 40% of Palestine's economic GDP in 1970, and only contributes less than 3.5% today.

Food injustice in Palestine is an unmitigated humanitarian crisis. Palestinians face mass unemployment due to Israel's restrictions on movement and the ongoing economic crisis which is a key contributor to the area's high food insecurity. 37% of the population currently rely on food aid, and the incapacity to produce food has forced Palestinians to rely on Israeli produce and products. This only reinforces the political and economic cycle of dependence and further restricts self-determination. Earlier this year, at the beginning of June, Palestinians all over the country participated in 'Palestinian Produce Week.' The action aimed to protest the occupation and challenge Israel's economic power and dominance over resources by boycotting Israeli products and supporting Palestinian businesses and Palestinian-grown produce.

Building food sovereignty in Palestine is being attempted through several means, mainly through localisation. Local food production, as a way of keeping Palestinian food traditions alive and as a form of resistance to the occupation, has been termed 'agro-resistance.' In the town of Beit Sahour in Bethlehem, a seed library has been created as a way of preserving local fruits and vegetables, and of providing farmers with the opportunity to borrow and share seeds. Methods to alleviate the impacts of increased urbanisation and land loss have also been developed, such as assisting Palestinians in Gaza to capture rooftop rainwater to counteract shortages and to water gardens. The Ma'an Permaculture Centre trains and educates farmers, providing them with initiatives to grow food for local populations and opportunities to learn innovative farming techniques.

Food sovereignty is inherently interrelated with Indigenous sovereignty. In Australia, Indigenous land rights are in conflict with hyper-capitalist modes of food production and Australia's agricultural industry more broadly. Like Palestine, food injustice in Australia cannot be disconnected from a broader global context of colonialism. Indigenous food sovereignty facilitates 'collective continuance,' which Kyle Whyte describes as "an ecology of humans, non-humans, entities, and landscapes that enable 'adaptation to change.'" Achieving Indigenous food sovereignty requires decolonisation, resisting capitalism and the revival of Indigenous ways of life.

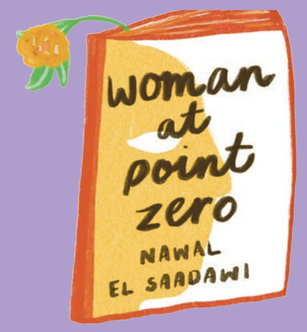
Impending climate catastrophe and its ability to threaten food production further leads us to search for new modes of sustainable agriculture. To achieve food justice, it is imperative that farmers, peasants, and small producers control food production, including distribution. Food sovereignty, particularly amongst Indigenous people living in colonised nations, achieves fair food practices that are in line with the needs and cultures of specific populations. Food sovereignty additionally provides adequate supplies of high quality food and greater food independence, preventing malnourishment. Food sovereignty also allows marginalised populations, especially in the Global South, to maintain culturally-specific forms of food provision, preparation and sustenance.

Food sovereignty has evidently been disrupted by unfettered capitalism, colonialism and the wholesale destruction of traditional ways of life. Tackling food injustice should be at the forefront of all social justice movements as it is inherently inseparable from social justice struggles such as economic, gender, and racial inequality. Achieving food justice is, therefore, essential to achieving justice and equality for marginalised groups.

Art by Amelia Mertha

fiction as a tool of resistance against the reality of womanhood: arab women writers' approach to truth

***Reham Zughair** explores the power of truth and resistance in fiction by Arab women.*



"If you are creative, you must be dissident."
- Nawal El Saadawi

When I sat down at the dinner table with my mum over the sahlab she'd made for dessert, I explained (in my broken Arabic and hand gestures) that I was writing a piece on Arab women writers. Her face instantly lit up as she attempted to help, scrambling to remember all the women writers she'd come across in her life, with Google Translate filling the language barrier between us for words such as *feminism* and *revolutionary*. She consoled my concerns that this piece would be a mere comparison of the freedoms that are offered and to whom they are offered, stating that it is hard to study women in the Middle East as a stand-alone topic without the inclusion of men. This is a case that extends beyond literary regards.

The Arab literary scene, whilst having long overcome the initial barrier of excluding women, remains largely problematic in the sense of liberties and standards of writing offered to women in contrast to those that men freely utilise. Due to the multitude of restrictions placed on Arab women attempting to make their ideas known in the literary scene, the preferred (more so safest) style of writing utilised is fiction. Fiction gives women the ability to tell their stories as the main character, full of the hard truths that they've had to endure, yet in the veil of a fabrication that protects them from the otherwise harsh consequences awaiting them, should they choose to speak it as though it were real.

Nawal El-Saadawi, like many other Arab women who have pursued literary careers, was a living testament of the brilliance and resilience of women in an Arab country, in a role most commonly dominated by men. El-Sadaawi utilised fiction in her published works, of those including *Woman at Point Zero*, in which she uses two main characters in an attempt to re-tell real life scenarios drawn from her own experience. Both the doctor and the prisoner in this novel resemble Nawal's own experiences in life, be it in profession, sexual history and encounter with prison life. The topics that Nawal addresses highlight issues that Arab women must face whether due to culture or religion, or more commonly, both. The characters within this book are carefully handpicked to represent the person that El-Sadaawi was throughout her life, or the one that she needed. Created as a testament to the oppression of a woman in a man's world, these characters live within the pages to tell stories too often left untold. The story mirrors El-Sadaawi's own experiences regarding the genital circumcision of men and women, as Firdaus (the prisoner) explains the reason why she, a prisoner awaiting death row, feels no fear in leaving a world in which she was never meant to thrive in to begin with.

When women attempt to unmask their ideas and publish non-fiction works as social commentaries, as Nawal El-Sadaawi has with *Women and Sex*, the punishments are severe and discriminatory. Her book, banned in several Arab countries, led to her being dismissed from her post as Egypt's director-general of health education due to the uproar that it caused. El-Sadaawi's experience as a physician in rural Egypt, as well as her own experience of being an Arab woman in a conservative society, enabled her to piece together the unmistakable connection between gender and class inequality. *Women and Sex* candidly addresses topics of sex and women's reproductive health, debunking common Arab myths such as a woman's hymen needing to be intact at the time of marriage to symbolise chastity. As these are truths which can shake up a society that benefits from having them kept silent, her medical and scientific input on reproductive health and sex was shunned.

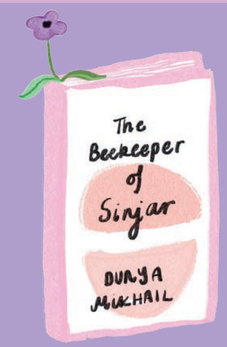
Fiction further enables women to provide a political commentary that they otherwise would not be able to express without their opinions being labelled invalid. Sahar Khalifeh captures the alienation of the Palestinian diaspora through her novel *The Inheritance*. The occupation of Palestinian land by illegal Israeli settlers has led to generations of Indigenous Palestinians dispossessed of their land and identity, leaving many to flee and living a life between two homes. In *The Inheritance*, Sahar places a particular emphasis on the struggle for individual identity and nationhood of Palestinian women through the lense of young Zaynab. Not only is this character brought up in a land far from the homeland that her Father tells her the sweetest stories of, but she also has an American mother, creating further divide in how she perceives herself. As well as touching on existential issues, Khalifeh encapsulates the heavily protected idea of a woman belonging to a man; initially to her father and then, bound by customs and traditions, to her husband. The time during which Khalifeh wrote this was during the Oslo Accords and the Gulf War, providing a woman's perspective on a politically saturated era which was largely determined by men, both Arab and non-Arab alike.

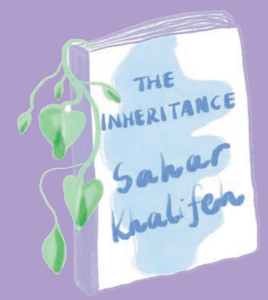
All I had ever known about Iraq, from being born there to fleeing shortly after, during Saddam Hussien's reign, was a war-torn country full of grief. This is directly reflected in the poetry style most commonly attributed to Iraqi writers, that being the third century Qasida; which, according to the Collins dictionary, is defined as "an Arabic poem of *mourning* or *praise*." This particular type of poem was commonly used amongst male Arab poets, aptly chosen due to the conditions in which most (due to non-negotiable conscription during the many wars waged) experienced the height of mourning or praise. This style of poetry has also been utilised by women, shedding light on the shared struggle of war from the frontlines of the home. Dunya Mikhail, best known for her work *The Beekeeper of Sinjar*, reflects on her own writing as a media-labelled 'war poet', a title that Iraqi authors of the time she had been writing in had been assigned to. Mikhail comments on this label, questioning whether Iraq will ever see a time of post-war poets. As war has been a part of an Iraqi's daily life since the last Century, and continues to impact the daily lives of Iraqis today, a post-war era of living becomes hard to imagine, let alone a post-war era of writing. Familiarity as a muse, regardless of the work's contents, enables a collective narrative to be expressed and received by those who have experienced its realities.

Arab women writers give Arab women everywhere an invaluable sense of comfort, knowing that another has the words to articulate their battles, ones often fought in silence and submissiveness. Fiction and non-fiction works alike written by Arab women delve into deeper layers of the human condition incomprehensible to those who have not experienced it firsthand. Whether it be a story on a woman's success or her strife, reading a text with an Arab woman as the main character, one not devised by/for the male gaze, is in itself an act of resistance. Women like Nawal, Sahar and Dunya allow Arab women to dream. They enable them to first be consoled of the burdens that come with being born as an Arab woman, then they allow them to dream. Because when a woman's words can shake up a society that functions on the exploitation of women, the power that comes with those words becomes evident. When a woman's words can comfort mothers who have watched their children die fighting for the preservation of their homelands and their identity, there is a degree of personal experience to those words. When a woman's words are able to stand beside a man's grievances of war, making way for the grieving women whose pain is often dismissed, the void of unspoken apologies and admiration can be filled.

READING LIST

Woman at Point Zero - Nawal El-Sadaawi
Women and Sex - Nawal El-Sadaawi
The Inheritance - Sahar Khalifeh
The Beekeeper of Sinjar - Dunya Mikhail
Our Women on the Ground - Zahra Hankir
We Wrote in Symbols - Elif Shafak
Silence is a Sense - Layla Alammar
Women of Sand and Myrrh - Hanan al-Shaykh
The Waiting List: An Iraqi Woman's Tales of Alienation - Daisy al-Amir





Art by Amelia Mertha

ON BEING A XENOMORPH

Art and words by Monica McNaught-Lee

I have always had an affinity for aliens. I truly believe that there are aliens out there pitying Earth humans for what we have become. Lately, I have wondered why I am so fascinated by the idea of them. Then one day while reading about the seeds of Afrofuturism that appeared in W.E.B. Du Bois's sci-fi short fiction, it struck me that the reason I love alien content so much is that capitalism has forced our alienation — from ourselves and each other.

In the same way that extraterrestrials only exist in opposition to a narrative that falsely centres humanity, the neoliberal human body only exists under the rule of capitalism. As capitalism has progressed, our bodies have become just another product to tweak and alter. Our value exists only in our ability to work, and work, and work without fail.

Afrofuturism is an ideology that looks to reconstruct Black history and the Black present, in search of limitless and beautiful futures. It feels almost impossible to think about existence beyond capitalism, beyond an economic system that gleefully teaches us to sacrifice ourselves and our bodies to the industrial machine. On the days that start to lose hope, I look to the memories of my ancestors in China. Of the way they used stones from the river and mud from the rice fields to build round earthen dwellings called Hakka Tu Lous. These places would house whole communities that cared and provided for each other. Retelling ancestral and Indigenous histories can inspire us to imagine fuller futures where we are not alienated from our bodies. A future where our value is in how we can care for others, not in our bodies ability to produce monetisable labour and conform to unachievable standards.

Care in Confinement:

How ancient traditions impact women's health today

***Kira Trahana** explores non-Western reproductive health practices.*

While folk medicine is not unique to East Asian communities, the popular appropriation of traditional Chinese medicine is particularly visible in Australian society. From acupuncture to 'gua sha' to meditation gurus espousing the importance of a yin-yang balance, Eastern traditional health practices have sauntered, or perhaps been dragged kicking and screaming, into popularity amongst white Australians, often bringing with them inflated price tags.

The thousand-year-old Chinese tradition of zuoyuezi (坐月子), which literally translates into "sitting the month", is a practice commonly undertaken by women directly after given birth. During this time, a woman must stay at home for forty days. The list of restrictions is long and varied: she must not bathe. She must not expose herself to cold winds. She must not carry her newborn baby. She must follow a strict diet of broths and other herbal medicines. She must not climb stairs or shed tears.

'Sitting the month' is just one item in a long list of medical traditions still practiced today. Widely practiced in China, immigrant communities have also established services catering to mothers sitting the month. In Australia, meal delivery services and specialised stay-at-home nannies are available to support postnatal women over their forty-day period of rest.

On its surface, sitting the month appears to be a regimented but relatively harmless tradition. Immigrant communities around the world practice alternative medicine as a method of both healing and connecting with cultural roots. Alternative medicine is often also pursued as a rejection of Western medical institutions that marginalise and dismiss the cultural nuances of diaspora groups. Similar postpartum practices have been documented and are still practiced on the Indian subcontinent ('jaapa'), Iran ('chilla') and Latin America ('la cuarenta').

More so than in other areas of health, reproductive health is intimately linked to the cultures and traditions of women beforehand. Knowledge passes from mother to daughter. A girl's first period. A young woman's wedding night. A mother's first baby. These are milestones intrinsically linked with a woman's femininity, consolidating her place in patriarchal society. Women are reluctant to discuss their reproductive health, and conversations will often take place through hushed whispers and euphemisms.

The dissonances that exist between ancient and modern medicine serve to further complicate the issue. Instead of prescribing bed rest, Western obstetric advice today centres around a mother returning to her full range of activities after birth. Even more controversial is the period of social isolation associated with sitting the month, a known risk factor for postpartum depression. Immigrant communities are particularly likely to shy away from discussions of mental health, and women may feel that seeking help will be seen as a 'betrayal' of their cultural roots and of the expected decorum that accompanies them.

While accounting for their nuances, it is important not to disregard the roots or innate value of such traditions, as doing so alienates communities and women within. In ancient times, 'sitting the month' may have been the only time peasant women were afforded the luxury of extended rest in their lives. Concepts such as washing with cloths soaked in boiled ginger water rather than bathing in a river may have prevented the risk of postpartum infection. Avoiding cold winds may have protected new mothers' delicate immune systems, while the consumption of broths may have been essential in preventing malnourishment. Importantly, the custom of having a mother-in-law present for the postpartum confinement would have ensured child raising advice was passed down through generations. Dismissing this cultural knowledge would only further marginalise immigrant communities.

Beyond the scope of childbirth, adherence to alternative reproductive health traditions can also inadvertently silence women. One such example is the ancient notion of a 'cold' uterus. This belief states that a woman who 'neglects' her body by being barefoot, eating cold foods, or not wearing sufficient warm clothing will suffer from menstrual cramps. As women grow older, superstitions such as these can manifest, for many, in internalised self-blame for occurrences out of their own control. Instead of seeking help, women can risk suffering silently from chronic conditions such as endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) for years. The cultural nuances of such issues are not often met with understanding nor empathy by the Western medical establishment.

For many second-generation immigrant women, the idea of speaking about issues of reproductive health incurs a complex hesitance. Already seen as too Anglicised to comfortably belong in their parents' home countries, they also struggle for acceptance in white-dominated Australian society. Critiquing motherland health traditions is accompanied by fears of being called a cultural traitor or a 'banana'- yellow on the outside but white on the inside.

S. Lee, a mother who sat the month, writes "The self-blame and doubt still seep through every so often, even years later. When I heard confinement stories from some of my more traditional friends, I felt like I was overly sensitive, not "Chinese enough" and certainly not hardy enough, as though I had failed a personal fortitude test".

A core philosophical tenet of traditional Chinese medicine is that of balance. Push and pull. Hot and cold. Yin and Yang. Where there exists a contrast between traditional practices and modern Western medicine, there is also unity to be found within. Ardent believers in one will always harbour skepticism of the other. While there may not be an approach to reproductive health that is perfect for one and all, women feeling empowered and safe in their choices is, for me, more than enough.

The Dance Industry in Australia: Expelling the Myth of Harmlessness

***Talia Meli** interrogates the sinister undercurrents beneath one of Australia's most popular sports.*

Art by Monica McNaught-Lee

Dance has become a fixed component of the Australian sports industry. Approximately 17% of Australian children participate in this activity, with dance considered a normal and neutral option for children's sport. Dance has cultivated a social image which portrays studios as a safe space for children to engage in physical activity, whilst conjunctly nurturing social skills, discipline and creative expression. What is obscured is that the dance industry is an unregulated body, from which paedophilia and cultural appropriation are born and normalised.

The majority of individuals engaged with the dance industry are children who participate in after school hours, or junior school training. While the dance industry claims to foster a safe environment for children, incidents such as the 2016 RG Dance scandal (in which Sydney-based dance teacher Grant Davies was sentenced to 24 years in jail for 63 child sexual offences), have blistered this veneer, exposing studios as precarious environments which can threaten rather than protect students' welfare. While dance schools dispute the claim that they support or engage with this type of behaviour, studios continue to perpetuate the sexualisation of children often, however, in more insidious and concealed ways.

The contemporary dance scene is a hypersexual environment which has normalised the objectification and sexualisation of children. This provocation is most visible in costuming with tight, short and skin baring outfits, which are more often the rule, rather than the exception at dance showcases. These costumes are often accompanied by highly suggestive routines and explicit music, constructing performative narratives within which children are positioned as sexual beings. The competitive nature of these events also exposes a problematic dynamic whereby children are rewarded for highly sexualised performances. When children score highly or win a division with a provocative routine, they are affirmed in this state and come to understand, on some level, that their value is tied to their hypersexual performance and objectification. For many children, it is within the dance scene where they are introduced to hypersexuality as a dominant social and cultural currency.

This normalisation of hypersexuality extends past competitions and is often still apparent within dance studios, even if companies aim to mitigate hypersexual performances. While dance schools may not claim to outwardly support or engage in the sexualisation of children, their uniforms often demonstrate a compliancy with, and perpetuation of these norms. Recently, there has been an undeniable shift towards dance uniforms that are unreasonably revealing. Booty shorts and sports bras are repackaged as uniforms, and sold by studios who encourage or require dancers to wear such to their classes. While tighter clothing is often encouraged, with alleged genuine reason (it enables choreographers and dancers to better see body lines and movement), these clothing styles offer no material benefit. Rather, they point towards a culture where children's bodies are being exposed at an increasing rate, including in environments that are generally considered "safe". This is further complicated by the unregulated nature of the dance industry, which has no overarching framework or regulatory body that oversees the hiring of studio instructors, and no industry relevant systems of justice for dealing with incidents, allowing for such to be covered up and perpetrators to remain within the scene.

While the individual right to bodily autonomy and sexual expression is indisputable, we must challenge the industries which necessitate or normalise the exposing of children's bodies. Especially when such spaces are unregulated, and often shared with others who are much older. While no clothing is inherently sexual, the culture which encourages children to wear revealing garments is. If the dance industry claims to be committed to the protection of the children who sustain it, then the incorporation of unnecessarily revealing uniforms, aswell as the normalcy of hypersexualised performances, must be confronted.

In conjunction with issues of oversexualisation, cultural appropriation is pervasive in the Australian dance industry. Most dancers will look back at past performances and be able to pinpoint a routine, or multiple, that was informed by stereotypical cultural aesthetics. Eisteddfods and showcases frequently demonstrate the standardisation of this practice with

routines and costumes featuring chopsticks, fans, "tribal print" clothes, Saris and "Arabian style" two pieces.

Within the dance industry, cultural dance styles, movements and aesthetics are exploited for their entertainment value. When "cultural" routines are choreographed by instructors who don't belong to such groups or have no relevant training in such styles, they rely upon stereotypical and inauthentic interpretations of these cultures and their movements. Valuable cultural knowledge and aesthetics are de-contextualised from their authentic forms and reappropriated in ways which often retain little to no cultural legitimacy. This often results in a homogenisation of cultural movement and aesthetic into amalgamous and indefinite categories, as is seen in the prevalence of "Asian" or "Indian" inspired routines. This de-contextualisation of movement and its subsequent reconstruction could be considered a form of cultural colonisation.

Within the competitive scene, culturally inspired routines can be advantageous and are seen to give troopes an "edge" over others. This points to a tradition of exoticism whereby cultural or ethnic aesthetics are considered alluring, bizarre and captivating, increasing the value of performative pieces which utilize them. However, this benefit often only operates under the condition that the bodies who are performing the routine do not belong to the culture of which they are performing. When individuals perform a routine inspired by their own ethnic or cultural background, such performances can be critiqued as being too traditionalist, or people question why they are performing cultural routines in a modern or non-cultural competition.

The choice to choreograph a culturally inspired routine, when one holds no legitimate cultural knowledge, often stems from an exoticised perception of such culture, and one's opportunistic desire to utilize it for aesthetic reasons. Rarely, does this desire arise from cultural appreciation or respect. The ideological perspective which informs the choice to exploit a culture for personal benefit are the same from which stem cultural fetishization, prejudice, stereotypes and racism. The performance of culturally appropriated routines normalise the ideology that valuable cultural knowledges and aesthetics can be exploited, performed and capitalized for personal use, neutralising to dancers and adolescents the belief that valuable cultural aesthetics are theirs to utilize.

The prevelance of cultural appropriation in dance is an issue that is rarely discussed or critiqued, despite its ubiquity. While contemporary dance, especially in the professional and international circuit, has worked to expand on dance's exclusionary conceptions (the dance industry has an ongoing history of racial exclusion and supervaluation of white aesthetics), within the recreational scene, cultural appropriation prevails largely unchecked.

The dance industry is not a neutral space. Rather, it manifests, perpetuates and exhibits significant cultural challenges. The question now points to how we can work to reform or de-problematize it. As an unregulated industry, the creation of victim-informed guidelines or frameworks of safety could help to mitigate issues related to the protection and welfare of children, especially when related to who is able to engage as an instructor. The rectification of identity based issues, such as cultural appropriation, should have a simple solution; don't choreograph a cultural dance if you have no legitimate cultural knowledge. This self-explanatory conclusion, however, still seems lost on many choreographers, directors and judges, pointing towards the necessity of formal mechanisms. However, even if dance reaches a point where cultural appropriation in performance is completely eradicated, significant cultural work focused on unlearning, addressing and rectifying will still remain.

The inclusion of problematic choreographers and studios within the dance industry only continues when such goes unchecked, un-criticised and without reparation. As a community, we have the ability to radically change the dance industry through mutual discussion, reflection, accountability and compensation. It is our responsibility to educate, critique and cultivate environments where individuals are safe. It is our responsibility to engage with and support culturally diverse and marginalised artists. Individuals within the dance scene who continue to harm others have no place. Therefore, it is also our responsibility to boycott, hold publicly accountable and disrupt the individuals and studios which continue to choose harm. The dance industry needs to increase its self-reflection and self-critique. It is only through these mutual systems that dance can ever have the potential to be fully actualized as a safe and nurturing space.

Instagram resources for inclusive dance

@Freedomovement.co
@__humxn
@Aocinitiative
@Bl.ckb.rds
@Bangarradancetheatre
@Bipocdancehealth
@Hiphop4change
@Thegoodproject_
@Danceequityassociation
@Thedanceunion
@Thedancesafe

CW: assault

"We'll grab a spot front left" reads a text from a mate – my phone screen obnoxiously bright amid the dimly lit venue. Soundcheck has begun, defibrillating the crowd. Front left – a strategic spot to claim in the mosh. It allows you to inconspicuously work your way up the side of the crowd and gradually slink towards the front – trying not to spill your overpriced bourbon and coke.

Sydney's live music scene has been responsible for the majority of my good nights out. My stamina and my bank account are easily dissolved by clubbing – so my choice of nightlife rotates between a humble pub or a local gig, always followed by a kebab. In non-COVID pre-apocalyptic times, a good portion of my spendings went to gig tickets.

Some of my nights though, despite the novelty of dressing up, being with my friends, and seeing a band I love, have been tarnished at the hands of power imbalances in the mosh pit. It is not uncommon for people to take advantage of the cramped environment to grope or harass others under the guise that it was an 'accident'. Fight or flight impulses are stifled by the densely packed space which limits your physical options. Security is usually stationed at the perimeter of the mosh pit and can be completely oblivious to attacks that may occur.

A recent gig compelled me to consider if these patterns of behaviour contributed to something larger. I saw women in the crowd become completely sidelined as the mosh pit became volatile, monopolised by a boys club. It seems unfair that discrepancies in physical ability determine how much people enjoy themselves.

Despite being separated in the crowd, my mate and I left the gig with the same sentiment of lingering disappointment. On a brisk stroll back from Marrickville to Newtown, we mulled over the circumstances that left us devoid of a good time. Considering that everyone was there for the same reason, we were embittered that others felt entitled to have a better time than everyone else.

It's experiences like these, leaving gigs bruised and bewildered, which prompted me to investigate how common these experiences are for women attending live music. In a scene which is, at times, already pretentious and somewhat 'gatekeepy' – I wondered if this behaviour toward women contributed to a culture that alienates them from this world altogether.

I surveyed the USYD Women's Collective Facebook Group which received some saddening, yet unsurprising, responses.

The first staggering result was that 81.3% of participants in the survey responded 'yes' to having been harassed or assaulted in a mosh pit. It seemed to match the anecdotal evidence shared in my group of friends – many having been groped or had strangers make sexual advances in a gig setting. The data seemed reflective of broader attitudes towards women which had pervaded into the spaces of arts and music.

Following the coverage of Chanel Contos and Brittany Higgins' experiences, there was a 61% spike in the reporting of sexual assault. It became clear that many women were living with the burden of assault and feeling jaded by the futility of the system. It spoke to the reality that sexual assault has become a common experience, yet is inconspicuous and still goes unreported.

Optional questions in the survey warranted longer responses. The long-response question which garnered the most answers was:

Do you feel like you can't enjoy yourself as much in a mosh pit compared to cis men? Why or why not?

Responses included:

Yes because mosh pits give men the opportunity to harass and pass it off as an accident due to how crowded the area is

I get knocked to the ground, men can get aggressive and are unaware of their space/ strength

Yes, because I am worried that I will 1. Be assaulted in the mosh 2. Men tend to get very aggressive

I love moshing! But how can I enjoy myself when I am resisting being squashed by men. The risk of losing your friends, being elbowed in the face or being sexually assaulted is too high to succumb to the mosh pit as men do...

Yes because some men sexualise everything

Unfortunately, yes. Obviously there are exceptions and you do get good crowds but you can tell when a crowd "turns" (usually when drunk cis men dominate) and it begins to feel unsafe.

The answers unveil a suite of similar experiences. There is consensus that moshing isn't the issue. Rather, it is the prospect of being hurt, assaulted, or simply being unable to enjoy the music that they had paid to see.

There is a difference between a playful mosh and a negligent one. I don't mind leaving a mosh pit with a few bruises. They can be residual markings of a hyped-up crowd. But there is a grave distinction between this kind of environment, where the intensity doesn't transgress into volatility, and one that endangers others by way of wilful ignorance, or intentional predatory behaviour.

Some participants who hadn't experienced assault in a mosh pit stated that they were "lucky enough" to have not. The results left me frustrated. Not experiencing assault in a mosh pit should be the bare minimum, rather than shapeshifting into a matter of "luck," removing the accountability of perpetrators.

I also posed the question, "Do you think physical build and ability determine whether you can have fun in a mosh pit?" Giving participants the option to answer with Yes, No, or Other. Two people undertaking the survey mentioned that attending a gig with a male partner has a tangible influence over their enjoyment.

I found this point particularly interesting. Speaking about it with a friend, she told me, "Yeah, it's almost as though you have a shield." She explained that she felt as though predators would feel intimidated to cross any boundary if you are with a partner.

Another response stated, "I think build and ability do play into [the ability to have fun in a mosh pit] but I also think that cis men are socialised to be less respectful of women's personal space... Like it's their behaviour more than their physicality."

However, to truly combat an issue which is indicative of broader attitudes towards women, it calls for both accountability and a cultural shift. Staff and venues have attempted to mitigate the mistreatment of women at gigs, but it will never be enough. Unfortunately, women are continually alienated by being made to feel unsafe in the Aussie music scene, showing negligence on account of different venues and organisers, and most significantly, the broader social patterns that allow for this behaviour to proliferate.

Leaving women estranged by way of violence and intimidation is a stain on an otherwise unified scene. There is an undeniable sense of community when everyone has rocked up to see the same band. More often than not, fellow gig-goers are easy to talk to. There's instant common ground between yourself and everyone else at the venue. A mosh pit and a few drinks make for good insulation on a cold winter's night, but this experience is tarnished for so many.

LITTLE DRUMMER GIRL

*Words by **Hannah Rose***

Art by Ellie Wilson

The gendering of instruments wasn't something I consciously understood until I picked up the drums when I was eight. I didn't realise how much of a novelty I was, but the little girl skulking behind the behemoth of the drumkit ironically stuck out. I was achingly shy. The drumkit terrified me and I spent the first few years playing very poorly and tentatively in my primary school band. But I fell in love with the rhythm section so I kept practicing.

The drumkit embodies several stereotypically masculine qualities. It's a big instrument that has deep tones, and it makes so much noise that it commands attention. Men are actively encouraged to play the drums because it's viewed as a physical manifestation of masculine traits. As such, the majority of drummers and percussion players are male, whereas female drummers are still a rarity. These misconceptions are prominent amongst all instruments. There is no reasonable argument that one musician is better than the other based on their gender. Yet; young boys are still more likely to pick up drumsticks than a flute, and male instrumentalists dominate the music scene.

Bands, especially in alternative rock folklore, are usually formed between friends in informal settings. However, as most women working in other male dominated industries know, social inclusion is one of the hardest aspects of existing in these spaces. I felt like I had to infiltrate 'boys' night', to try and be like them, and make myself more masculine to be included. But it didn't work. I was seen as needy, desperate or pushy, and only further excluded. Women aren't 'one of the boys', so they're not one of the bandmates. We are so often excluded from the band formation process.

Men's hesitancy to include female drummers also comes from preconceived notions of what certain instrumentalists should look like. A drummer is supposed to be a man with bulging arm muscles, gregarious, perhaps obnoxious, a bit thick in the skull, musty and the butt of countless jokes. I think this became the phenomenon after the explosion of what would become 'dad rock' in the late 60s. Hypermasculine imagery pervaded the music industry through the 70s and lingers in folklore and popular culture today. This perception remains: female drummers aren't 'real drummers.'

I've often tried to use the novelty of my gender to my advantage in drumming. But being the only female drummer hasn't landed me many gigs. Men really love to gatekeep music. The music industry is a gigantic boy's club, and I regret spending the better part of my teenage years trying to fit in with the boys who ran it. I cringe when thinking about how many knots I twisted myself into to impress the teenage boys who took up a permanent lunch time residence in the school music rooms. I'm embarrassed by the amount of male manipulator music I absorbed to seem relatable, and am still working on deconstructing the internalised misogyny it fostered. I was always on the outside peering in. I was so apologetic. I felt I had to work twice as hard to make up for taking a position in the band that 'should have' gone to a man.

A common excuse for the lack of women instrumentalists in popular music is that there just aren't enough women musicians. This is not true - they just won't let us in. Men have a plethora of famous male drummers to look to for inspiration, whereas I struggled to find a female drummer to idolise as I practiced. Male musicians don't want us in the band, music labels that are run by men don't think we're profitable and thus the narrative has been reinforced that people don't want to see women behind the drum kit. Assertive women are vilified for challenging the quiet and passive qualities expected of them and are therefore discouraged from drumming by marketing departments. This was the case for Karen Carpenter, a highly proficient drummer and vocalist who was forced out from behind the kit to only sing instead.

Given the substantial lack of female drumming idols to look up to, as a young girl I took great pride in the few I did have. I idolised Meg White from the White Stripes, despite her drumming style being heavily critiqued for its simplicity. Perth band San Cisco has a great drummer in Scarlett Stevens that I revered throughout highschool, and Melbourne born non-binary artist G-Flip is another great non-male advocate for the instrument (female drummers are hard to come by, but non-binary drummers even more so). It's also important to remember the early jazz drummers like Pauline Braddy and Viola Smith, who started diversifying the drumming scene back in the 1940s.

What I've strived to prove throughout the years is that gender does not affect your ability to play drums. The misogyny that pervades the music industry does. There are no men having to write about why they deserve to play the drums. Male mediocrity is lauded over women's actual talent. Women drummers are criminally ignored, further discouraging other women and girls from picking up and pursuing the instrument. The blame does not fall on the drum kit or the drummer herself, it falls on the sexist music industry that fails female instrumentalists. This piece is not meant to deter other women from drumming,in fact the opposite; I'd love for more girls to pick up the sticks. I want to see the conceited male drummers of the world replaced, with prompt.

Men who hurt women: The sanctification of male artists

Jess Page wonders why the work of violent artists endures.

CW: child sexual violence, sexual violence

Indro Montanelli was an Italian writer, journalist and historian, considered a hero of the Italian press, and decorated with an Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, and in the mid-1930s, he bought and raped a child.

In 2020, a long-overdue conversation started (or rather, continued more loudly) in Italy by Black Lives Matter activists about the place of Montanelli in academia and journalism. His justification for his actions and the arguments of his defenders were always rooted in deep colonial racism and misogyny.

His defenders admit to this abhorrent fact, whilst often subtly excusing it by stating that child marriage and rape was a common practice among the Italian soldiers who massacred their way through Ethiopia. The fact that it was a common practice should be additionally shocking, but Montanelli's participation in this infliction of violence upon African women and children remains an individual choice, as is the racist and misogynist equivocation to excuse it.

Many outside of Italy or journalism have likely not heard of him, but his influence has been felt in the field since he founded *Il Giornale*, one of the largest daily newspapers in Italy. When his name was brought up again in the media with the surge of Black Lives Matter protests internationally, Montanelli's actions and the talk around him represented a familiar story. There is a discourse surrounding artists and academics like Montanelli to have their lives "judged in their totality", as argued by Milanese Mayor Giuseppe Sala. The sentiment is that the art must be separated from the actions and even the personal beliefs of the artist.

As a result; violent, racist, misogynistic men remain in positions of national and international reverence and prestige. Men who hurt women surround us in university reading lists promoting F. Scott Fitzgerald and Pablo Neruda. There are museums with entire buildings dedicated to Picasso, Netflix specials featuring Louis C.K. and Chris D'Elia, and artists who find it continually justifiable to work with Dr Luke.

The kingpin of artistic forgiveness is arguably Pablo Picasso. However, another dead Pablo is considered Chile's national poet, whose homes have been converted into public museums, and who described in his 1974 *Memoirs* raping a member of his staff in 1925. This has been nothing but a grim footnote in Pablo Neruda's life and legacy.

The ability to forgive transgressions that we, as a society, should consider unforgivable or at least career-ending is not restricted to white men (see the continued success and wealth of Chris Brown). But for these figures, their privilege renders them far more likely to obtain such positions of cultural reverence and international acclaim. Once challenged, the collective that gave this reverence to them is extremely reluctant to let them go.

The discourse of separating the art from the artist undeniably privileges certain artists above others. It perpetuates a harsh artistic landscape where the bodies of women and children are mere collateral damage. It also represents the massive overvaluing of this art in relation to their wider influences (particularly women and minority groups), whose art and ideas people like Picasso, Neruda and Montanelli exploit.

Firstly, it is important to discuss the obvious problems with this discourse that promotes the separation of the violent artist or academic from their esteemed body of work. Certainly, the abusiveness of Picasso and the rape committed by Neruda are known and discussed, however marginally and unsatisfactorily. Montanelli's child marriage and rape have filtered in and out of public conversation since the 1960s, with varying degrees of horror and disgust. The loud resurgence of these conversations in 2020 provoked much the same response from the Italian establishment, showing that, against gradual changes in public response, communities are generally unswayed to rethink their idols.

The process of rethinking is important, as the argument to separate the art from the artist strongly implies that such art is not informed by, and is not the unique product of racist or femicidal violence. Many of Montanelli's articles are littered with racist ideology, supporting Italy's colonial devastation of Africa. The violence he committed against the 12-year-old he married wasn't an inconvenient exception to the "totality" of his life, it was entirely consistent with it. Similarly, it has been argued that the "love" depicted in Neruda's most famous poems are nothing more than a need for possession, and an obsession with women as either pure or sexual beings, in lineation with the Madonna-whore complex. Sexual objectification has also been noted as an overarching theme throughout Neruda's works.

It appears that as long as an artwork isn't obscenely grotesque, the discourse around it excuses all "external factors" that are seemingly irrelevant to public discussion. It allows people in this discourse to see this work as a separate entity unconnected to its creator's actions and extreme prejudices. On the contrary, much of Picasso's art documented his abusive nature and sexual violence, as seen in *Le Rêve*; a sexualised painting of Marie-Thérèse Walter, whom he began grooming as a teenager. Furthermore, the museums where his work is admired are purposefully absent of the works of his former lovers like Dora Maar, who was artistically suppressed by Picasso, and Françoise Gilot, whom Picasso attempted to blacklist from the art market.

So why such cognitive dissonance? Simply put, this discourse maligns the experience of women whilst sanctifying white male art for being precisely that, deemed irreplaceable by any other artist. To proponents of this discourse, the artwork of Gilot can simply never measure up. In the wake of sexual misconduct allegations, we saw fans of Louis C.K.'s satirical comedy cling to him as a master of the art form, rather than turning to the standup of the likes of Maria Bamford or Ali Wong. Similarly, Picasso's cubist mapping of human nature, love, and war was not wholly unique to him (considering the innumerable anonymous African artists that Picasso denied the existence of in his "African Period"). The groundbreaking techniques and symbols for which Picasso gained his acclaim are displayed spectacularly in the paintings of Baya Mahieddine or the surrealist photography of Dora Maar.

Neither Picasso's entire artistic output, nor each line composed by Neruda, or every article of Montanelli's, should be disregarded or collectively forgotten. First and foremost, to do so would erase important pieces of evidence about the violent artist contained within, and the experiences of the women and children hurt. Like Neruda, men in positions of power can and do abuse their authority to hurt and threaten the women in their employ with little to no repercussions. And like Picasso, repeated patterns of abuse and violence are a burden that many women feel they need to bear in exchange for security and love. Picasso's proud habit of "destroying" the women he left sadly proves them right. Their artwork should stand as evidence of this, not as a shield against public scrutiny and justified outrage.

This sort of cognitive dissonance continues to fail the women and children victimised by Picasso, Neruda and Montanelli, as the truth of their stories cannot be read properly alongside the blurred narratives built around these artists. It continues to erase their lived experience, just as these artists would hope.

The discourse of separating the art from the artist undeniably privileges certain artists above others. It perpetuates a harsh artistic landscape where the bodies of women and children are mere collateral damage.

STING

Words by Zoe Coles

Art by Amelia Mertha

I suffered a sea-change at age twelve.

My friends and I sunk ourselves in the water of our local beach, the white wash foaming on the lips of the waves we ducked under. To an observer, we would have epitomised a child-like innocence unknowingly about to turn rotten. We would still brave the cold, and the only photos we'd take were to send to our mothers to let them know what end of the beach to pick us up from.

That particular day, we had swum into an armada of bluebottles. Their tentacles were bound up in each other, like a woven bag coming undone, and they wrapped themselves around us. We ran out of the water frantically, all comparing our welts, and began to walk along the road that led to the surf club at the other end of the beach to get some ice.

The word *bluebottle* itself is a kind of myth.
A bluebottle is not an animal in itself, but rather four different colonies of polyps that depend on each other to survive. The float is a single individual that supports the rest of the colony, and the tentacles are polyps with the job of detecting and capturing food. They hand their food over to the digestive polyps, and reproduction is carried out by the gonozooids. They are symbiotic.

I often consider the symbiosis of the men who slowed their car down whilst we walked along the bitumen road, our stings swelling and searing. Their odometer clocked down to a fraction slower than the pace we walked at, and they followed behind us. Was the first man to yell out at us the tentacle? Had it been organised that he would detect and capture that day's prey? The next man to stretch his head out the window seemed to break us down, dissect us, easier for digestion.

"Nice ass."
"She's got great tits."

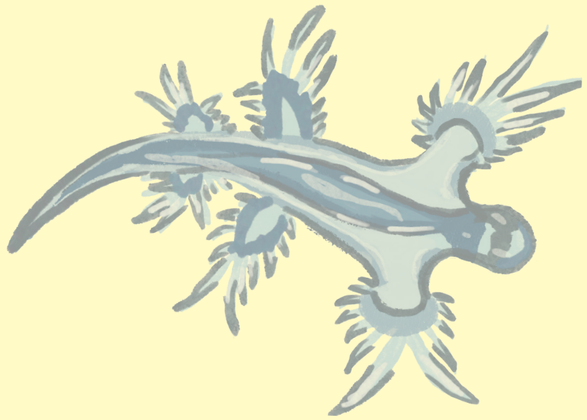
We hadn't even got our periods yet. Did that matter to the gonozooid man, the one who drove the float, or was this whole scene an exercise to demonstrate how little our bodies belonged to us? We had dared to walk the road, as we had dared to enter the ocean, and now we would brave the cold.
Bluebottles are translucent. When you are close to one, you can see through them. But their art lies in how you will never know when you are close, and when you realise, it will always be too late. You cannot suspect every car will treat you this way, and so you act with the assumption that you belong to your body as they belong to theirs. It is only three years later, when you are fifteen, that it is too late again and you watch the symbiosis come to fruition once more - the float, the tentacles, the dissection and digestion, the plastering of sex upon your body that has now become aclimitized to the cold.

I am nineteen now, and I exist in this dependency. I am someone's daughter, someone's sister, someone's partner, someone's friend. I am not a float, but rather attach myself to others subjectivities and situations in hopes of survival. If men were known not as a float, but rather as someone's son, someone's brother, someone's partner, someone's friend, perhaps there would be an opportunity to educate and to enlighten them. But they are totalities in themselves, microcosms of the patriarchal culture that buzzes in the air.

I seek the totality of the *Blue Dragon*. She feeds on bluebottles, soaking in their toxic chemicals and stinging cells into her own skin. No bigger than a thumbnail, she countershades, her colour palette of azure and bleu de france camouflage her against the lulling backdrop of ocean waves. Her underbelly, in shades of silver coins, brews with the bright sea surface and conceals her from predators below. She gulps in oxygen ("**I EAT MEN LIKE AIR**") and floats in the high seas. At the centre of her heteroglossia, there is a unity, a central oneness. She is not delegated, and she floats out there somewhere as you read this, her ceratas the shape of a hand held by no one.

There was a neurological sea-change within me, yes, when those men wound down the windows and the sharp pain of their words pitted onto us hurt more than the welts decorating our legs. I learnt I could be anatomized, fragmented, splintered into worthy and unworthy parts. But I suppose I did soak up some of that sting, and I store it somewhere, a protective layer around my last offcut of oneness that lets me write this piece.

I brave the cold.



MY MOTHER'S GARDEN

Alana Ramshaw

When I was in Year Ten, I arrived at one of the rehearsals for my school's production of the Wizard of Oz, clutching a plastic bag full of bitter melons. My proud mother had grown these wrinkly green gourds from seeds and had tasked me with passing them on to my one friend who was willing to take them.

Mum discovered her enthusiasm for gardening around ten years ago. It started with one small backyard planter box, and gradually spiralled into what can only be described as horticultural anarchy. These days, my parents live on a five-acre property dotted with vegetable patches, citrus trees, and rows of repurposed bathtubs filled with soil. My parents' home is a rainforest in some places, a purposefully overgrown mess of ferns, and it is a garden bed in others, with neat rows of gailan or kale poking out of fresh potting mix. It is quirky, it is cluttered, and it is home.

In many ways, the care and attention my mother has invested in her garden is the same with which she raised me and my siblings. Coming from a working-class Chinese family on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, my mother approached parenting in the same way she approaches most other things in her life - to give until she has nothing left. Raising me on stories of my long lineage of notoriously strong-willed, hard-working Hakka women, my mother embodies a mentality of sacrifice and selflessness without end. This is a mentality common to immigrant parents and families, and one with which I will always have a complex relationship due to the intergenerational and cultural dissonances which have shaped her approach to motherhood, and my approach to personhood.

Throughout my life, I have seen mum reap the fruits of her labour. I have seen the joy that her professional and academic successes have brought, and I see the pride she has in my brothers (both over-achieving engineers). Conversely, I have seen her drive herself to exhaustion and physical illness, and I have seen the harsh and unforgiving anger with which she chastises herself for not meeting expectations. My mother has given me big gumboots to fill. I hope that one day we might both learn to embrace my little feet.

Occasionally I receive an email from my mum, followed by a phone call (from the next room) about said email. I suppose nothing is stronger than love, not even the weight of academic dishonesty on my conscience. I open the email.

"Lani, please check this for me. Thanks."

As I open the PDF and slowly rework her disjointed prose into something more coherent, I decide to leave the errant prayer my deeply religious mother had included in her report. Sometimes in life you have to pick your battles, and I figured I would leave that particular one for her marker.

Around four years ago, my mother had a midlife revelation that it was her duty to study traditional Chinese medicine. She delved in head first, acquiring massage tables, massage chairs, and expensive remedies for which endangered animals were undoubtedly exploited.

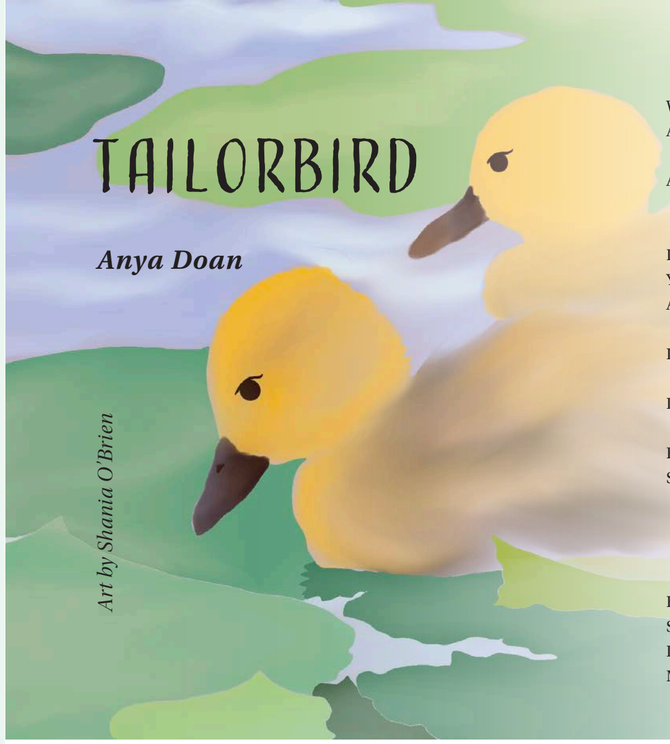
For a brief period in high school, I became a guinea pig for a particular acupuncture treatment. Every evening I would lie on my mum's table for half an hour, with twelve needles poking out of my arms and legs which she had meticulously lined up with the intention of helping me grow beyond my humble 4'10". If you have encountered me since then, you'll know that this was not a successful endeavour. I did not become tall, but a pincushion. I guess we will both have to accept that for what it is.

As my mum's only daughter, the advice she usually offers me is aimed towards goals of finding a husband (preferably cashed-up, Christian, and Chinese), and raising two or three children (one will be too lonely, four will be too many to handle). My mother wishes for me to seek the same fulfilment she found in raising a family, in spite of the fact that I have never wanted any of that heteronormative suburban white picket fence nonsense, and probably never will. There is a part of me that will always carry guilt for that. However, I also suspect voicing my own ambitions of living in a cottage in the Cotswolds, with a girl who is a little taller than me but also short enough to comfortably rest her chin on my head, wouldn't go down too swimmingly.

In the time since my residency on my mother's acupuncture table, I have grown distant from the aspirations and dreams she has for me, and I continue to grow into myself in ways immeasurable by pencil markings on a bedroom wall. I am grateful for the childhood I am borne back ceaselessly into, and I will cultivate a future in the body I am slowly learning to accept.

My mother and I both have our own ideal gardens. While they may share some species of plants, and while they may both be overwhelmingly green at first, their fruits and flowers are destined to be very different come Spring. This is not a choice, nor could it ever really be. My garden has to work for me.

Art by Bonnie Huang



TAILORBIRD

Anya Doan

Art by Shania O'Brien

When a girl turns sixteen her innocence snaps like a salamander's tongue
A mallard and her two ducklings neck deep in the barberry
along the rim of a brook
And into the uncaged storm, the squish of a grandmother's palm rumble
in our stomachs

Did you enjoy your *sleep?* Of a bamboo bed, you count seven splinters
Years later, a baby sister is born, the softest howl
A gingerly kneaded gluten ball in a dessert soup circling the brewing heat
dissolving into the mouths of crickets nearby
In their lightless village, their feet are the only sounds in sight

Immediately my sister comes of age and learns that her comfort place is her
half-beaten family
Earth rusts like a bitter melon and its core a custard apple
She eats but she can't stop thinking of bone and ivory
in the soil, the elephants that died with their stomachs open,
how before she was born her grandfather died a hero and
her uncle of heroism and how the deaths haven't stopped

Her hips widen and her armpit devotes its energy to a single hair
Sometimes the sister feels like the brother. But rarely the other way around
I want to tell her something, something slippery she wears around her neck--
Maybe she'd forget why she is here and is angry at how the world is drawn,
her fists brimming with white water lilies.

Land of Tiny People and Slim Fit Pants

Jo Engelman

My Love was from
Big Love, My Love from Coogee
2 Long Hours by Public Transport to
Leave The Hills,
A Place Full of Straight People
And White Mums and Lonely Dogs
In their Backyards.
The Dogs scavenge for grass between the planks.

I was painting in MY room,
(Did You Know she Liked Painters?)
Mould my Body into Tiny Pieces,
Be Like the 19 Year Old Teens which
Parade their Tiny Bodies at
Bondi Westfield
with their Yoga Shirts and Slim Fit Pants.
I wanted to Be them.
Tried to Eat just like them,
Bleached MY hair to impress Them.
Did You Ever Notice me?

My Love was From Places of Tiny People,
she wore it like a Prefect wears their sashes.
I was also From the Land of Tiny People
But not in the Same Way,
See No One knows where I'm From,
Mum said, that Makes me A blank Canvas
cause I get to 'create my story'
but it doesn't really feel that way,
when you get to the Bottom of it.
You asked me for the suburbs surrounding it,
And heard You Say,
oh, That place.

You Drove out to Get me
In your fancy Company Car.
I wanted to say something Funny,
Everything Came Out Funny.
Realised You were here for One Thing,
and One thing only.
Took me TOO long to realise
Big People don't like small people like me.

Art by Amelia Mertha

If *consent matters* to USyd management, why are they still failing survivors?

Ahead of the next survey on campus sexual violence, ***Amelia Mertha*** *and* ***Shani Patel*** *examine what USyd management have done since the last report.*

CW: sexual violence

Orientation weeks ('o-weeks') across Australia are known to be the most dangerous time of the student calendar. It is during this period that 1 in 8 of all incidents of sexual violence are perpetrated. This is why, to mitigate the association between sexual violence and USyd's 'O-Week,' in 2019 management renamed our orientation week 'Welcome Week.' This was an adoption of a recommendation to colleges by the Broderick Review of 2018. As Honi editors back then, including former Women's Officer Jessica Syed, commented in their report on orientation week's fluffy face-lift, "When some behaviour is so entrenched in specific institutions, to the extent that it is hailed as tradition, it's unlikely that any name change will reduce sexual violence at USyd...at least so long as residential college procedures and accountability mechanisms remain clandestine."

At WoCo's 'Welcome Week' stall this year, a collective member overheard a first year college-resident saying that she'd "already seen rape culture" at her college. The timing of Welcome Week with emerging news of Chanel Contos' petition for holistic high school consent education in the wake of thousands of stories of sexual violence that Contos received, was unsurprising but deeply felt, and for many survivors, re-traumatising.

There is little question that holistic consent and sex education is severely lacking from school curriculums, and that this results in an aggregious pipeline of toxic masculinity, misogyny, rape culture and apologism from high schools straight into university campuses and colleges. This can also come hand-in-hand with the elitism and privilege of rich (usually private-school educated) kids who remain crudely loyal to those college institutions unwilling to take full accountability for historical violence committed. WoCo's campaign to dismantle the colleges is routinely trivialised as something done out of spite (for what? who knows) rather than something integral to our unwavering belief in body autonomy and an accessible, free education.

University should not be the place where someone first learns about affirmative consent, body autonomy, or "stealthing". Yet, given what kids aren't learning at high school (and certainly not learning by example from governments) universities need to foster and advocate an environment that openly talks about consent and sex. University should never be a place that forces students who are survivors to choose between their education and their mental health, that makes safe accomodation inaccessible. It should be a place that encourages survivor-centric responses to harm, instead of those that save reputations. USyd management must reckon with the rape epidemic that it faces; not drag its feet behind the tireless work of activists and survivors

This September, Universities Australia is running the National Student Safety Survey. This project is a follow up, aiming to build upon the Ausralian Human Rights Comission survey that culminated in the 2017 *National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities*. This original report was a harrowing account of the prevalence, location, and nature of sexual assault at Australian universities. It also included numerous recommendations, broadly covering leadership, changing attitudes and behaviours, updating responses to reported cases, and cultural changes within residential colleges. According to the Social Research Centre, the new project aims to "measure the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment experiences among university students at Australian universities". Named more broadly than its predecessor, the National Student Safety Survey claims that it will "build on and extend the foundational survey", introducing differences such as behavioural questions.

However, it should be noted that this project is one of multiple follow-ups from the past few years alone. 2018 saw both the Broderick Report by the independent consulting company Elizabeth Broderick & Co along with the Red Zone Report by advocacy group End Rape on Campus (EROC), who directly engaged with previous University of Sydney Women's Officers and the Women's Collective. The former was commissioned by The University of Sydney itself along with St Paul's college, aiming to be a 'cultural review' including qualitative data on leadership, diversity, alcohol consumption, hazing and "the experiences of women" relating to sexual misconduct with recommendations for reform. Contrastingly, the Red Zone Report, more independent and informed by stakeholders, aimed to address the shortcomings of the Broderick Report. These included detailed historical context and first-hand survivor accounts using higher standards of research, along with more direct and confronting recommendations.

Despite their differences, both reports paint a clear and gut-wrenching picture: USyd is facing an epidemic of sexual violence on campus, and the problem starts at the residential colleges. Sexist culture within universities runs deep, its historical roots and modern attendants holding it firmly in place, with real and debilitating outcomes for students. The plethora of research and recommendations plead universities to change, though these institutions continue to drag their feet.

It is important to remember that surveys and statistics are not immune from enacting a kind of archival violence themselves by dehumanising people into/as data and rehashing these statistics into oblivion. Certainly, numbers tell a story - but not the whole story. They often obscure the actual experiences and needs of survivors, and cannot replace real institutional and cultural action. Other than assessing the effectiveness of current strategies, will another survey realistically spur USyd management to do what has been demanded by survivors for years?

WHAT HAS USYD MANAGEMENT DONE SINCE THE LAST REPORT?

Each year, the SRC Women's Officers and President sit on a committee called the Safer Communities Advisory Group alongside representatives from the USU, SUPRA, colleges and residential housing, SUSF and campus security. Given WoCo's strong stance on the colleges and carceral responses to safety, it is admittedly disconcerting to join these meetings. Our inclusion on this committee can only ever be tokenistic and box-ticking when management does not listen to us, engage with us in any other way, and uses other departments on the committee to reign us in. As ex-Women's Officer Katie Thorburn wrote in 2018, "These meetings are largely for show and an attempt to point to a line of communication to attempt to suppress protesting which put the university in a bad light."

Under the 'Safer Communities' banner, there is a small team established in November 2019 who provide trauma and administration support for survivors of sexual misconduct. The Safer Communities Office are able to provide a direct line to student services, the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, emergency accomodation and the local police. This year the Safer Communities Office has provided in-person consent training to the colleges, and through Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia (RDVSA), offered in-person first responder training for student groups including WoCo and others within the SRC. With only four Student Liaison Officers in this team, this seems hardly sufficient to support tens of thousands of USyd students and staff with the addition of alumni and the public who (since late 2020) may report on historical sexual misconduct or that which involves university property or university groups.

Over 100,000 students have completed the Consent Matters online learning module since it was introduced in 2018. Though we are far from the first to say so, the ubiquity of online learning and meetings should bring into sharp relief how lacking the module is in lieu of face-to-face consent education. It still takes no more than an hour to complete, is hardly memorable, and has been understandably ridiculed for ineffectiveness since the idea surfaced. By giving the answers immediately, the module offers no opportunity for students to think about and reflect on what they do and don't know. Sure, it has no milkshakes involved but how exactly are we meant to believe that the module has genuinely destigmatised conversations about consent, sex, and body autonomy?

We can confidently say that the university has not made meaningful change to the rape culture prevailing within student community. Instead, it has renamed our orientation week while letting events such as Rad Sex and Consent Week disappear. It has closed the F23 building to anti-sexual violence activism and stood by as the colleges deeply embarrass themselves time and time again. It has left anti-sexual violence activists and the Women's Collective to defend themselves against misogynists and rape apologists only to then turn around and threaten the continuation of our enrolment.

A NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

To hold our university accountable to support survivors during the roll-out of the National Safety Survey, a National Day of Action (NDA) against sexual violence on campuses has been planned for **October 6** amongst Women's Collectives in every state and territory.

WE DEMAND:

- **End sexual violence against students everywhere — at home, on campus, at work.**
- **Accountability from universities: Release the survey's findings.**
- **Increase and improve survivor support services.**
- **Abolish the colleges — build safe and affordable student housing.**
- **Earlier, holistic, direct sex education in high school and university.**

It cannot be understated that the last demand — the implementation and practical support of earlier, holistic and direct consent and sex education in schools — is absolutely crucial to ending sexual violence. Sex education is crucial preventative work against sexual violence. Sex education must be an ongoing conversation, which is why WoCo is bringing back Radical Sex and Consent Week in Week 8 of this semester, to continue these important conversations on sexual autonomy and positivity.

Stand up for survivors and help hold this university accountable. Come to the NDA against sexual violence on campus on October 6th, and follow WoCo on social media for updates (@usydwoco).

CONTACTS FOR SUPPORT

Safer Communities Office (Student Liaison Officers) | 02 8627 6808 or 1 800 SYD HLP (1800 793 457) | safer-communities.officer@sydney.edu.au | open Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 5:30pm

The University of Sydney's Reporting Module: if you need to report a case of sexual assault to the university or submit a disclosure, use the "Report an Incident" box at https://sydney.edu.au/students/sexual-assult/report-to-the-university.html

NSW Rape Crisis Centre | 1800 424 017 | Free hotline available 24/7 run by experienced professionals who can provide support, counselling, and referrals.

Sexual Assault Clinic at RPA Hospital | (02) 9515 9040 | Face-to-face and telephone counselling services, as well as medical services such as forensic kits and STI testing, available to outpatients (i.e. you don't need to be checked into the hospital).

USyd Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) | 8627 8422 | free counselling services available to USyd students.

Payday Loans and Why They Suck!

Payday loans or **Small Amount Loans** are a quick way to get cash, especially for those without a good credit rating. For the vast majority of situations they are absolutely horrendous, and should be avoided. The lure of getting cash as quickly as an hour after you apply should be considered in the sobering light of the interest rates or charges. Different loans have different conditions. Some promote that they have no charges, but charge an interest rate of up to 48%. Others do not charge interest, but instead charge an account management fee that is equivalent to at least 48%.

Debt consolidation loans are almost as bad. There are many fees and charges that are imposed, with little opportunity for your repayments to actually reduce your loan. Debt consolidation companies have been known to sign people into an **act of bankruptcy**, which can have profound effects on your financial health for many years.

There are better alternatives. Your energy provider (electricity and gas) is part of the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) scheme which gives $50 vouchers to people in need. You could also ask your telephone and internet companies if they have a similar voucher scheme, or if they can put you on a payment plan. You might be able to get a bursary or an interest free loan through the University's Financial Assistance Unit. If you are on a Centrelink payment you might be able to get an advance payment.

There may also be ways to spend less money each week. For example, there are many services around the University that provides cheap or free food, medical services, and other similar types of services. The SRC has a Guide to Living on Little Money [srcusyd.net.au/src-help/money/guide-to-living-on-little-money] that might be helpful or make an appointment to talk to an SRC caseworker by calling 9660 5222.

Ask Abe

SRC caseworker help Q&A

BEWARE of SCAMS!

IF IT SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT PROBABLY IS A SCAM!

Hi Abe,

Someone I met at my uni accommodation told me about a different way of paying your fees. I'm an international student and the exchange rate and cost of transferring money makes my fees cost even more. This person said I can transfer money to their account in our country, and they will pay the fees from their Australian account. Is this true?

Sincerely,
Fee Fear

Dear Fee Fear,

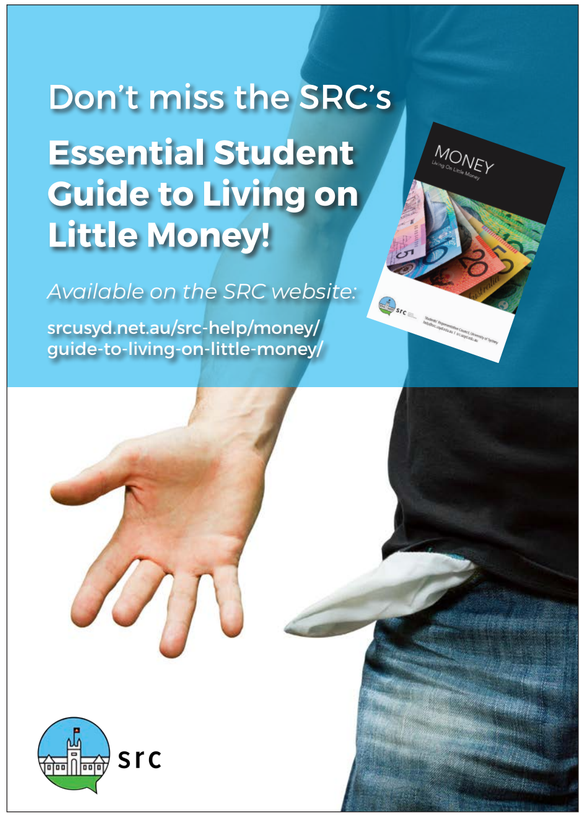
This sounds like a scam designed to steal your money. Unfortunately there are lots of people in Australia who will try to trick international students into paying them money.

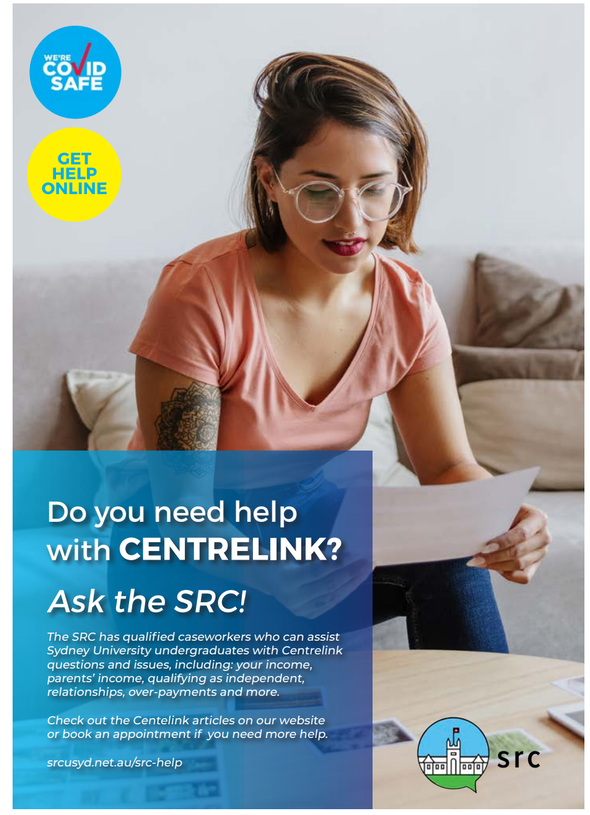
A good general rule to live by is: if it seems too good to be true, it probably is a scam.

Never give your personal details, bank information, or money to anyone whose identity you cannot verify. If you are contacted by someone who says they are from the government, the police, or the university and you are suspicious, contact the organisation via their official contact information yourself.

For more information about how to avoid scams, visit: scamwatch.gov.au/about-scamwatch/tools-resources/in-your-language

Sincerely,
Abe





Contact an SRC Caseworker on 02 9660 5222 or email help@src.usyd.edu.au

President

SWAPNIK SANAGAVARAPU

Congratulations on finishing your first week of Semester 2! With the ongoing lockdown and the escalating COVID situation, I hope that everyone is staying safe and taking care of themselves. I'm enthused by the recent announcement that workers will be able to receive payments when waiting for a COVID test and also while in isolation. This was something that has been agitated for Unions NSW and a key demand in our Welfare Collective's Day of Action, so it's nice to see them implemented.

On a serious note, I've been notified that Fisher Library and the Learning Hubs will be closed during lockdown if students do not follow all health regulations, including mask wearing, social distancing, and sign-in upon entry. Accessing a safe area to study is essential for students, but library access will not be able to continue if students do not follow NSW Health regulations. I urge all students to comply with the public health order so that we can continue enjoying the benefits of an open library and open learning centres! Please feel free to email me if you have any thoughts or questions on the issue.

We've also begun looking into rents at University accommodation and in the surrounding areas. The University has made a promise in the past for all student accommodation to offer rents that are 25% below the market rates and in fact reduced rents for students last year at the height of the pandemic! With the ongoing lockdown, many private providers of student accommodation have offered reduced rent to students, but no such thing has occurred in University owned accommodation. We're hoping to begin a campaign in the next few weeks to call for rent reductions in University accommodation so that students who are struggling with income don't need to worry about their rent.

Finally, join the Education Action Group on August 16th to protest against the Australian Financial Review's Vice Chancellor's Summit - all the details can be found on the SRC's Facebook page.

Until next time,
Swapnik

Vice President

MARIA GE AND ROISIN MURPHY

Roisin's Report

Over the holidays, we've mainly focused on the relationship between international students and the SRC. Early on in the holidays I covered for Swapnik as acting President, when he took leave. Since then, we've been workshopping an efficient way to gain student input on the SRC's services. We've also spent time promoting the SRC's informative sessions about navigating uni admin and your legal rights as a student. I've also been attending the Standing Legal Committee meetings, where we've focused on the changes to the SRC's constitution and regulations. I'm really glad that we've met a reasonable outcome which will ensure an efficient election. Other than that, I've also been working on women's honi as an editor and continuing our work on the SRC exec to keep the organisation functioning through lockdown. I wish we were all back on campus, but I look forward to this sem and fighting alongside staff through the EBA period.

Maria's Report

In the past one month, I have been attending Standing Legal Council meetings related to some proposed changes and we are happy to make some reasonable changes. Apart from it, Roisin and I worked on promotion and advertising. To separate the task, Roisin is responsible for the local students, and I am responsible for the international students.

Promotion of the election to international students: I am currently working with Riki and the Publications Managers in regards to the translation of the materials for the advertising of the election.

Promotion of special consideration survey: During the exam period, we have received many complaints related to the application of special consideration. Hence, we promoted the survey on multiple platforms and translated it to share with the international students. We hope this can help.

Promotion of O-week seminar: We created working groups with Anne to promote SRC and the seminars with first year students. We have done the translation and designing work to promote it and will edit the recording to share with more students.

Promotion of the the international student survey: I have done the translation work related to the international student survey created by Migration Workers Centre and promoted it.

Special students affairs: In the past one month, I have helped many students with their special unprecedented cases by tracking it, and raised it in the fortnight meetings with the uni when needed.

Thank you for your work. Take care during lockdown.

Kind regards,
Maria and Roisin

General Secretary

PRIYA GUPTA AND ANNE ZHAO

Hello!

We hope everyone is settling well into semester 2 and online university, and to those of you for whom this is your first semester, we are so sorry, but it will get better! For now, try to go to your online classes while they're on, and find a uni community to get involved in - the SRC has plenty of great collectives doing important activism who would love to have you.

Over the winter holidays we have been working on a few exciting things. One of these is Radical Education Week. In the past this has been a chock-full week of exciting and educational sessions run by fellow students on all kinds of topics which you don't cover in class, and is radical in nature, in allowing students to experiment with different models of democratic teaching and learning. We hoped to be loud and proud on Eastern Av in Week 4, but due to the lockdown, have unfortunately had to push it online. We decided that instead of a week of events, we would have a series of exciting sessions throughout semester - every Tuesday 6pm and Thursday 2pm!

Come along to the first session this week, at 2pm on Thursday! It will be on education as a form of liberation and will be a great theoretical basis for the rest of the week. You can find more information about the week on our Facebook Page (linked in the QR code), and see new events being uploaded on a rolling basis. We will also be having a very exciting draw each week where participants in the events can win some ~radical~ books!

Hope to see you there!

Ethnocultural Officers

BONNIE HUANG, AZIZA MUMIN AND KRITIKA RATHORE

ACAR community space for people of colour of any level of political education, who also organise left-wing anti-racist activism. We understand these current circumstances are really difficult, and although we will be online, please do not be discouraged to join if you are new, we would be so happy to see you!

We also condemn the Berejiklian Government's increased use of police scare tactics in LGA's that have a large migrant demographic—many of whom are people of colour that have war or police-related trauma.

Over the winter break, ACAR has been working on the Asian on the Margins-Stories Campaign in collaboration with the Asian Australian Project. It is a social media campaign that aims to share and uplift the stories of the Asian community in light of the increased incidences of racial discrimination and assault worldwide. To submit your experiences with COVID-related discrimination, or stories of empowerment, please enter through the Google Form (linked in QR code):

Following the campaign, we will be hosting an online panel later in the semester to discuss these issues. Make sure to follow the campaign socials @ aapxacarstoriescampaign or like our Facebook page to keep updated.

Despite being in lockdown, this semester will still be an exciting one! We will meet weekly to organise or to do reading groups/film screenings as a way to educate ourselves. The group is autonomous, meaning that it is only open to people of colour, but we hold non-autonomous events open for allies as well!

If you are interested, please join ACAR's closed Facebook group or email us at ethno.cultural@src.usyd.edu.au!

Queer Officers

OSCAR CHAFFEY AND HONEY CHRISTENSEN

This semester, the Queer Action Collective has gone online. Join us at our regular meetings and stay tuned for updates on upcoming reading groups, virtual events such as Rad Ed week and USU Pride Week, as well as chances to contribute to our autonomous edition of Honi later in the semester! Check our Facebook page or message Honey Christensen or Oscar Chaffey for more info :)

Disabilities and Carers Officers

MARGOT BEAVON-COLLIN AND SARAH KORTE DID NOT SUBMIT A REPORT.

THE AUSTRALIENNE

Womasteriskn's Weekly

Women, amirite fellas?

SNEAK PEEK: *"Our hibiscus rights are under attack!" (aka ~ so true bestie ~ aka im woke and bespoke✌)*

Read the full piece online

In This Edition

St. Paul's Resident's Family Tree Looking a Bit Topiary

ARTICLE SPONSORED BY TINDER AUSTRALIA

A recent scientific study has revealed strong correlation between residency at St Paul's and Women's Colleges and incidents of haemophilia, limb malformations, feet perfectly evolved to fit unbroken RM Williams, and other congenital conditions.

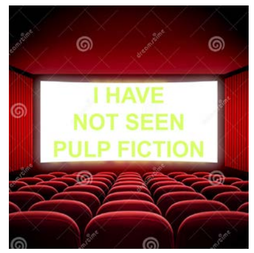
The study was prompted after suspicions of inbreeding were aroused when George Raytheon II discovered that his girlfriend, Emily Raytheon III had a similar surname to him and an uncanny facial resemblance. The couple met at a St Paul's College formal in 2019. "I didn't realise it was weird," George said, "until I realised we were both invited to Aunty Rineheart's Christmas dinner in Perth."

Documents obtained by Womasteriskn's Weekly reveal that St Paul's College and Women's College initiated their equity scholarship streams to diversify the College's gene pool.

"We found a worrying increase in health concerns amongst our collegians in the generations before we introduced the equity stream. We are seeing far fewer of these problems now that we've offered pathways for students from Coogee and Bronte, offsetting the Mosman mutations," said St Paul's physician Dr Eugene Iscist.

Using Tinder at college? Click here to learn how to link your Ancestry.com account to your profile!

🙏 *Affirmations*



Get ready to radically re-think and re-learn sex education!

RADICAL SEX and CONSENT WEEK 2021

Radical Sex and Consent Week is everything your high school sex education should have been and more! Join us to discuss sex, gender, relationships, bodies, and consent alongside an array of exciting guests. Have you ever asked.....

What is a red flag in a relationship?

How do I use a vibrator for the first time?

Is sex work the right industry for me?

When should I get an STI test?

What do I do when my friend discloses an incident to me?

Answer these questions and more with the many online events, podcasts, videos, and other content featured during Radical Sex and Consent Week in WEEK 8.

We're taking sex education back into our own hands. We believe that radical education is that which we learn together, and teach each other in pursuit of liberation (and pleasure....).

Celebrate body and sexual autonomy and expression, and combat sexual violence on campus with the Sydney Uni Women's Collective during Radical Sex and Consent Week!