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news

Life's a bleach and then you dye

by Gazette staff

Feminine protection is truly a misnomer. Products sold as "feminine hygiene" may actually be very harmful to women's health and to the condition of the environment.

The Women and Environment Education and Development Foundation (WEED) have begun a "Stop the Whitewash" campaign to protest the "sanitary products" industry's practices. Their goals are to compel manufacturers to get the chlorine

bleach out of women's "sanitary" products and diapers as well as to reduce the copious waste created by single use disposables.

A recent government report confirmed what environmentalists have been saying for years; the organochlorines discharged from bleached pulp mills are hazardous—even deadly to fish and other aquatic organisms near some pulp mills—and need to be reduced.

The waste created by these products is also of grave concern. 20 000 000 000 soggy and soiled disposable diapers find their way into landfill sites and municipal incinerators every year in North America. More than 12 billion sanitary napkins make the same journey.

Tampons cause problems in sewage treatment plants while their plastic applicators end up by the thousands in rivers, oceans and on coastal beaches, posing a grave threat to seabirds and marine mammals.

There are a number of ways women can voice their concerns surrounding these issues. Women have a

great deal of consumer clout considering they purchase 80% of all day-to-day goods and services. Women can demand chlorine-free products by calling the 1-800 number on the tampon or sanitary napkin box and saying they want products without any chlorine compounds at any stage of production.

Also, they can send back products with individual wrapping, polybagging and other excess packaging. Finally, they can start using re-usable cloth diapers, cloth sanitary napkins and sponge "tampons".

WEED was established as an offshoot of Women and Environmentalists magazine which in turn began as a small newsletter linking the participants in the UN conference of Human Settlements in 1976. Their objective is "to provide a forum for communication and conduct research on issues relating to women in the fields of planning, health, ecology and environment, workplace design, community development and urban and rural sociology."

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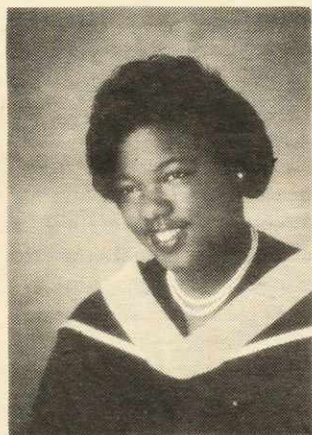
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