

The propaganda of pornography

by Siobhan Avery

Feminists are often criticised (usually by men) when they focus much effort within the Women's Movement against pornography. Women are advised to focus instead on more "useful" and "real" issues, the ones that truly affect them. They are accused of being "moral dictators", "prudish", and unappreciative of their own sexuality. Women are further accused of not understanding men's sexual needs and therefore being perhaps even "viciously sexist" themselves.

Why is pornography an issue; why focus on it? Pornography is an extremely prevalent part of our society; it is available in virtually every neighborhood in North America. It is a multi-billion dollar industry that wields a strong influence on society; the human models pornography portrays are not called "models" for nothing.

Pornography is imposed on people. Any woman who feels humiliated when she walks past a magazine rack laden with pornographic magazines while men are flipping through the pages is a victim of pornography.

Porn is hate material full of misogyny. It is difficult for women to face, as it cannot be discussed in the same manner as the Crow Rate. This is because pornography hurts women personally.

Many women, and men as well (contrary to the criticism mentioned earlier) are developing an appreciation for their sexuality, for its right to exist in a manner not decreed by pornography but rather as part of an individual human being. These people are demanding only the right to be considered as such; they are certainly not trying to impose social mores on other people nor are they being prudish. They are not denying sexuality, rather they are fighting against lies about their sexuality.

There are all kinds of statistical debates going on about whether or not pornography reduces or increases hostile behavior towards women. It is time to turn from numbers to real life: Crisis Centers have observed an increasingly noticeable link developing between pornography and sexual abuse. Women



report demands made on them by husbands to imitate pornography. Violence is often used against them if they refuse to comply.

A study done by the University of Pennsylvania showed that the more pornography men and women are exposed to, the less they consider rape a serious crime. In the study, researchers asked members of various groups to suggest an appropriate prison term in the case of a local man who had been convicted of raping a woman but had not

yet been sentenced. There were four groups: a "massive exposure" group that saw 36 erotic films; an "intermediate exposure" group that saw 18 erotic films and 18 non-erotic films; a "no exposure group" that saw no films at all. All films were of the same length.

The results were as follows: men from the "no exposure" group recommended sentences averaging 94 months, nearly twice as much as the 49 month sentence recommended by the men in the "massive exposure" group. The results for women were similar; though women from both groups suggested longer prison sentences than men had. Women from the "massive exposure" group recommended sentences of 77 months, and those from the "no exposure" group recommended 143 months.

Another discovery was: the more pornography that both the men and the women in the study were exposed to, the less offensive and objectionable they considered it to be, and the less they thought it should be restricted.

Canadian writer Margaret Atwood considers an interesting parallel to the abuses of sex: social drinking has not been banned as a solution to the problems of alcoholism but laws have been established to combat abuses of alcohol that may result in harm to other people.

The Playboy-type of pornography is not the savior of sexuality its defenders claim it to be. It is the most prevalent, pervasive and subtle form of pornography in our society, employing subversive psychology and sociology to present an image of women. "Soft-core" pornography affects women in more subtle ways than the explicit violence depicted in "hard-core" porn. It decrees what is female and attaches a false image to the female body. It is an objectified and humiliating image whereby a woman's body exists as a commodity designed for male pleasure. Scenes which include no male involvement or violence such as a woman masturbating or having sex with another woman, are created for the sexual pleasure of men.

In his book, *Techniques of Persuasion*, J.A.C.



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