

A magistrate's guide to mammaries: Boy tits good, girl tits bad ...so watch it!



by Michelle Huang
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"Anyone who thinks male and female breasts are the same is not living in the real world." -Provincial Court Judge Bruce Payne, in convicting university student Gwen Jacob of indecent exposure after going topless in Guelph last summer.

So, what is the difference between men's and women's breasts in the

bearpit

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"real" world of modern, western civilization?

The difference is that:

Women's breasts are, generally, larger than men's. And when they are not, many flat-chested women — and even those who are not — feel pressured to have them artificially enlarged by operation, often at horrifying risk to their health. Some implants are now leaking chemicals into recipients' bodies, and suspected of causing cancer and infectious diseases.

The trouble is that no one knows for sure what exactly the hazards are because some implant manufacturers didn't bother to properly or thoroughly examine the risks before selling them to cosmetic surgeons to pump up women's chests. And many doctors — who seem more interested in cashing in on poor self-image than

their patients' health — didn't investigate either.

Doctors and scientists who did warn of the dangers were, up until recently, ignored and shunned by their colleagues. In fact, the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons, Inc. in the early 1980's described small breasts as "deformed" and "diseased." All in the name of beauty — a male conception of beauty.

Some women's breasts are "too big," and these women are often the object of even more lewd stares and comments and unwelcome pinches (by men) than the woman with an "average" chest. Such women often deal with the harassment also by having surgery — to reduce their breast size.

Moral of the story: breasts are naturally too small, too big, or the wrong shape — they almost always need artificial enhancement.

Men bare their chests when and where they like, while it is only acceptable for women to show a little cleavage, but not too much; wear tight shirts, but not too tight. And, of course, there are specific contexts in which it is appropriate (and encouraged) that women be topless — ie. in pornography and strip shows.

In his decision to convict Gwen Jacob, Judge Payne said, "The female breast... is part of the female body that is sexually stimulating to men, both by sight and touch, and is not therefore a part of the body that ought to be flagrantly exposed to public view."

In other words, even though a man's bare chest is erotic to many women (and some men), women must control the urge to hoot, pinch, and grab, while men can't be expected to exercise the same self-discipline. Therefore, the onus is on women to prevent men from becoming "sexually stimulated" and committing sexual

harassment or sexual assault by changing our behaviour — ie. covering our breasts; wearing not-too-short, not-too-tight skirts; not getting too drunk or too sexually assertive.

Whether or not the female breast is erotic is a question the courts waver back and forth on — depending on what the charge is and against whom it is laid. In 1984, New Brunswick's Court of Appeal reduced a sexual assault because a man scuffling with a 15-year-old girl managed only to grab her breasts, not her genitals. Judge J.C. Angers called the female breast a "secondary sexual characteristic", equating it with a man's beard. One certainly would not be charged with sexual assault for fondling a man's facial hair, and there-

fore, the judge concluded, the accused was not guilty of sexual assault.

Judge Payne, in recognizing there is a significant difference in men's and women's breasts, is in touch with reality but isn't interested in changing it. He convicted Gwen Jacob on the grounds that she violated community standards. The community standards Judge Payne invoked and upholds are those that make women's breasts a fetish; that treat them as dirty and shameful; that tell women our breasts can and should always be improved; and that put the responsibility of unwanted advances and sexual assault on the woman.

Michelle Huang is a staff writer for the Varsity

The door marked "Men Also"

by Darren Wilson

This article may come as a surprise (pleasant or otherwise) to some readers. Preconceived notions aside, the truth is that women's issues and feminism have a strong effect on today's men (as they should). However, a realistic male perspective remains largely elusive in today's society.

I do not wish to make any sweeping generalizations concerning the status of men or regarding feminism; I can only speak for myself. But in doing so, and in voicing my own beliefs, perhaps I can express some thoughts and feelings that may be shared by other men.

It is my mother whom I credit with my starting to question the established gender roles of society. My mother is a feminist. Not a radical feminist, but a feminist nonetheless. I do not feel that one can be an open-minded, free-thinking individual in today's society without being a feminist (or an equalist) to a certain extent. But I must also equally acknowledge my father, whose struggle to change within himself and to question "the system," set an example of which I am proud to follow.

Despite my liberal upbringing coming to York was a shock to say the least. I was astonished at the

atmosphere of hostility towards men, not just in the campus media, but also as propagated by students, student groups and faculty alike within the York community. I was even more appalled at the apparent lack of acknowledgment of men who genuinely make an effort to change themselves and their environment every day of the year, not just as a token gesture on Women's Remembrance Day. Maybe my childhood wasn't so average after all.

Militant feminism was not something I was exposed to in my average suburban public school education. Although I studied the women's suffrage movement in history class, and participated in debates on abortion, I had never been subject to "male-bashing" before.

For me, this was a great load to bear at an age when I was coming into full awareness on my own. Institutional discrimination and the victimization of women were around centuries before I was born. How can I, and my generation, be held responsible for our ancestors' ignorance and injustice? Pointing fingers is not a solution. I don't think many feminists who continue to do so realize the damage they may be inflicting on future generations of young men and women. This is where an anti-feminist backlash can start.

Changing the spelling of

"women" to "womyn" and the call for the advancement of "herstory" are, in my opinion, petty and inflammatory actions which do nothing to promote the equality of women in our society nor advance the cause of feminism, serving only to antagonize men (the etymology of the word "history" makes no reference to gender).

These two examples just scratch the surface. Acts of radical, militant feminism are largely regressive and counterproductive, and undermine the more legitimate efforts of the struggle for equality. Perhaps more important, the credibility of feminism itself is undermined, and men are put on the defensive.

The change towards equality has begun. But keep in mind that we have the inertia of generations upon generations of inequality to overcome. Change will not come instantly as all of us hope it will. The momentum generated by radical feminists of the past thirty years is more than enough to carry us through the next thirty. But we must start working together to educate and promote positive, constructive change for the future.

Men can no longer be excluded from the process of change. Men are as much a part of the future of equality as women are. That is what equality is all about, isn't it?

If women want men to change, please support men who do.

excalibur
ELECTIONS
1992

Wednesday, March 11
4:00 pm

- Editor-in-Chief
- Managing Editor
- News Editor(s)
- Arts Editor(s)
- Staff reps. to the B.O.P.

Thursday, March 12
4:00 pm

- Features Editor
- Sports Editor
- Letters Editor
- Photo Editor
- Issues coordinators

Come out and vote.
3rd floor Student Centre
in the Common Room