

to photos of smiling Christy document the risks women in poverty face in childbirth, and the 'special report' is effectively an advertisement for CARE. Again, the heart is apparent, and the issues touched on in the story could be put in human rights terms, but they aren't. Next, I meet the Natalie of the front cover — Natalie Portman, who is concerned that we know she is not the intellectual she is said to be (!) but is in fact 'really mushy'. It's not at all apparent why this profile gets the 'Fashion with heart' logo.

These articles are not rights-based stories. They are not about people whose human rights are threatened, violated or realised. They are not about people who advocate for, defend, or even offend against, human rights. They about people who do 'good things' for other people — and what they do may or may not address human rights.

Even if, generously, a story on fitting out women looking for work is about sex discrimination and the right to work, what undermines any credible claim to *Marie Claire's* taking human rights seriously, or even understanding them at all, is its boast that 'it's cool to care'. What's cool, or not, is a question of fashion, and what is cool one day may not be the next. Human rights — and a commitment to them — is not a question of fashion. Human rights matter whether or not it is cool to care. The universality of human rights is fundamentally at odds with their being a matter of fashion.

The 'Fashion with heart' stories might have incorporated some commentary, or even analysis, informed by human rights, lifting them above being mere feel-good stories about glamorous people. But they didn't. Instead, the 'human rights' claim in the marketing of this issue of *Marie Claire* trivialises human rights, and patronises its readers. I am confident that among the readers of *Marie Claire* are people who, wealthy enough to consider paying \$2000 for a pair of shoes, are smart enough to understand that support for fundamental rights is not a question of fashion.

I am attracted by an argument that any forum that promotes understanding of and respect for human rights is worthy of support, even if (or especially when?)

jammed between the glamour ads. But until *Marie Claire* actually does that, the cover price of \$8.50 is better spent on a donation to CARE (thanks Christy).

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POLICE VERBALS

Mutant Death; Big Home Productions (EP) 1984

In Australia's punk music scene in the early 1980s, The Black Assassins were said to be 'Brisbane's Ugliest Band',¹ a reference to their appearance, not their music. Brisbane's loss was Sydney's gain when some members of the band moved down and formed the 'very obscure activist punk' band,² Mutant Death.

Mutant Death never gained the following of The Black Assassins, but many Sydney lawyers have good reason to remember them. Redfern Legal Centre's 1984 Christmas party was 'at home', in the Redfern Town Hall. The night was hot, the hall packed, the music loud. Mutant Death was undeterred by a threat from one of Redfern's lawyers to pull the plug on them and, in a tribute to their hosts, the band performed — a more apt word than 'sang' — 'Police Verbals', aka 'Redfern Legal Centre Blues'.

'Police Verbals' describes bluntly and vividly the notorious nature of NSW policing at the time, later the subject of the Wood Royal Commission.³ Virginia Bell — now Justice Bell of the High Court — was counsel assisting that Commission, 13 years after Mutant Death had put on record her reputation for taking on the NSW police.

Seven-inch vinyls of Mutant Death's 'Police Verbals' occasionally become available from online sources.

I was sitting home watching my TV
When three fat pigs came bustin' in on me
'We got you red handed, with three grams
and a gun'
'Come on down the station, we're gonna
have some fun'.

I was being verballed, I was being framed
The cops had set me up, I was going down
the drain.

I didn't know what was going on, I was in a
state of fright
Alone with three pigs, in the middle of the night

They said 'go with the detective, he'll treat
you real nice'
I'm not saying anything, till I get legal advice.

I was being verballed, I was being framed
Had to get in touch with Redfern Legal
Centre straight away.

I went with the detective, into another room
There was no chairs or tables, I knew it was
coming soon
Then he took off his jacket, and he punched
me in the face
Said 'plead guilty to the charges or you'll
never leave this place'.

I was being verballed, I was being bashed
And the law couldn't help me 'cause I didn't
have the cash.

I woke up next morning, still bleeding in my cell
Got on to Redfern Legal Centre, spoke to
Virginia Bell
When she got on to the cops they said 'you
haven't got a chance'
'Your client signed a record of interview
before we broke his hands'.

I was being verballed, I was being framed
The cops had set me up, and I was going
down the drain.

Next thing I knew, I was standing up in court
The evidence was bullshit, and the witnesses
were bought
I told the judge and jury but the bullshit
didn't stop
They were gonna take the word of a lousy
drug dealin' cop.

I was being verballed, I was being framed
The cops had loaded me up, I was going down
the drain.

The cops had done their homework, they
knew they couldn't fail
The jury found me guilty, I got 16 years in jail
And now I know what justice is, but what a
price I paid
I should have read the law book from Redfern
Legal Aid.

I was being verballed, I was being framed
The cops had loaded me up, and I was going
down the drain.

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SIMON RICE was a volunteer and employee
at Redfern Legal Centre 1980–1988.

REFERENCES

1. Nation Master Encyclopedia, <nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/The-Black-Assassins> at 9 February 2009.
2. Antipodean Underground, <antipodeanunderground.com/blog/> at 9 February 2009.
3. Available online at <pic.nsw.gov.au/OtherReportsAndPublications.aspx> at 9 February 2009.