

'SIT DOWN GIRLIE'

Girlie has a peek at Sex



Sex too hot for Iceland

While Mount Eyjafjallajökull disrupts world airline services by blowing its top, Julie Bindel (*The Age*, 27 March 2010) reports from Reykjavik that Iceland is about to close down its sex industry. A new law is intended to close all of Iceland's strip clubs, and make it illegal for any business to profit from nudity of its employees. Bindel writes, 'The Nordic state is the first country in the world to ban stripping and lapdancing for feminist, rather than religious reasons.' She quotes the politician who proposed the ban, 'It is not acceptable that women or people in general are a product to be sold.' Iceland has a population of only 320 000 and half of its politicians are women with Johanna Sigurdardottir being the openly lesbian head of government.

Steele trapped

Republican Party chair Michael Steele, representing the Conservative Party in the United States — upholders of family and Christian values — has got himself into a pickle over a visit to Voyeur West Hollywood, a bondage and S&M Club in Los Angeles 'City of the Fallen Angels' (*The Age*, 31 March 2010). His monthly disclosure report to the Federal Electoral Commission revealed he had spent about US\$2000 on a visit to the club where 'topless women hang from nets on the ceiling, appear in acts involving bondage and simulate sex in a glass cage.'

Raunch culture

To understand how Gen Y women are coping with the 'sexualisation and pornification of society' Dr Anastasia Powell, sociologist, LaTrobe University interviewed 117 teens and young adults for her PhD and book *Sex, Power and Consent: Youth Culture and the Unwritten Rules*. She found raunch culture is putting pressure on young women to have sex younger and against their will. She also found that while young women are better informed about sexual health issues they are still called 'sluts' if they are too open about their sexuality and needs.

We are not victims

Kathleen Parker's 'Afghan Women Reveal Tenacity' (*The Weekend Australian*, 20–21 March 2010) strips away some myths about Afghan women. She features Colonel Shafiqua Quraish, Director of Gender, Human and Child Rights who was one of nine women to be awarded the International Women of Courage Award. Along with fellow award-winner Afghan Shukria Asil, Colonel Quraish assists women and children struggling for rights and security. The dominant theme of these two women, and many other Afghan women is, 'we are not victims'. This is a common theme echoed by Vital Voices which sprang from the United Nation's Fourth World Conference in 1995 which promotes women's advancement. Though many of the women have been raped, attacked, and discriminated against, their quest is for empowerment rather than restitution by engaging women in the workforce and in politics.

Out and about but still not legal

A feature in *The Sunday Age* (28 March 2010) by Jacqueline Tomlins notes that same-sex marriages are legally recognised in 20 countries and argues it is time they were legal in Australia. Same-sex marriages in this country are not permitted by federal law although there is legislation to remove discrimination against same-sex couples in tax, health, welfare, aged care and superannuation requirements. Canada, the United Kingdom and some states of the US do recognise same-sex marriages.

Fair go, mate!

Fair Work Australia is expected to be granted new powers to assist in tackling the wage gap between women and men which is currently at about 17 per cent. The federal government is also examining an initiative to get businesses to report every two years on what they are doing to address gender pay imbalances. It is also mooted that the Sex Discrimination Commissioner will be granted own motion powers, which would mean the ability to investigate sex discrimination without having to wait for complaints.

Why's he getting more than me?

Victoria's women barristers want the government to assist them in ending the pay disparity between men and women barristers. Women barristers briefed by government departments for lower court matters are paid on average 59 per cent less than men. Women barristers are briefed less than their male counterparts by private firms and they are briefed in matters stereotyped as women's work such as Family Court matters, mediations, and Children's Court work. They dip out on civil, commercial larger trial briefs. (*The Sunday Age*, 18 April 2010)

Defensive homicide

In 2005, in Victoria, the defence of provocation in murder trials was abolished with the Attorney-General saying it had promoted a culture of victim blaming and had no place in modern society. Now anti-domestic violence campaigners have said the defence of 'defensive homicide' appears to have replaced provocation. Luke Middendorp killed his partner Jade Bownds with a fishing knife and was acquitted of murder but convicted of defensive homicide. Evidence before the jury was that he had stabbed her four times in the back, did not call an ambulance and neighbours heard him saying, 'You had it coming. You got what you deserved, you slut.' She was half his size.

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