

## Girl Culture

### It's not a Girl friendly culture:

Most world leaders, law makers, law enforcers, Santa Clause, the Easter Bunny, the Pope, baby Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Allah, the Creator, God - all guys!

We live in a culture that makes a fortune out of sexual violence. Most of that violence is against girls and women. Pornography for example - If they showed pictures or films of similar things being done to a particular race - or for that matter, animals - racial equality groups or animal rights activists would put a stop to it. In fact, we live in a culture where violence against women is considered "entertainment". A culture that makes and watches "Slasher" movies where women run around screaming trying to get away from men with knives. It seems it is completely acceptable to use images of violence against women - in movies, music and in advertising:

- Skate board add : a man is holding a gun to a woman's head - with the word, "Bitch" underneath
- Bumper sticker: "If I don't get laid soon, somebody's going to get hurt."
- Fashion ad: women are literally Walking Targets: models wearing skimpy clothes with bulls-eyes on the breasts and butt.

**Fashion advertising** (and Barbie) have convinced us that we are all supposed to look a certain way - tall and very, very skinny. (If Barbie were real, she would be 5'7", weigh 100 lbs and she would be so top heavy she would not be able to stand up.) How many of us have never felt we were too fat, not tall enough, didn't like the shape of our body? Eating disorders have reached epidemic proportions: 40% of all 9 year old girls have already tried dieting which is the leading cause of eating disorders. 90% of sufferers are female. (National Eating Disorder Center) Here we all are, hating our bodies for not looking like the bodies in the magazines when the truth is - The models in the magazines don't even look like that. They are air brushed and digitally altered. Many of the models themselves are surgically altered. We live in a world where women go under the knife to remove or add to or change the shape and size of their bodies to look a certain way so they can feel beautiful. We live in a world where females starve themselves to death in order to meet a standard of beauty that doesn't exist. If we love each other, and ourselves we have to stop focussing on how beautiful we look. We have to start telling each other and ourselves how beautiful we are.

### Schools are not Girl friendly places:

In textbooks, only one-seventh of illustrations of children are female

- girls read six times as many biographies of males as of females

- children read three times as many boy centered stories
- even in animal stories, characters are twice as likely to be males
- boys are depicted as brave, clever, and resourceful in stories
- girls are depicted as kind, dependent and docile in stories
- boys are five times more likely to receive teachers attention
- boys are twelve times more likely to speak up in class
- boys are twice as likely to be seen as role models
- boys are praised for academic and intellectual work while girls are praised for clothing, behaving properly and obeying rules

**It is not a Girl friendly language:**

*Mankind, human, person, the brotherhood of man* - (postman, chairman, repairman, policeman, manmade...) how about this one: *history*. (his story!) Ask yourselves, how many of the following facts did we learn in our *history* lessons in school?

**It is not a Girl friendly world:**

Women make up 52% of the worlds population, own 1% of the worlds property, do 2/3 of the worlds work, make 1/10th of the worlds money. (United Nations statistic)

**Africa and the Middle East** - women are infibulated - an extreme form of genital mutilation, often done to young girls without anesthetic, which prevents females from experiencing sexual pleasure and causes life threatening infections. As well, "Honor Killings" are common in many Middle Eastern countries and a woman can be killed by her male family members for shaming them by committing the crime of infidelity or losing her virginity outside of marriage - even if she has been raped.

**Afghanistan** - women have been robbed of their basic human rights (education, medical care, the right to seek employment or to speak in public).

**Nigeria** - young women are stoned to death for becoming pregnant outside marriage - even if she has been raped.

**Pakistan** - 90% of women are abused by their husbands and are considered to have the same value as a shoe.

**China** - so many girl babies are killed at birth there is now a shortage of marriageable aged women and young girls between 12 and 18 are being kidnapped and sold as brides.

**India** - the leading cause of death for married women is "accidental kitchen fires". Wives are burned so that the husband can marry again and collect a new 'dowry' from his new wife's family.

**Japan** - women who report domestic violence are often told to, "go home and be better wives" and robbery is considered a worse crime than rape

**Canada** - 1,000,000 women every day are injured (2 women every week are killed) by a husband or boyfriend. This is the leading cause of injury for women In Canada, including car accidents, stranger rapes and muggings combined. (Statistics Canada survey)

**Did you know that Women invented:**

- the bullet proof vest (not guns or bullets though)
- the fire escape
- the navy signal flare (about saving people and preserving life)
- the circular saw
- solar heating
- invisible glass (what we have in our windows today)
- computer programming
- email
- bridges and canals
- tires
- the white line that divides the road
- the ice-cream cone
- and yes, the Barbie doll - (the woman who invented the Barbie doll also invented the first natural looking breast prosthesis for women who have lost their breasts to cancer. - for this, we can almost forgive her for the Barbie doll!)
- and a Japanese woman - Murasaki Shikibu - wrote the first novel

**Remember:** Don't worry so much about being *good* girls - or *nice* girls - be **strong** girls, be **smart** girls, be **safe** girls. **Strong** girls grow up to be powerful women, **smart** girls grow up to be wise women and **safe** girls get to grow up.