



**GENDERHOPES**  
WORKING TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

## **She's Not For Sale**

**By Lucy Coote**

Watched by a teenage boy, a young girl seductively opens a can of Coke and it conveniently sprays all over her chest and mouth. The boy gapes on, all his adolescent hormones on overdrive.

Just another advertising image using an attractive girl, we see them all the time. Suggestive images of picture-perfect, young women in sexually suggestive poses intended to grab the attention of men.

So what? Sex sells, we all know that. It's just part of the society we live in. Women who look good sell commodities, right? It's a win-win situation in which everyone reaps the rewards.

Or do they?

How exactly is this benefiting the female population? Is my own daughter going to become that girl in the advert one day, lured into the false pretence of (five minutes of) fame? Will she understand that women in the media are not fairly represented and that they are carefully selected, often by men, for men's pleasure?

Will she remain true to self, follow her own ideals, beliefs and values and not bow to the unrelenting external pressure which starts in early childhood to continually conform to 'look like the ideal woman'?

I do hope so.

But females are often other females' own worst enemies. Although we know what we want and how we want to be, when it comes to how we look we are constant critics of each other and often of ourselves.

A middle-aged, regular guy walks past on the street - fat, thin, bald, short, tall, skinny, tie, no tie, jeans, suit - and no one bats an eyelid. No one critiques how he looks, what he's wearing, or the fact that he's got a slight paunch appearing or a wrinkled forehead. No one's that interested in him, unless he's a good-looking dude or possibly famous.

A middle-aged, regular woman walks by on the same street and she will be totally scrutinised in seconds by both males and females and a quick judgment made on her overall attractiveness. If she is remotely outside the "perfect ideal woman bracket" she will be criticised mentally, and often verbally.

Why don't we women support each other more to combat this ridiculous stereotyping? Why do we allow men to objectify us, especially through the media? Why do we keep buying the trashy magazines that make huge fortunes selling pages and pages and pages of stories about women and their attractiveness, or lack of? And don't get me started on the out-of-control porn or "glamour" industry. Can you really claim to be pro-feminism and work in the porn industry? Isn't that as good as saying, "Well yes, we women ARE viewed as sex objects, but I feel in control and empowered because I am a female making lots of money". What kind of message does that send out to young, influential girls looking for a career choice? It sends out the message that sex sells and it's ok to sell yourself for money. That's not ok and it's not pro-feminism in any shape or form.

The media are so influential and so powerful in our current time. They have women in the palm of their hand and we are letting them dictate whatever message they want to send out without proper control. The current message is you must be thin, eternally young, symmetrically beautiful and have no imperfections. We have celebrity "role models" to show us how it's done and some of them are even credited with intelligence too. It really is possible to have it all? Well yes, of course it is - but only if you're attractive. If you're clever but don't conform to the largely Westernised level of attractiveness then it's unlikely you'll get the full recognition as an intelligent human being that you deserve. In fact you will probably end up being known more for your flaws and "unattractiveness" than for what you say or do in the world.

Where will it end? Will this bubble of perfection change its course and reverse, or will it continue to get worse until something major happens which forces change to happen? How many more females will be subjected to rape and domestic violence or the victims of self-harm or bullying? When will these negative actions cease and we become at ease with who we are as individuals, not just viewed as sex objects?

As the documentary Miss Representation shows, we CAN be the change we want to see in the world, and united we can make it a better place for the female generations to come.

### ***About the author***

*Lucy Cote lives in Monaco with her five year old daughter and supremely patient husband. She feels compelled to pick up a pen and write about topics that impassion her, usually centered toward the more taboo.*

*One such topic is the advocating of women's rights and equality. Lucy feels her driven purpose in life is to communicate for others in need whose voice is often not heard.*

*For more information about the documentary Miss Representation and the Representation Project, please visit: <http://therepresentationproject.org/>*