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Newsletter of the Lower Hutt Women's Centre

Hui Tangaru 2013 Vol.21 No 1



Sandra Torrijos / Isis International-Manila

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♦ The Feral Rich

Women's Centre Opening Hours

Monday to Thursday 10am – 5pm

Friday 9am – 5pm

Ph: 04 569 2711 Fax: 04 570 2820

Email: info@lhwc.org.nz

186 Knights Road, Waterloo

Lower Hutt 5011



Thanks to all the women that helped put the newsletter together, and to the women that donate the graphics to Isis International Manilla.

Friendship Group

We are a facilitated group who meet weekly for discussions and occasionally an outing.

Our focus is on learning about friendship, maintaining, developing and exploring the ideas.

Friendships are a vital source of emotional sustenance. As well as providing the pleasure of companionship, your friendship network offers you a sense of support and belonging.

The outings are on the last thursday of

the month. We often leave early.

This group is open to all women and you can join the group by turning up to the Women's Centre on Thursdays from 10am to 12noon.

Our ability to make and sustain friendships is influenced by our ability to develop and maintain a nurturing relationships with ourselves.

Facilitator: Yvonne Broadley

If you are interested please phone or come along.

All women welcome.

Free 1-1 Computer Lessons @the Lower Hutt Women's Centre

Learn how to....

- surf the net, keep yourself safe online, send email and connect with your family and friends on Facebook or with SKYPE, edit your photos and share them online.
- use Word or Open Office, update your CV and cover letter, or do what you want.
- Excel to manage your budget, Power point to present your work, smart presentation and branding - first impressions and look good,
- maintain your computer, organise your photos and documents, avoid losing your work, keep those viruses and worms out, troubleshoot when it all goes wrong, and much more ...

When? Thursdays (9-3.30pm)

Appointments with computer tutor 30 or 60 min

How? Phone 569-2711 for an appointment

Lower Hutt Women's Centre | 186 Knights Road | Waterloo

Free Access computer

The Women's Centre has a free public access computer available for all women to use during our opening hours. Phone to book your time.

Anger as a Strength

Anger is a misunderstood emotion and energy.

This training is skill based in providing opportunities and techniques to express anger using tools of assertiveness.

Anger is necessary for survival. Many women have been taught, to express anger or not express anger, in unhealthy ways. Through these unhealthy expressions of anger problems arise and issues become bigger, confused or shut down.

This course will be an opportunity for women to explore the use and mis-use of anger.

Facilitator: Ally Andersun

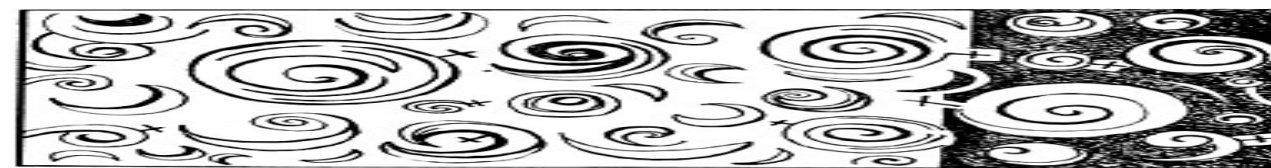
Dates: 6 Weeks beginning Wednesday 13th February 2013 (Not including 20th March 2013, last date 27th March 2013)

Time: 7-9pm

Cost: \$40 Waged /\$20 Low or unwaged

Enrol: by deposit or payment.

Venue: Lower Hutt Women's Centre



Mosaics

If you want to learn how to mosaic and meet other women doing the same come along anytime from 10am to 2.00pm every Tuesday, Stephanie can show you what to do. We normally start with a paver, after you have made a paving stone you can progress on to a variety of projects. We do charge for materials - it does cost \$5 for a completed paver. If you want to work on your own projects you need to pay for materials.

This is an open workshop and costs are for materials used only.





Welcome Home

Using Meditation To Find Relaxation and Peace Wherever We Are

A 6 week Course with Ruth Pink

Date and Time: Six weeks beginning Thursday 28 February 2013 **Time:** 7-9pm.

Cost: \$40/\$20 Waged/Unwaged. **Enrolment** through payment

Meditation is a simple technique for relaxing and refreshing the mind and body. It empowers us to establish a sense of grounded -ness and peace in the midst of change and the difficulties of life.

Research has shown that meditation can bring about relief for a number of ailments like stress, pain, anxiety and depression. It can also help us to develop mindfulness which supports us to live fuller, more vibrant lives.

Ruth will tailor the course to the needs and aspirations of the women who attend, but a primary focus will be to discovering and strengthening a feeling of home within ourselves.

During the six weeks we will also:

- learn some basic meditation techniques,
- explore ways to manage our thoughts and feelings (instead of letting them manage us!)
- discuss ways of living more easefully and more mindfully.
- explore some basic Buddhist principles that support meditation.

The course will include meditation practice, art work, gentle body movements, discussion and sharing. It is suitable for people who are new to meditation and those who are looking to revitalize their practice.

Please wear warm loose clothing.

6 Minimum for course to commence.

Ruth Pink currently works as a Team Leader assisting community organisations to support vulnerable families and children. In the past, she has worked as a writer, counsellor and a celebrant, and has been meditating and studying meditation for more than 17 years. A stressful job brought her to meditation and a serious illness helped her really practice it. Ruth is connected to the Wangapeka Study and Retreat Centre in Nelson, and has studied with the Venerable Tarchin Hearn, the Venerable Namgyal Rinpoche, Leander Kane and many other teachers whose wisdom has enriched her life. Ruth weaves together teachings from the Buddha and other spiritual traditions with art, science, and poetry. While seeking to inspire others to change their lives and change their minds, she is also open-hearted, and down to earth.

Self Care versus Burn Out

Part of self care is understanding that the relationship between belief systems and feelings is an essential step to stop self defeating behaviour.

Burn out is a community hazard which people contract when they forget to remember themselves.

This workshop is designed to develop an ethos of caring, support and empowerment for the participants when facing present day pressures and stress. There is opportunity to identify the differences in social stress and personal stress and how both of these impact on daily lives, often in an unconscious way.

This workshop is skill based where physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being will be explored, drawing on the experience of the facilitator and the participants together.

Safe, firm boundaries will be named and regained throughout the workshop.

Facilitator: Ally Andersun

Date: Friday 12th April 2013, Saturday 13th April 2013 and Sunday 14th April 2013.

Cost: \$40/\$20 Waged/Unwaged

Time: Frid, 7pm-9.30pm, Saturday 10-5pm and Sunday 10-4.30pm.

Enrolment by contacting the Women's Centre and making payment.

Participants are expected to attend all sessions.



Sandra Torrijos/ Isis International Manila

Self Esteem Workshops For Women

Lower Hutt Women's Centre
186 Knights Road
Lower Hutt
5692 711

Friday Morning 2013

Jan 25	Self Love
Feb 1	Acknowledging Self
Feb 8	Enhancing self in terms of awareness
Feb 15	Acceptance and use of strengths
Feb 22	Positive thought and talk
Mch 1	Messages about self
Mch 8	Accepting responsibility about self
Mch 15	Coming to grips with feelings
Mch 22	Talking About Ourselves
April 5	Beliefs About Self
April 12	Expressing Pride in Self
April 19	Letting Go of the Past
April 26	Respecting Self and Others
May 3	Striving for pure motives
May 10	Putting Yourself in Neutral
May 17	Having the Courage to be Imperfect
May 24	Developing Courage
May 31	Willpower
June 7	Anger as a Strength

Tuesday Evening 2013

Jan 22	Positive thought and talk
Jan 31	Messages about Self
Feb 7	Accepting responsibility for self
Feb 14	Coming to grips with feelings
Feb 21	Talking About Ourselves
Feb 28	Beliefs About Self
March 6	Expressing Pride in Self
March 13	Letting Go of the Past
March 20	Respecting Self and Others
March 27	Striving for Pure Motives
April 3	Putting Yourself in Neutral
April 10	Having the Courage to be Imperfect
April 17	Developing Courage
April 24	Willpower
May 1	Anger as a Strength
May 8	Developing Self Knowledge
May 15	Self Love
May 22	Acknowledging Self
May 29	Enhancing self in terms of awareness
June 5	Acceptance and use of strengths

Now is the time for all good women to stand up and say who we will be

Self Esteem Workshops on a Friday morning and a Tuesday Evening.

Each workshop is separate. You may attend one or as many as you like. Creche is provided for **pre-school children only** without extra charge only on Friday morning. Please make enquiries about babies because they need a lot of attention and we have one creche worker. The workshop is for women only so try to avoid planning on taking your children into the workshop.

Time: Friday morning 9.45 - 12noon and Tuesday evening 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

The workshop starts right on time at 10am and 6.30pm and late comers can't go into the morning workshop.

If you have children you need to arrive about 20 minutes early to settle them in.

Cost: Friday \$2.00 and Tuesday \$5.00

All women welcome.

You don't need to enrol, just turn up.

Facilitators:

Friday Morning Stephanie Brockman

Tuesday Evening Julie Smart



Therapeutic Massage & Relaxation Massage

When muscles are overworked, waste products such as lactic acid can accumulate in the muscle, causing soreness, stiffness, and even muscle spasm. Massage improves circulation, which increases blood flow, bringing fresh oxygen and nutrients to body tissues. This can assist the lymphatic system in the elimination of waste products, speed healing after injury, and enhance recovery from disease. It eases tense and knotted muscles and stiff joints, improving mobility and flexibility.

Therapeutic massage can be used to promote general well-being and enhance self-esteem, while boosting the circulatory and immune systems to benefit blood pressure, circulation, muscle tone, digestion, and skin tone.

And it feels great!

Book a session at The Women's Centre with Rachel on: 0226988090 or email: therapeuticmassage@gmx.com

I take appointments at the Women's Centre on a Monday.

Price: 45 minute session for only \$30

I also treat clients at Aurora Medical Centre in 39 Pretoria Street, Lower Hutt which I charge professional rates. If you come to Aurora Centre as a result of referral from Women's Centre I will donate 10% to the Women's Centre.

WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

The Women's Support Group is for

- support or
- if you are having a hard time coping with stress,
- day to day hassles,
- depression,
- grief
- or oppression.

Do you want to unload, are you getting stressed out?

If you are feeling out of touch with yourself and other people around, or feeling isolated .. then the group is a time to get support in a caring environment while you work on looking at yourself, your feelings and how you are in life.

The group is open to all women and you can join the group by turning up to the Women's Centre on Wednesdays at 1pm. The group goes from 1pm to 2.30pm.

You don't need to book, just turn up.

Every Wednesday at 1pm. The group lasts for an hour and half.

Facilitator: Stephanie Brockman

Support Group for Women who have experienced childhood Sexual Abuse and Rape

A monthly 3 hour support group for women who have experienced childhood sexual abuse and rape is being offered at the Lower Hutt Women's Centre. These will be held on the first Sunday of the month at 1pm to 4pm and are for women at any stage of their journey through abuse and recovery.

The group will be facilitated by an ACC accredited counsellor who is skilled in therapeutic group work.

"The traumatised child doesn't have the luxury of self reflection." (John Briere).

This group offers an opportunity for women to develop self awareness and self reflection at their own pace and in their own style, an opportunity to reclaim and retrieve split off hurt parts of themselves and allow them to heal.

Healing is not only possible but essential.

Facilitator:

Ally Andersun

Time: 1-4pm

Attendance: Enrolment not necessary, you can just turn up.

Inquiries: Ally Andersun or Stephanie Brockman Phone 5692711

Dates for the next 7 months

Sunday 3rd February 2013

Sunday 3rd March 2013

Sunday 7th April 2013

Sunday 5th May 2013

Sunday 2nd June 2013

Sunday 7th July 2013

Sunday 4th August 2013

Venue: Lower Hutt Women's Centre,
186 Knights Road, Waterloo. Lower

Self Esteem for Teenage Girls

We will be running a course this first half of the year. If you are interested please phone the centre and check for dates and a current pamphlet to be sent out.

Self Development Using the Psychodramatic Method

This weekend will give participants opportunity to explore personal issues using the psychodramatic method. This workshop will be useful for women wanting to expand and develop their experience of life and the issues that hold them back. Women new to the psychodramatic method are welcome.

Participants are expected to attend the full course

Dates: Frid 17th May , Saturday 18th May and Sunday 19th May 2013

Time: Frid: 7-9.30pm 10-5pm Saturday and 10-4.30pm Sunday

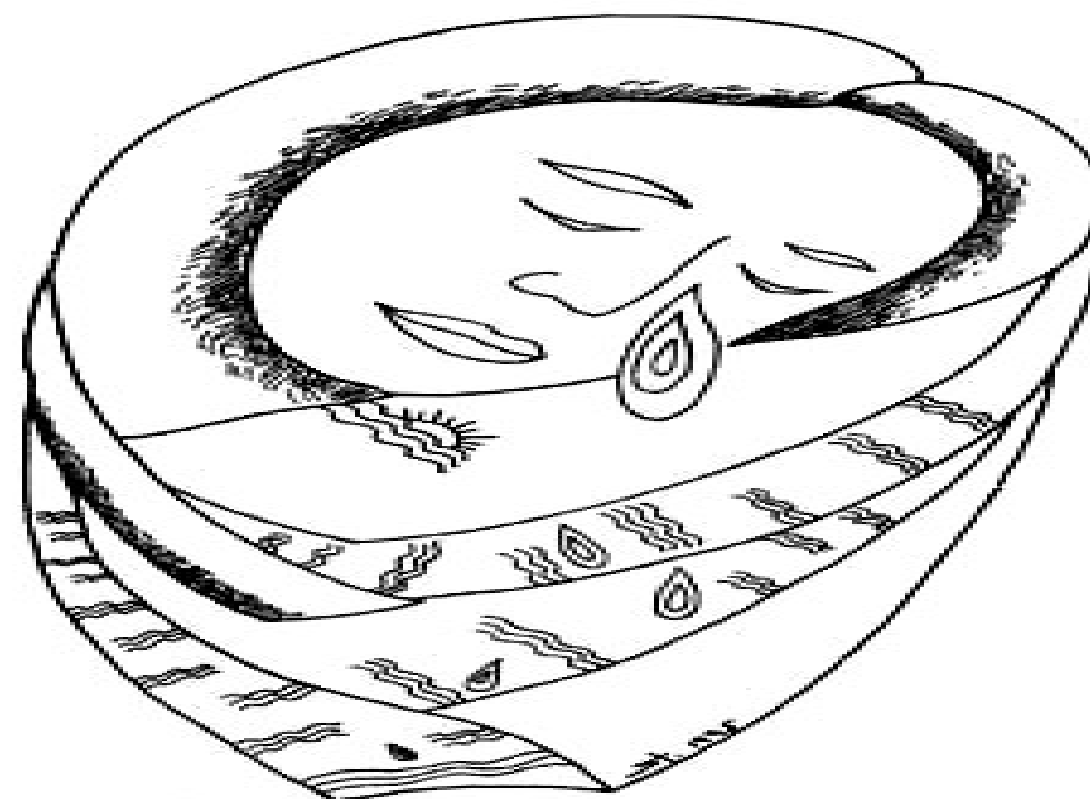
Venue: Women's Centre

Enrol: Only by payment or deposit

Cost: Waged \$40 /Low or Unwaged \$20

Facilitator: Ally Andersun

5 Minimum and 7 Maximum for course to commence
Participants are expected to attend the full course.



Sandra Torrijos / Isis International-Manila

Assertiveness for Women

Assertiveness is the ability to express yourself and your rights without violating the rights of others. It is appropriately direct, open, and honest communication which is self-enhancing and expressive.

Acting assertively will give you the opportunity to feel self-confident and will generally gain you the respect of yourself and your peers and friends. It can increase your chances for honest relationships, and help you to feel better about yourself and your self in everyday situations.

Dates: 6 Weeks beginning Wednesday 3rd April 2013

Venue: Women's Centre, 186 Knights Road, Waterloo.

Lower Hutt Enrol: Only by payment or deposit

Cost: Waged \$40/\$20 Waged/Unwaged

Time: 7-9pm

Facilitator: Stephanie Brockman



Menopause for Women

This course is designed for women experiencing menopause and for women wanting information on menopause — looking at recognising symptoms and ways of handling them. There will be guest speakers talking on medical treatments, alternative treatments and time for women to share their own experiences to gain knowledge and information for themselves.

Facilitator: Ally Andersun
Date: Six Weeks beginning Wednesday 15th May 2013
Time: 7-9.00pm
Cost: \$20/\$40 Waged/Unwaged
Venue: Lower Hutt Women's Centre
186 Knights Road Lower Hutt
Enrolment: By payment or phone 5692 711 for more information

Women Who Love Too Much

(Co-dependency, Relationship Addiction, Giving yourself up in relationships)

We run two women who love too much workshops. The first one is focussed on an educational experience. What is "Women Who Love Too Much?", "Am I Women Who Love Too Much?", "How does it effect my life?", "How would my life be different if I wasn't Women Who Love Too Much?"

The second workshop is therapeutically focussed where there is an opportunity for you to work through some of your own personal issues.

The workshops are a group process and you need to have attended part one before you attend part two.

Women Who Love Too Much (Part One)

Workshop One is an educational weekend. This weekend will give participants an opportunity to explore their own issues around co-dependency and process addiction, the origins of your behaviour and ways of changing and developing in yourself. Women Who Love Too Much, co-dependency, relationship addiction; all names which reflect different aspects of this issue that some women have in relationships. If you have difficulty with relationships; partners, children, parents, then this workshop may help you in understanding how to look at your behaviour in the relationship and where that behaviour comes from. This workshop will help women that want to look at the damaging or dysfunctional relationships they have been/or are in. Using the group work process and action methods we will begin the process of personal recovery

Dates: 22nd, 23rd and 24th March 2013

Time: Friday 7-9:30, Saturday 10-5pm and Sunday 10-4.30pm

Facilitator: Ally Andersun

Venue: Women's Centre

Enrol: By payment or deposit to Women's Centre

Women Who Love Too Much (Part Two)

This weekend is for women that have completed the first weekend. This weekend will be for women that want to work therapeutically with these co-dependency issues. The workshop will give participants an opportunity to explore their own issues around co-dependency and process addiction. We will also explore the origins of your behaviour and ways of changing and developing in yourself.

Dates: Friday, Sat and Sunday 21st, 22nd and 23rd June 2013

Time: Frid 7-9.30pm, Sat 10-5pm and Sund 10-4.30pm.

Cost: \$40/\$20 Waged/Unwaged/Low waged

Venue: Lower Hutt Women's Centre

Enrolment: By payment or deposit

6 Minimum and 10 Maximum for both courses.

Sleep well for women

In a world where "time is money", just about everything in life can seem more important than sleep. Yet, our sleep and health are very closely linked. Parenting demands, caring for an elderly parent, or a restless partner can interrupt our sleep. Pain, worries, fears, or our fluctuating hormones may keep us awake. Whilst sleeping problems are as widespread as they are diverse, this course aims to help participants to understand basic facts and to discover practical and workable solutions toward improved sleep and well-being.

We will begin with exploring important aspects of sleep, including;

- sleep stages and body rhythms
- the relationship between daytime busyness and quality of sleep
- the effects of sleep loss.

Participants will be invited to reflect on their own sleeping patterns and needs.

We will look at what helps, and what may get in the way of sleep. This includes;

- stress, worry and anxiety
- food and other habits
- parenting and other caring roles
- hormonal changes, illness and changing patterns as we age.

Handouts and information about other resources will be provided.

Date: 6 Weeks beginning Monday 8th April 2013
Time: 7-9pm
Cost: \$40 Waged/\$20 Low or unwaged
Venue: Lower Hutt Women's Centre, 186 Knights Road, Lower Hutt
Facilitator: Veronika Gabel
Enrolment: By deposit or payment only

As a counsellor and social worker, Veronika has worked with women in a variety of settings, covering diverse issues and experiences. After researching sleep related topics in 2005 she has facilitated some workshops on coping with sleeping problems, both in New Zealand and her home country Germany.

Veronika has a BSW Social Work (Germany), Certificate in Counselling, and Certificate in Adult Teaching. She has been counselling for 12 years and social work approx 10 years.

Seventy-Something

A One Day Workshop for Women In Their Sixties, Seventies, Eighties....

To discuss and share about Ages, Aging, and Wellbeing.

Our older years, our second half of life. What does this time in our lives mean to each of us, and how do we go about navigating it and living it to the full?

The Workshop is Participatory, to explore these themes, alongside one another. It is designed to be Educational, Interactive, Supportive and Personal, and tailored to the needs within the group. Attendance is for the full day, (bring lunch to share).

The Group Size is 5-10 members, and enrolment is by advance payment.

Venue: At The Womens Centre, 186 Knights Road, Lower Hutt

Date: On Saturday 11 May 2013

Time: 10 am to 3 pm

Facilitated by Anne Horrill

Fee for the Day \$50 Negotiable

For enquiries, registrations of interest, enrolments, please contact Anne Horrill directly, on 5627544 or ahorrill@clear.net.nz

Anne Horrill, Certificate in Counselling. B Ed (Applied). Member NZAC

Accredited Supervisor - NZAC

This is a workshop run by Anne Horrill and not a Women's Centre sponsored workshop. All enquiries to Anne Horrill. 5627544

Counselling for Women

I am a private practice counselor and use a room at the Women's Centre two days per week, (Tuesdays and Thursdays) for my counselling work.

These are some of the issues I work with.

Personal Issues, Grief, Loss, Life Changes, Personal development, Recovery from Abuse/Trauma. ACC Counselling.

Rates Negotiable

Inquiries now welcome for the new year. For all enquiries please phone Anne Horrill on 5627544 ahorrill@clear.net.nz

Anne Horrill

Certificate in Counselling

B Ed (Applied)

Member NZAC. Accredited Supervisor - NZAC

Marriage Bill all about fairness

Louisa Wall | Thursday, November 8, 2012

Labour MP Louisa Wall gave the first public submission on her Marriage Equality (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill today, saying that all New Zealand couples deserve equality under the law.

The Government and Administration Select Committee is now hearing thousands of submissions on the Bill.

“My message to the committee and to New Zealanders today was simple - marriage equality is about fairness and choice. It is about recognising that all couples, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, deserve equality under the law and equal access to the social and civil institution of marriage,” Louisa Wall said.

“We now have an opportunity to have a comprehensive debate about marriage equality. In my introductory submission I chose to debunk some of the arguments put forward in the past few months and to draw attention to the key drivers behind this legislation.

“Fundamentally, this issue is about human rights and highlighting the principles of equality and non-discrimination with consenting adults being able to obtain a marriage licence from the State as equal citizens. How, who and where consenting couples marry is a private matter and my Bill is not concerned with these decisions.

“I reiterated today that churches have nothing to fear from marriage equality. There is no obligation on them to marry any couple against their wishes.

“Marriage equality has drawn broad-based support from a cross-section of New Zealanders and across the political spectrum.

“Today’s select committee session was a robust example of democracy in action. I am confident the committee will ensure a constructive, respectful environment for all submitters.

“I look forward to the debate ahead,” Louisa Wall said.

From the Luddite Journo Blog

Garth McVicar and heterosexual camouflage January 19, 2013

Funny story. I once camped on Garth McVicar’s land after a friendly chat with him.

I’d just cycled through Te Urewera, in snow, and was feeling pretty damn intrepid. I’d then cycled to Taupo via some beautiful backroads, and was making my way down to Napier to head home.

About two thirds of the way to Napier I was hunting for somewhere to sleep and biked down a gravel road which promised a campground at the end. An hour later, no campsite, I was standing at the edge of the road, looking down at a beautiful river framed by stony ravine, eating handfuls of chocolate raisins. A bloke on a tractor drove up.

Giddys exchanged, I asked him if it would be alright to just camp by the river. Of course he said, and pointed me upriver a bit, to a better spot.

A day later, I caught the bus back to Wellington, driven by the same man who I’d taken me up ten days earlier. He had swapped his shift because he wanted to hear if I’d actually done the trip I’d planned, so we spent several hours talking about land and weather, places he’d fished and I’d cycled through.

I told him the story of the friendly tractor driver, and where it was.

“Oh, that will have been Garth McVicar. That’s his land, down that road.”

When I got home I did a google image search. Turned out my friendly tractor driver was Mr Hang ‘Em himself. I felt like I’d got away with something, a radical bisexual lefty anti-racist feminist. I was pretty sure I wasn’t Mr McVicar’s idea of a pleasant social companion.

And just today, turns out how right I was, because if I get married to a woman lover, Mr McVicar is worried it will lead to crime.

Garth, Garth, Garth. Such a shame I didn’t realise in time. We could have had such a chat by my portable gas cooker about what really causes domestic violence and child abuse. I am kinda surprised you didn’t immediately recognise my crime-causing potential. Maybe the dust and grime acted like heterosexual camouflage.

<http://ludditejourno.wordpress.com/2013/01/19/garth-mcvcicar-and-heterosexual-camouflage/>

And a different viewpoint. "Marriage is a red herring for the 21st Century pursuit of social justice."

I wonder why many lesbians and gay men around the world have taken up this issue, and find it difficult to see why many lesbians and gay men see this as a human right or social justice issue. Marriage itself has been and continues to be for many women and men an institution full of hypocrisy, constraint, oppression and dysfunction. I fully believe in lesbians and gay men and all of the other variations of sexuality diversity achieving human rights but I don't see marriage as an avenue for that. I believe we could be fighting for the acceptance of difference rather than fighting to be seen as the same. I think taking on marriage as the vehicle for equality and social justice for lesbians and gay men will have difficult consequences for people wanting equality, empowerment and freedom in relationships.

Annamarie Jagose puts forward her view in a wonderfully elegant and articulate way about this issue. If you are interested in a different viewpoint watch this debate(links below) and look out specifically for Annamarie Jagose's contribution.

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/same-sex-marriage/4051410>
<http://www.iq2oz.com/events/event-details/2012-series-sydney/may.php>

Let's talk about greed, baby

From Luddite Journo Blog

January 24, 2013

I've written before on why we should focus attention upon the powerful, rather than people who experience oppression. Pretty much Changing the World 101 as far as I'm concerned. Want to change domestic violence? Dismantle masculinity constructs which equate power and control with being a man, and encourage ideas of relationships between whole people which involve sharing decision making and healthy autonomy. Racism enraging you? Examine the ways white privilege operates – then insist it is named and challenged wherever you see it, because every time we pretend something is racially neutral, we're probably perpetrating racism.

We spend far too much time, when it comes to economics, talking about poverty. We have all these narratives about it. People who don't have enough are probably lazy, if not now then earlier in life. They didn't try hard enough at school, or they take the piss at work. They're probably drinking too much. Look at the food they buy, that's disgusting. Besides, they've got Sky TV/that flash jacket/new sunglasses every week/something I don't approve of them buying if they were really that poor.....

Let's talk about greed. In stats, because I like them:

The richest 100 billionaires in the world are worth \$240 billion. Oxfam thinks that's enough to END world poverty four times over

The richest 1% in the world have increased their income by 60% in the last 20 years. The financial "crisis" has just accelerated this wealth grabbing.

Here in Aotearoa, according to Stats NZ, the richest 10% get 25% of our total income, and own 50% of our total wealth.

So let's talk about those rich people. How they live, the choices they make, how they make such profits. Because if we did, I'm pretty sure there wouldn't be quite as many people out there prepared to put up with such a corrupt and inhumane way of organising sharing our resources.

<http://ludditejourno.wordpress.com/>

The feral rich *Courtesy of New Internationalist Magazine.*

<http://newint.org/features/2013/01/01/feral-rich-keynote/>

January 2013

For too long we've problematized the poor and overlooked the wealthy. It's time to turn the tables, argues Vanessa Baird.

Now here's a puzzle. The world economy is in a fix. Most people are getting poorer. Household income is down by more than five per cent on last year. That's the global average; in some countries it's much worse. We need 80 million new jobs to get us back to pre-crash employment levels. And the progress on reducing world hun-

ger has stalled, leaving one in seven people without enough to eat.^{1,2,3}

But for one group of people life just gets better, no matter where they live. Known as HNWIs – High Net Worth Individuals – this global elite's fortunes just keep rising.

The richest man in the world - telecoms tycoon Carlos Slim - is courted after giving a lecture at the UN in Geneva. Valentin Flauraud / Reuters

In the past year, the 400 richest Americans have seen their wealth grow by \$200 billion – enough to provide every student in the country with free education, except, of course, it isn't spent that way.⁴

During the same period, the 1,000 richest Britons have watched their fortunes swell to record levels – to \$667 billion – a nearly five-per-cent increase on the previous year.⁵

India's ultra-rich increased in number by 30 per cent in 2012. Sri Ram Khanna of the Delhi School of Economics observes: 'The better-offs continue to prosper in a slowdown and are largely immune to it... The lower your income, the more you are at risk. It is a global phenomenon.'⁶

How did we get here? How did members of this new plutocracy manage to peel themselves off from the rest of humanity, to feed off the crisis?

But first: let's have a look at who they might be.

Rich? Moi?

Meet Carlos Slim Helú, the richest man in the world. A Mexican telecoms tycoon, the portly 72-year-old is worth \$69 billion. Young Carlos was just 12 when he bought his first shares in a bank. He invested heavily during Mexico's 1982 financial crisis, buying into a wide variety of interests, including tobacco. But it was the privatization of the state telephone utility that really made his fortune. It is said (though he denies this) that his close links with the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) government secured him an effective monopoly. This cosy relationship has persisted, regardless of which party is in power. Today, Slim has so many business interests that it is said you cannot spend a day in Mexico without putting money in his pocket.

Meet Australian mining heiress Gina Rinehart, aged 58. The world's richest woman (worth \$28 billion), she suggests

that poor people should 'spend less time in the pub' and that the minimum wage should be reduced. She funds climate sceptics and is now trying to use her growing share in the Australian media to fight against carbon cuts. Rinehart, who inherited Hancock Prospecting from her father, is currently engaged in an acrimonious battle involving three of her children and the family fortune.

Slim and Rinehart share the billionaire cachet with around 1,200 individuals in the world today. Beneath them is a legion of millionaires, now numbering around 29 million. Their wealth comes from various sources. Around a third of the super-rich have inherited it. Two-thirds are described as 'self-made'. A fair number are maths graduates who have gone into IT and software development. Few are complete rags-to-riches cases; most have comfortable backgrounds and university educations. Financiers are disproportionately well represented among the wealthiest.

Many of the super-rich have had friends in high places. The oligarchs from the former Soviet states, for example, were close to political power at the time of transition and took advantage of the fire-sale of public companies and utilities; the growing army of super-rich Chinese are largely the offspring of Communist Party officials.

As to be expected, many of the rich have been busy augmenting their wealth through the services of hedge fund operators and private equity wizards.

New York City's Upper East Side is now home to a lot of people, many aged under 40, who are making \$20 or \$30 million a year from their hedge funds, reports business journalist Chrystia Freeland in her eye-popping book *Plutocrats: the rise of the new global super rich*.⁷

But, naturally, maintaining the super-rich lifestyle has certain requirements, as Egyptian telecom billionaire Naguib Sawaris explained to Freeland. 'To cover the fringe benefits, the plane, the boat, it takes a billion.'

Luxury goods and services are in high demand. A London domestic service

agency, Bespoke Bureau, placed 430 British-trained butlers last year, catering in particular to demand from Russia, China and the Middle East.⁸

It may come as no surprise that many of the rich do not actually feel wealthy.

Economist Angus Deaton has shown that the richer you are the more covetous you become. Millionaires control 40 per cent of the world's wealth. But Fidelity, a consultancy firm that regularly surveys millionaires, finds that whatever their wealth, they generally say they need double that amount. A recent survey of 1,000 millionaires, with an average net worth of \$3 million, revealed that a quarter felt they needed an extra \$5 million to feel wealthy.⁹

How it's happened

To find the origins of today's feral incarnation of wealth we have to go back to the 1980s.

Free market policies were embraced by conservative governments on both sides of the Atlantic which cut through regulation, privatized state utilities and opened up new business opportunities.

While most wages grew at a sluggish pace, top executive pay started to race ahead.

How did members of this new plutocracy manage to peel themselves off from the rest of humanity, to feed off the crisis?

New laws eroded union power, while globalization enabled transnational corporations to outsource production to the country that offered the cheapest, usually non-unionized, labour.

Profit margins grew, benefiting shareholders and business owners. This was accompanied by fierce cuts in tax paid by both corporations and high earners.

But the most important factor was the decision to deregulate financial markets, taken initially in New York and London. Pay scales in the finance sector went through the roof, bonus culture went wild, greed was good. As we now know, it was

a house of cards.

The political response to the 2008 financial crisis – first to bail out banks, then to cut public spending – has produced the crowning irony of our times: those who made the mess have come out virtually unscathed while the rest of us are being punished.

Even government efforts to stimulate growth have lined the pockets of the already prosperous by pushing up share prices and other assets. In Britain, the richest households were \$561,000 better off as a result of the Bank of England’s quantitative easing programme; the average increase for the poorest households was \$1,900.¹⁰

How do they spend it?

A few goods and services catering for the seriously rich:

- Customized 18-carat solid gold mobile phone from Aesir Copenhagen, designed by Yves Behr – \$60,000
- Night in the Royal Penthouse of the Hotel President Wilson, Geneva – \$85,000
- Meal for two at New York’s Masa restaurant – \$1,500 (base price \$450 per person without drink, tips)
- Crocodile-skin umbrella – \$55,000
- Small private jet hire – \$9,000 per hour
- Mediterranean holiday at Royal Villa, Grand Resort, Lagonisi, Greece – \$48,000 a night
- Green, orange, and black Renova coloured toilet paper – \$20
- Penthouse on the New York’s Upper East Side – starting price \$60 million
- Trophy hunting in Namibia – \$16,000 (one giraffe, mounting and shipping extra)
- Crystal ErgoRapido vacuum cleaner (with 3,730 Swarovski crystals) – \$18,993
- Louis Vuitton skateboard – \$8,250
- Little Gold 24-carat gold vibrator (silent and waterproof) – \$325
- Diamond encrusted bluetooth headset – \$50,000
- Tub of Harrods Posh Instant noodles – \$43
- Luxury frisbee – \$305
- Virgin Galactic space trip (per person) – \$283,000

The rich can afford to speculate with high-risk, high-return investments. If they are prepared to touch the toxic-looking stuff, the rewards can be thrilling. Vulture funds,

for example, buy up debts from entities that are weak, or on the edge of default, at knockdown prices. Dart Management, registered in the Cayman Islands, made a killing on Greek debt it bought at just 35 per cent of the nominal price but which was paid back by the Greek people at a much higher value.¹¹

Even the dogs in the street know that the financial sector needs a radical overhaul. But reforms to make it safer keep getting sabotaged. The crime scene is strewn with clues as to why. Exhibit number one: the \$150 million mustered by the British financial services industry to lobby politicians and regulators when the Barclays Libor rate-fixing scandal was provoking renewed calls for tougher rules.¹² Exhibit two: the \$355 million the US finance industry spent on political lobbying in Washington in 2012, second only to the health industry lobby.¹³

Politicians and regulators still persist in arguing in favour of light-touch self-regulation, saying that otherwise the high-finance ‘talent’ will leave their jurisdictions, with a resulting loss in tax revenue. The same argument is used in support of low taxes on corporations and high earners. The corporate rich, especially those linked to finance, have governments in their pockets. To compound the problem, many in government are themselves millionaires and have close links to the industry.

This crisis has many victims, including democracy. British writer and commentator George Monbiot is not exaggerating when he describes the state we are in as one akin to ‘totalitarian capitalism’.¹⁴

‘Rich people are successful and that’s good for society’

Underpinning all this is an enduring set of beliefs about the acquisition of wealth.

For some, especially those who remember the Cold War, the amassing of personal fortune is synonymous with political freedom. Others simply believe that ‘rich people deserve their wealth’. Some 60 per cent of Australians surveyed said they agreed with this statement, as did 58 per cent of North Americans. British people were not so sure – at 45 per cent – while only 16 per

cent of Russians and 9 per cent of Greeks concurred with the statement.¹⁵ A quarter of millionaires surveyed said they needed an extra \$5 million to feel wealthy

It is said that ‘rich people create jobs’. Nick Hanauer, a wealthy entrepreneur who founded the online advertising company aQuantive and then sold it to Microsoft for \$6 billion, thinks the idea is absurd. For him it’s like saying ‘squirrels create evolution’. Even if entrepreneurs or investors establish and build companies that eventually employ thousands of people, it is the customers and a healthy economic system surrounding the firm that create the jobs, not the owners.¹⁶

Current reality is undermining the idea that the rich are ‘wealth creators’ who add to the economy in a way that benefits society at large. In booming India, for example, many of the country’s new millionaires are not software developers or manufacturing innovators, but what economists call ‘rent-seekers’. Their predominant sources of income are land, natural resources and government contracts or licences. Rather than create something new, they use contacts and cronyism to get a bigger slice of a pre-existing pie.

It turns out that the rich are actually doing more harm than good. London is rapidly pricing out locals. Homeless people can be seen laying out their cardboard in the doorways of Mayfair’s elegant Regency houses. There is a housing crisis partly due to shortage and recession – a million builders are jobless. But there’s another reason. The city’s real estate has become the number one haven for rich international investors, who are buying almost 60 per cent of properties valued at \$3.2 million or more. These buildings are often left empty for months on end but harsh new laws have made squatting an imprisonable offence. Local councils, meanwhile, are breaking up communities and shifting their poorer residents to other cities, which may be hundreds of miles away.¹⁷

What’s happening in London is symptomatic of the distortions created by runaway wealth and overheated property values.

Thousands of miles away in Peru is another casualty of feral capitalism. Gold is a prize commodity in times of trouble – and mining is bringing fat returns for corporations, investors and purchasers. Peasants have been shot as they protested against gold and other precious-metal mining projects that are poisoning their water and polluting their land.

The rich, says French writer Hervé Kempf, are quite literally destroying the earth. With their investments in oil and mining, the new global oligarchs are making the planet uninhabitable. And, like Gina Rinehart, they are using their clout to block the changes desperately needed to tackle climate change.¹⁸

What next?

When young rioters rampaged the streets of British cities 18 months ago, looting shops and setting buildings alight, they were severely punished; many received harsh prison sentences. Media reports at the time used the words ‘feral’ and ‘underclass’ to describe them.

But one commentator, Peter Osborne of the usually conservative Daily Telegraph, pointed to another group of people that had ‘forgotten they have duties as well as rights... the feral rich of Chelsea and Kensington’ who had been nurturing ‘an almost universal culture of selfishness and greed’.¹⁹

Not all rich individuals, of course, are venal, greedy, selfish and oblivious. Some may use their wealth to try to do good in the world. Even the monopolistic Microsoft boss Bill Gates seems genuinely concerned to improve public health in Africa. Currency speculator George Soros candidly blasts the system that has enriched him and he promotes democratic values though his Open Society Foundations. But while such individual actions may fill pockets, they won’t change the big picture. And the rich still give a smaller share of their income to charity than those earning average incomes, and much less than those on the lowest.²⁰

There are signs, though, that some natural political allies of the rich – and some rich people themselves – are feeling increas-

ingly uneasy. The perversity of the current situation and its egregious unfairness is damaging capitalism, they say. They are reminded of Marx’s prediction about capitalism having within it the seeds of its own destruction.

Mouthing nice words about equality is not enough – it has to come with redistribution

There are even indications of tensions between the millionaires and the billionaires – the latter having become so much richer, so much faster, than the mere millionaires who are struggling to keep up. Equality is a buzz word that has entered all spheres now – including elite gatherings of business and world leaders at the World Economic Forum and in the pages of The Economist. Widening inequality is seen as a danger, a source of social unrest that disrupts the workings of capitalism.

This is where hope lies: in disruption from below. Today’s inequality is the result of years of deliberate action to crush unions, drive down wages and create a self-serving elite of plutocrats. Mouthing nice words about greater equality is not enough. It has to come with serious redistribution of wealth and a dismantling of the institutions and practices that are perpetuating privilege and inequality. What the young British rioters of 2011 were doing was redistribution in action, but without discipline or a political framework. When Uncut protesters occupy Starbucks coffee shops and turn them into crèches – because that’s the kind of thing that’s being cut when the coffee giant dodges its taxes – it’s smart and appropriate and wins public support. When 800 council workers in Caerphilly, Wales, walk out in protest at a 30-per-cent hike in pay for their bosses, it shows a significant shift in focus.

The mobilization around corporate greed and aggressive tax avoidance in various parts of the world is revealing a long list of culprits – Apple, General Electric, Vodafone, Starbucks, Google, Amazon, PepsiCo, Goldman Sachs, Facebook – and generating widespread feelings of anger and revulsion. The mood has changed. In Greece, a country where tax avoidance was previously the social norm, the journalist who was put on trial for revealing

the names of 2,000 high level tax dodgers is viewed as a hero by the people. This coming year will see more austerity measures, as governments try to convince the people that the national deficit is their fault and they must pay for it with their jobs and their public services and their pension and their savings. They may encounter more resistance than they expect. Remember, the political class, like the rich, are in the minority. The plutocracy, and those in power who do their bidding, need the co-operation of the 99 per cent, even if they think and behave as if they don’t. They detach themselves from the rest of humanity at their peril. And we ignore them – or accept their hideously distorting power – at ours.

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Newsletter Collective Statement

We would like this newsletter to be:

- ✕ a creative outlook for writers and artists and that means you
- ✕ a publication that provides information relative to women
- ✕ a publication that informs women on Women's Centre activities and other activities for women in the region.

We know we will make mistakes but hope we can learn from these and be open to criticism and change, and to sharing skills and resources with other groups.

The newsletter collective reserves the right not to publish letters which conflict with Women's Centre philosophy. We may not agree with the views expressed in letters. Some letters are edited in consultation with the writer. We do not publish personal attacks. Letter addressed to the newsletter collective are assumed to be intended for publication. Please indicate clearly if they are not.

Women's Centre philosophy

The Women's centre:

- i) recognise and work in the spirit of the Tiriti o Waitangi;
- ii) confront women's oppression and empower women to take control of their own lives
- iii) oppose discrimination by those who have power against those who do not. This includes discrimination against women, especially Maori women, Pacific Island women, women of colour, lesbians, those who are differently abled, young, old, working class and those with different spiritual beliefs.
- iv) promote a safe supportive environment for all women and children;
- v) promote the sharing of power and resources;
- vi) act as a resource and information centre for the community.

The news letter is free to Women's Centre members and women's organisations. To join the Lower Hutt Women's Centre, send \$27 waged, \$15 unwaged, \$10 teenage, \$5 children to 186 Knights Road Lower Hutt. Membership also entitles you to borrow books, magazines, tapes, videos etc from the library for up to one month.

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