

**ALL DUE****RESPECT**

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**Forward**

When Evelyn died in July this year those closest to her lost one who was dearly loved. The world lost a formidable social and political activist. From her student days onwards Evelyn was active in trying to make the world a better place and in many respects she succeeded. A working class childhood shaped her lifelong drive to tackle social injustice and informed the critical analysis she applied to all the causes with which she became involved. As is evident from this article Evelyn was a gifted communicator who could convey difficult concepts clearly and persuasively which she very effectively applied to promoting social, political and cultural change. The term Zero Tolerance may seem ubiquitous now but, at the time Evelyn applied it, to a campaign combating violence against women and children, it was new, and marked out a campaign which - controversially at the time – was uncompromising in its feminist analysis. That a gendered analysis of violence against women and children is now almost taken for granted in social policy in Scotland is no small testament to the effectiveness of campaigns like Zero Tolerance, which boldly changed the terms of the debate about domestic abuse in Scotland and shaped political thinking. Evelyn had the guts to put her head above the parapet, to challenge the hegemonic thinking shaped by those in positions of power and the strategic intelligence to ensure that wider truths impacting on the common good could not be ignored. We can all learn from her. Hence this article is reprinted here – all due respect indeed!

If you want to know more about Evelyn's life and work read Lesley Riddoch's eulogy <http://www.lesleyriddoch.co.uk/2015/07/eulogy-to-evelyn-gillan.html>

Margaret Petrie - August 2015

Since it was launched in Edinburgh in 1992, Zero Tolerance has had a major impact in pushing the issue of violence against women and children to the forefront of the public and political agenda. In the last four years the Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust has produced over a hundred public education campaigns for use locally throughout the UK. A cursory examination of the key policy documents produced in the same period confirms that Zero Tolerance has played a significant role in influencing policy at both national and local level.<sup>1</sup> The campaign has inspired public education initiatives throughout the world. Campaign material has appeared in New York and South Australia. A community activist from Kenya recently told staff at the Trust's office in Edinburgh "Zero Tolerance has transformed women's lives in Kenya". The campaign's iconoclastic status was assured when it appeared in Irvine Welsh's novel *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1999)

Women's groups, young people and community activists from Aberdeen to Southampton have engaged in campaigning activities under the Zero Tolerance banner. In Hull, a local youth project performs songs they have written at the launch of the Hull Zero Tolerance campaign. In Fife, young people script and perform a play and local bands produce a CD. In Aberdeen, a community action group - AZTAG - ensures that the local Council maintains its commitment to the prevention of violence against women and children. But despite this widespread community response to, and involvement in, the Zero Tolerance campaign, the number of *community educators* who have actively engaged in the campaign remains relatively small.

In this article, I will argue that the principles which informed the planning, development, and implementation of a macro public education campaign like Zero Tolerance, should be of interest to anyone who classifies themselves as an *educator*; that the campaign's insistence on re-defining the problem and, critically, analysing the

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<sup>1</sup> See *Domestic Violence: A Report by the Scottish Needs Assessment Programme (SNAP)*; *Hitting Home: A Report on the Police Response to Domestic Violence*, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary; *Guidance on Preparing and Implementing a Multi-Agency Strategy to Tackle Violence Against Women: A Report by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)*; *Response to Preventing Violence Against Women: A Scottish Office Action Plan*.

causes created a space within which change became possible; and finally, that those who do not view education as a *neutral enterprise*, but recognise that as educators they are involved in a *political act*, should actively engage in the Zero Tolerance *Respect* initiative currently running throughout Scotland.

There are two aspects to the campaign, which are crucial in understanding the campaign's development and subsequent success. Firstly, from the onset, there was a firm theoretical base informing the campaign. The two key theoretical models which inform the campaign are Gramsci's theory of *hegemony* and in particular, the role of the mass media in sustaining the norms, beliefs and values of the *dominant culture*; and a feminist/structuralist analysis of male violence which recognises the *social construction of gender* as being central to our understanding of violence and its prevention:

The most fundamental set of factors bringing about wife-beating are those connected with the sexist structure of the family and society ... The cultural norms and values permitting and sometimes encouraging husband to wife violence reflect the hierarchical and male dominant type of society which characterises the western world. (Strauss, 1977).

The second significant fact was the combination of professional skills that were employed in the planning, development and implementation of the campaign. These included a thorough knowledge of, and experience in: community development; equality issues; political lobbying and structures; national and local campaigning; PR and the mass media; and visual communication.

Zero Tolerance makes the links between the different forms of violence and oppressive behaviours, and recognises the social and political framework on which these behaviours are based. The campaign believes that an informed analysis of the root causes of male violence is crucial in providing the basis for developing and implementing preventative strategies.

### **Problem Definition and Gender-Specificity**

Gramsci's concept of hegemony as *deeply saturating the consciousness of a society* confirms that public policy is never *ideologically neutral*. It is in the context of the *non-neutrality* of policy that we must view the national and local policy developments prior to Zero Tolerance. The Scottish Office had launched the *Positive Steps* initiative. Booklets, posters and leaflets outlined action that women could take to reduce their risk of attack eg avoid going out alone at night. At local level, many Community Education departments were running *Fear of Crime* classes for women in conjunction with the police. Women attending classes were shown how to fit secure locks on their doors, taken to visit local police stations, and shown basic self-defence techniques. All of these initiatives adhered to an individualised, problem-solving approach and all were targeted at women. By focusing on *situational* crime as opposed to *social* crime, they both conformed to, and implicitly supported, the dominant cultural and ideological view that women were somehow responsible for men's violence.

The implicit message emanating from all the national and local policy initiatives prior to Zero Tolerance was that, although it was men's behaviour, which created the problem, women's behaviour had to be changed in order to bring the problem under control. Michael Apple's description of the process of *selective tradition* (1975) helps us to understand how myths masquerading as truths can often end up informing government policy. Zero Tolerance uses an understanding of the process of hegemony to ask critical questions about the status quo. Who says that women are responsible for male violence? Where did this knowledge come from?

By rejecting both the problem definition and the solutions on offer, and rooting the campaign firmly in women's *lived experience*, Zero Tolerance challenges the norms, beliefs and values which give rise to, and sustain male violence against women and children. The *social reality* of male violence is that the overwhelming majority of violent acts against women and children are committed by men, most of whom are known to the victim; that women and children have very little control over the

violence that invades their lives, and whilst the home is the safest place for men, it is the least safe place for women and children.

In unequivocally naming the gender of the problem as male and asserting that male violence merely reflects social, cultural, and societal values, Zero Tolerance dismissed the mad, sad, and bad theories of male violence offered by the media representations and medical models. By re-defining the problem, the campaign refused to debate on the terms dictated by the dominant culture and created a space within which change became possible. Zero Tolerance then set about building a new set of truths.

As the campaign was inviting change, the first step was to ensure that people became aware of the extent and nature of male violence. Early campaign material focused on rape, child sexual abuse and domestic violence. Later campaign material examined the causes of violence and sought to dispel myths which continue to prevail. The *Justice* campaign exposes the role of institutions, in this case the criminal justice system, in reinforcing the hegemony of the dominant culture. *Justice* asks why the criminal justice system fails to protect women and children.

Zero Tolerance uses the methods of the powerful to communicate the campaign's counter-hegemonic messages. "We can only understand an effective and dominant culture if we understand the real social processes on which it depends" (Williams, 1976). Advertising hoardings, billboards, cinema and radio are all used to communicate the campaign's messages. Broadcaster Lesley Riddoch, writing in *Harpies and Quines* in 1993, described the effect:

It was a bit like I'd died and gone to heaven. There above all the shoppers in Edinburgh's Princes Street ran the bold message, *There is never an excuse*. There on a grassy bank halfway up the Mound sat a white Z of flowers. There at Hibernian Football ground a huge Z symbol was emblazoned across the nets. Men on the terracing were eating their pies out of cartons and boxes

overprinted with Zero Tolerance statistics... In doctor's surgeries patients sat beside posters proclaiming *No Man has the Right*. In swimming pools, school galas splashed off beside the happy image of three young women, and the message, *When They Say No, They Mean No...* The campaign for Zero Tolerance of violence is really HAPPENING all over Edinburgh.

### **Analysing Root Causes and Tackling Socialisation**

As Zero Tolerance's theoretical base is rooted in a political and social analysis of male violence, the campaign sees the gender socialisation of boys and girls as of fundamental importance in providing the basis for violence in personal relationships. In 1998, the Trust published a major study which looked at young people's attitudes to violence, sex and relationships (Burton et al 1998) The research involved over 2000 young people aged between 14 - 21 years in Glasgow, Fife and Manchester. The research found that:

- 1 in 2 boys and 1 in 3 girls thought that there were some circumstances when it could be acceptable to hit a woman or to force her to have sex;
- forced sex was more acceptable than hitting to both boys and girls;
- a significant minority of boys (36%) thought they might personally force a girl to have sex;
- over half of all respondents knew someone who had been hit by a male partner and exactly half knew someone who had been sexually abused.

As a result of the research, the Trust developed the *Respect* initiative in conjunction with local authorities across Scotland. A range of campaign material has been distributed to pubs, clubs and campuses across Scotland. A CD Rom and resource guide will shortly be available to adults working with young people. The Trust is offering specific training packages to educators who are interested in using the *Respect* resources.

A *Respect* pilot project is also being developed in conjunction with the YWCA. The pilot project will give young people the opportunity to discuss the issues that *Respect* raises in a structured and supportive environment. The pilot was developed after young people themselves raised concerns about the lack of opportunity in both formal and informal settings to explore the issues further. The *Respect* concept has already been appropriated by the Scottish Office. The recent policy document *Towards a Healthier Scotland* calls for 'healthy respect' to be the focus of the government's sexual health strategy.

To summarise, the key principles which inform Zero Tolerance are:

- a clear, theoretical foundation to inform work;
- a critical analysis of causation; a recognition that the above fundamentally affects practice

*Respect* therefore, is as much about challenging what it means to be male and female as it is about challenging male violence. The Zero Tolerance Trust believes that education has a fundamental role to play in the prevention of violence. When we talk about *social inclusion*, *emotional literacy* and *citizenship*, we must recognise that traditional gender stereotyping acts as a barrier to all three. Many community educators have missed the opportunity that Zero Tolerance has provided in the past. *Respect* offers another opportunity. A framework for a different future for men and women, boys and girls.

The best and most courageous prevention work that educationalists could engage in would be to (seriously) challenge male sexual behaviour, review the institution of heterosexuality, and to enable girls to develop their own forms of resistance; to re-educate boys in preparing them for non-violent caring ways of engaging in relationships and by posing alternatives to heterosexuality (Jones & Mahoney, 1989).

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