

Press release 15 June 2010

So Sexy So Soon - The New Sexualized Childhood

Children are learning how to be sex objects at increasingly younger ages. By the time they are five years old they will already have images of themselves as sexual beings. This is rewarded and appreciated by society, say Jean Kilbourne and Julie Gale, speaking today at the World Summit on Media and Youth in Karlstad, Sweden. Adult silence indirectly permits the market to shift the boundaries of what is acceptable. To create change we must first take responsibility for this state of affairs and then take action.

Most children are exposed to massive and damaging sexual images via popular culture. The media often exploits women's bodies, and violent and advanced sex is glamourised.

“When they are far too young, girls are treated as objects and are made aware of their sexual appeal,” says Jean Kilbourne. “Meanwhile, boys are learning to search for sex, but not for intimacy. Things that used to be secrets and belong to the adult world have become normal, everyday activities.”

Many people find themselves powerless in the face of these developments and our silence lets advertisers and manufacturers to continually move the boundaries of what is acceptable and the norm. Children learn to sexualise themselves and this is accepted by society.

“An individual can make a big difference,” says Julie Gale. “You can contact a company and protest. We need to become proactive. Committed individuals can force change. We should make a nuisance of ourselves, chasing corporations, starting protest groups and networking with each other. We need a much more honest and open climate when debating sexuality. Politicians, businesses and society must work together to achieve change.”

Further information

Jean Kilbourne of Wellesley Centers for Women, USA, has made award-winning films such as Killing Us Softly, Slim Hopes, and Spin the Bottle. She is the author of Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel, and So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids.

Julie Gale is the founder of Kids Free 2B Kids in Australia and is an author and entertainer. Julie works to raise public, corporate and political awareness about the sexualisation of children. Her work has led to changes to the Australian advertising codes for advertisements aimed at children.

Read more about the World Summit and download the Summit Programme at:
<http://www.wskarlstad2010.se>.

Contact person: Katarina Lindström, head of information, City of Karlstad, 070-565 99 37