

## Destroying the Joint: Why Women Have to Change The World

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ROZ BELLAMY

Sydney radio presenter Alan Jones' infamous comment that women are destroying the joint inadvertently gave rise to a new movement.



**When Sydney radio presenter Alan Jones made his now infamous comment that women are destroying the joint, after Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced \$320 million in aid for women in the Pacific, he inadvertently gave rise to a new movement.**

Social commentator and writer Jane Caro was quick to tweet satirically about destroying the joint, which soon trended as #destroythejoint and led to the creation of a successful online movement. Momentum continued to grow particularly when, a month later, Jones claimed that Gillard's father had died of shame, and again after Gillard's misogyny speech in Parliament.

The Destroy the Joint movement has gathered many followers on its Facebook and Twitter accounts, and has been involved in many forms of activism specifically focussed on women's issues and sexism. As with many social-media based movements, it has had to find ways to continue the momentum and keep its followers, called Destroyers, working towards social and political change.

Caro's next step was to compile and edit *Destroying the Joint*, a diverse collection of stories and essays written by journalists, comedians, academics, novelists and students. While the pieces certainly address Jones' comment, they go a step further and offer complex, nuanced analyses of Australian media, politics, feminism, parenthood and corporate culture. The voices within showcase a wide range of attitudes and beliefs, and the tone and genre of the stories vary from twitter-speak to political essay and even to erotic fiction.

The contributors all focus on ways to better our society but with different concepts of what the movement needs to strive for. Leslie Cannold examines gender socialisation and looks at creating gender egalitarian arrangements for raising children in order to balance men and women's access to financial independence and access to career progression. Her goal for the movement is to create a 'gender-equal world'. Likewise, Emily Maguire describes 'the society-transforming power of gender equality', looking at women's initiatives in Asia, the Middle-East and Africa that led to increased human rights, environmental conservation and political representation. Jennifer Mills' insightful essay looks at the problematic role of large, centralised media in our political culture and realises that, as it breaks down, 'it becomes our task not to replace it, not to climb into the vacated seat of power, but to harness the capacity of social media to do more.'

Whilst many contributors and Destroyers have reinterpreted and reclaimed the term 'the joint' to represent the conservative, misogynistic and patriarchal elements of and institutions in society, Carmen Lawrence uses the term to mean environmental destruction in her piece. She writes that as a society, both men and women are destroying the joint. She looks at how our consumerist and materialistic culture is 'generating serious problems of resource insecurity, environmental degradation and social dislocation' and why women might be better equipped to bring about much needed change.

There are some wonderful, humorous descriptions and evocative writing. Nina Funnell analyses society's stigma surrounding menstruation, describing the sense of having to 'prioritise men's delicate sensibilities' from a young age. Lily Edelstein had the same realisation at high school that teenage girls were expected to 'keep the inappropriate behaviour and attitudes of our teachers in check' when their hemlines caused male teachers some discomfort. Many pieces in the book rightfully bristle with anger, including Clementine Ford's fascinating and troubling piece on rape as a comedy subject. Some balance the rage with humour. As Catherine Deveny writes in *Destroying the Joint* in *Twelve Easy Lessons*, 'Feminism is not anti men. It's anti arseholes, misogynists, pricks, creeps, thugs and bigots.'

There were several standout chapters in the book, including Stella Young's essay on the frequently overlooked rights of women with disabilities. Discussing the lack of access to many buildings, which prevent Young from participating in many events and activities, she remarks, 'We can't very well destroy the joint if we're not allowed in'.

Reading her descriptions of being overlooked and excluded, even by well-meaning friends and organisations, and the sense of invisibility commonly felt, it struck me that Young's was one of the more diverse voices in the collection. As Senator Penny Wong writes in her chapter *Markers of Change*, the range of reactions to Gillard's misogyny speech 'serves as a reminder of the divergent realities that co-exist within our community'.

There could indeed have been more divergent realities investigated in *Destroying the Joint*. Many of the authors disclaimed that they were educated, even privileged, and this could have been balanced by a wider range of identities and experiences included in the collection. Overall, *Destroying the Joint* is a call to arms to people passionate about equal rights. When you put it down, you will most likely feel inspired to go and destroy a joint or two.

Rating: 4 stars out of 5

*Destroying the Joint: Why Women Have to Change the World*

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roz Bellamy is a Melbourne-based writer, reviewer and editor, with a passion for the arts and travel.