

In crisis: press, rights and privacy

Anna Gilmour and Tammy McGloughlin
introduce this issue of *cjm*

At the time of writing, the media is full of questions about the morality of journalists hacking the 'phones of the victims of murdered girls and their families, amongst others. The fall out of this with the closure of a 168 year old newspaper and resignations at the top of News International and the Metropolitan police, is still unclear. Questions around the future of freedom of the press and the relationship between media moguls and politicians remain unanswered. This comes hot on the heels of stories about celebrity super-injunctions intended to protect their privacy from the public, via the press, and being 'outed' on new media forms such as Twitter. Such developments are changing the way that information is shaped and what and who is to be believed.

These themes – the treatment of the 'victim' and matters of privacy – are taken up in the topical and debating sections of this issue of *cjm*. **Julie T Davis** writes about the function of gossip in society, how this has changed with the advent of new media and the harm it can cause. From another perspective, **Lorenzo Del Castillo** considers the vulnerable status of Libyan migrants into Italy, victims of the civil war that is threatening to engulf the 41-year reign of Gaddafi.

In the debating section consideration is given to whether Victim Personal Statements should affect the sentencing process, in response to a judicial warning against an apparent over reliance on victim statements as suggested by the *Breaking the Cycle* green paper. Opposing perspectives are brought to the debate by a barrister, former probation officer, the victim of a miscarriage of justice and a representative of a victim's group: **Peter Hungerford-Welch**, **Mike Guilfoyle**, **Robert Shaw** and **Javed Khan** consider whether there is a place in court for the statements.

2011, the year the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies celebrates its 80th anniversary year, is also the centenary year of International Women's Day, so an exploration of women, harm and violence is timely. If there was any doubt about the need for this focus, high profile 'gaffes' helped remove that doubt. In Canada, a police officer advised that women should 'avoid dressing as sluts', prompting women in Canada, India and the UK to organise 'Slut walks' in resistance to this kind of archaic attitude (Guardian, 9 May 2011). Meanwhile, the Justice Secretary Ken Clarke made much apologised for remarks that implied that some rapes are more 'serious' than others.

An alternative response came in the shape of the Bailey review of the sexualisation of children (Bailey, 2011). This is one of the many forms of harm and violence experienced by women and girls that is discussed in this issue, as outlined by **Christina Pantazis** in her introduction to the themed section. **Pantazis** discusses the precarious position for women in the face of Coalition policies and, citing examples of how women will disproportionately face job cuts and greater poverty, she surmises that these policies 'will amount to a serious assault on women's freedoms and well-being'. This is a viewpoint which is supported by the Fawcett Society's **Anna Bird's** piece on the impact of the cuts on women.

The themed section explores the harms women and girls experience and perpetrate, which leads them to be subject to criminal justice processes. However, there are also articles that discuss how women and girls resist these harms and organise from the ground-up to support and empower themselves and others. **Victoria Law's** article gives a 'short history of community organising against... gendered violence'. **Roanna Mitchell** gives an optimistic account from the Endangered Species summit held in London earlier this year, drawing on contributions from women from all over the world to challenge the negative culture that creates 'body hatred'.

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (CCJS) is pleased to announce that Susie Orbach, who was instrumental in setting up the Endangered Species summit, will be giving the annual Eve Saville Lecture on 16 November 2011. This event will mark the culmination of a productive 80th anniversary year for CCJS. If you would like to come along and be a part of it, please email: events@crimeandjustice.org.uk ■

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References

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- Clarke, K. (2011), www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-13436429 (accessed 18 July 2011)
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