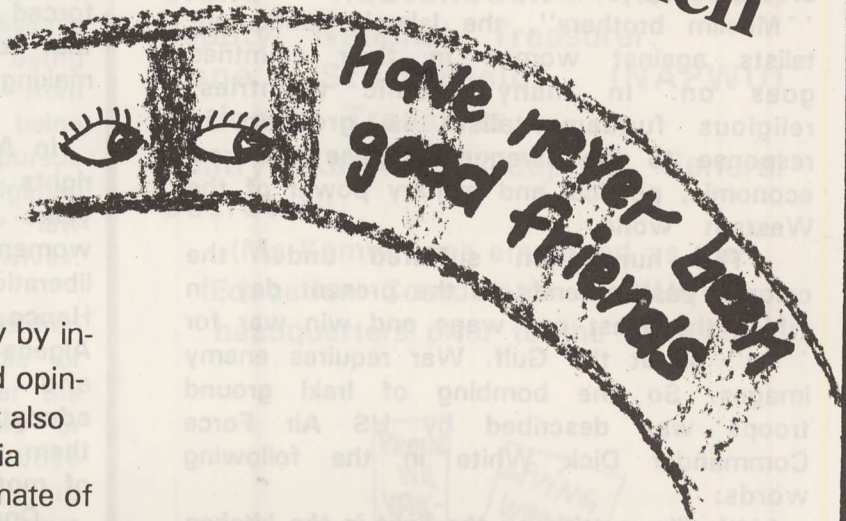


Advertisements and Women



Advertisements are re-creating reality by influencing public images, attitudes and opinions; not only about the products, but also more significantly about women. Media distortion contributes to a general climate of discrimination against, and abuse of women.

The advertisements where women are depicted as sex objects amount to zillions. Women's bodies are being used by money vultures to sell their products, resulting in women being seen as objects to be used for the pleasure and profit of men. The sadder effect on women is that they absorb and internalise these images coming to them from the pages of fashion magazines and 'glitzy' shop windows. We view ourselves as servile to men and conform to their ideals of women; young, slim and beautiful.

This encourages us to live in competitiveness with one another and feelings of inferiority when we cannot quite make the standards of beauty and fashion. We become puppets in the hands of advertising agencies, and subsequently the capitalist system.

We are the naked or semi-naked bodies of women posing seductively to hold the male reader's attention. Sometimes only parts of our female bodies are being used to suggest allure and availability; a caressing hand, a beckoning eye. Women's magazines place women under tremendous pressure with their urge for self improvement.

Ads easily exploit women's anxieties and promote competitiveness because women are wrongly judged by society in terms of their appearance. This ideal of femininity is hardly attainable for women who are not so able-bodied, poor, black or homosexual.

The western view of femininity has been used as a tool to propagate western cultural imperialism. African women are seduced into believing that the images we receive from western media, is something we should aspire to, despite financial and cultural inappropriateness.

Black women are lured into spending lots of money on cosmetic products to straighten our hair, and to lighten our skin. These skin lighteners have disastrous effects on our skins. According to these values of beauty and glamour, we are not allowed to grow old and have wrinkles. The ageing process must be slowed down at all costs. It is time us women take notice of this other side of the story, the values that are not printed on glossy pages, and to finally conclude that beauty is more than skin deep. ■ ■ ■