

Island School celebrates the historical significance of the Women's Liberation Movement with a Women's Liberation Week during April 12-16 2021. Women's liberation week consists of 3 major events: bitesize interviews with powerful women, a women's liberation creative showcase as well as house name changes, these events are being led by Island School's Social Justice Group (ISSJG).

ISSJG leader Taylor Chen : "The week was full of activities that aimed to bring the idea of empowering women to the forefront of our minds. I feel that they - especially the 'Bitesize Interviews' - really encouraged people to learn about the issues women face, building empathy to take action through events across the week such as the Creative Showcase. I hope this week acts as just a starting point for our community to continue celebrating women."

The ISSJG will have more events in the future, raising awareness about various other global issues.

### **Bitesize interviews with powerful women**



This year during Women's Liberation Week, the ISSJ team is honoured to have the opportunity to interview Samantha Mei Topp, Mia Kang, Mariko Hill, Rainlily centre, company LUÜNA Naturals, Spill Stories and Jill Von Dae - all inspiring females working in male dominated fields, or companies advocating for feminism by creating safe platforms for females.

Samantha Mei Topp is a British-Chinese journalist & founder of the Instagram platform @FrontlineFeminists targeting sexual violence. In her interview, she talked about how her experiences of overcoming sexual violence have inspired her to create @Frontline feminist. While discussing her experiences of sexual violence in the workplace, Samantha was disappointed to learn that all of her friends had gone through similar situations, which inspired her to step up and talk about it publicly. "I don't really think I speak up from the point of

courage, I think it came from the point that I felt really tired about this happening,” she said, “I am so tired of this being normalised and swept under the carpet. ”

Samantha is not the only one to voice concerns about the normalisation of sexual violence. “1 in 7 women in Hong Kong have experienced sexual violence in their life,” said Tweety from Rainlily. Rainlily is Hong Kong’s first sexual violence crisis centre and hotline since 1997, and provides free immediate crisis support, counselling, STI screenings and more. Working at Rainlily, Tweety learnt that a lot of the victims go through many difficulties when their loved ones don’t trust them, or even judge them at times. She talked about how we should respond when someone close to us is experiencing sexual violence: Don’t ask questions like “Why did it happen?” and blame the victim. Instead, show genuine understanding and support for them.

Gender inequality is not only portrayed in the form of sexual violence towards women, but also implicitly through “period shaming”. LUÜNA Naturals is Asia’s first 100% female-led period care company, and uses organic cotton to tackle menstruation stigma. “Many of the period care companies are led by men,” Huda from LUÜNA Naturals explained, “we think it is important that people who have period products have actually experienced them.” Huda also hopes to educate people on period poverty. 10% of each LUÜNA Naturals purchase goes towards funding charity to work towards this goal. She also calls for the end of “period shaming”. “Talk about your period freely! Alleviate the shame around period by talking about it with people around you,” She said, “Ask questions and educate yourselves and people around you.”

Apart from strong, empowering feminists who have spoken up against problematic sexist phenomena in society, we have also received videos from many inspiring feminists who talked about working in male-dominated fields. Mariko Hill is an Islander alumna (House Da Vinci), former captain of the Hong Kong Women’s National Cricket Team and co-founder of sports nutrition program Athena Nutrition. Regarding Athena Nutrition, she reminded us that females and males have different physiologies, however, there is a lack of nutritional information specifically for females. Athena Nutrition translates scientific information into simple and understandable infographics, allowing female athletes to optimise their performance and empower their body and mindset.

Mariko also talked about her athletic career. She started playing Cricket at the age of 11 and was selected to represent Hong Kong at the age of 12. “You tend to fail more often than not,” She explained that failure played a critical role in her cricket journey, pushing her to learn and grow. Ms Hill gave advice to aspiring athletes, “Persevere in whatever you love.”

Other than sports, we have also received a video from a feminist working in the film-making industry. Jill Von Dae is, like Mariko, an Islander alumna (House Einstein), and currently works as a film-maker in Hollywood, Los Angeles. She chooses to work on films and projects with meaning and has sought to develop a successful career in this male-dominated industry. She talked about her understanding of feminism in the video, “feminism is about being your own self and not fitting in with others.”, as well as about her experiences of working in a demanding career. Based on her past experiences, she thinks that women should not think of having “femininity” in a male-dominated field as a weakness, and instead strive to bring femininity to male-dominated fields. The strength of women is not

demonstrated by how non-feminin you are. Sensitivity of the female perspective is what male-dominated fields are lacking, and is what women should bring into those fields.

### **Herstories: The Women's Liberation Creative Showcase**



The ISSJ is very passionate about advocating for Women's liberation. Hence, we strongly desired to get all students of Island School to participate. We decided to launch a creative showcase through which students could demonstrate their views on women's liberation through creative media and the arts. We wanted to create this showcase in order to increase students' awareness in this field, and provide them with an opportunity to express their own views on femininity and womanhood. We welcomed all types of creative media, including slam poetry, song covers, dramatic reading, musical acts and more.

We are very pleased to have received loads of fascinating and extraordinary responses from our students. Our responses were mostly poems, ranging from slam poetry to narrative poetry. They also varied in topic; some students incorporated their own experiences, while others discussed examples from others. But they all had something in common: the demonstration of how powerful women are.

Airi Tachino from 10D, one of the participants, commented, "For the Herstories showcase, I decided to submit a poem portraying a woman's true beauty - her strength and her power as a warrior, not a mere person. The essence of how She deserves so much more than what society offered, and how She endured through more than we can possibly imagine. When I was writing it, I felt frustrated - words couldn't even come close to fully describing what some women experience on a daily basis. But I hope that I've captured some of the main emotions that I've been wanting to illustrate here."

All in all, this showcase has demonstrated student views on women's liberation, as well as allowed for engagement within the topic, which made students feel empowered. It was a very successful event overall and we hope that women's liberation will continue to be recognized in the future.

### **The Quiz**

During Women's Liberation Week, students participated in a number of quizzes designed to educate them on the importance of women's achievements and their impact on the world. These were categorised into Arts, Humanities, Maths, Sciences, Sports, and Technology and were a huge success in which many students participated; the humanities quiz was even played 47 times! Questions ranged from movies, tennis, laws and women's inventions, encouraging students to learn even more about the women's liberation movement.

## House Name Changes.



Our team is very passionate about advocating for Women's Liberation. This year, from 12 - 16 April, Island School's House names were renamed in honour of notable women from around the world, to increase gender diversity as all the house names were male. The Houses voted via Google Forms, which received a whopping 470 responses and resulted in the names of the current houses changing from Da Vinci, Einstein, Fleming, Nasen, Rutherford, and Wilberforce, to Marie Daly, Gertrude Elion, Rosalind Franklin, Florence Nightingale, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Chien-Shiung Wu respectively.

Nicolas Wong from 9R, one of the respondents of the survey, commented, "The name changes during the women's liberation week has been an experience for me. It showed how important women are to society and their role to society. Additionally, there was a lot of information that I could learn about these Women. I had fun choosing the Women that would go to the finals as there were a lot of interesting facts about them."

Furthermore, Andy Chan from 9E, stated that, "The house name changing event during the Women's Liberation Week was a meaningful and interesting take on expressing our house's support for Women's rights all around the world. Choosing the women that would go to the finals was an interesting experience as it has taught and informed me about what women of the past have achieved."

While brief, the house name changes were an effective way to educate the Island School community about inspirational women who impacted our lives in meaningful ways. It also engaged students and teachers in the activities which were related to the house name changes.

*Article by Sophie Luk, Media Team*