

It's been a month of hissy fits

By Ruth Ostrow

I am deeply offended. By what, you might ask? By everything! It's my right and prerogative as an Australian citizen to be mortally offended, hugely indignant. It's the latest trend. Political correctness has given birth to its first child: the public offence.

Not that there isn't a lot to be offended about. I'm hugely offended by Bronwyn Bishop's beehive hair, which seems to have a life of its own. I think the best thing she could do is cover herself with a headdress, which should be forced by law upon all politicians having bad-hair days.

I was offended by comments about mail-order brides, even though I've ordered several myself. I'm offended by John Howard's performance on TV the other night asking a Muslim schoolgirl in very slow English something to the effect of, "And when did you come here?" "I was born here," she replied, masking indignation.

I'm offended we're asking refugees to pay for their own detention; and by women's magazines praising celebs for getting skinny straight after giving birth. But most of all, I'm offended at having been thrown off stage for being offensive at a recent gala dinner. Apparently, I offended the sponsors by speaking about certain parts of the human anatomy which, of course, no-one hiring a former sex writer would expect them to do.

It's been a month of hissy fits and moral outrage. The serious question is: why is everyone so offended all the time? Admittedly, there is plenty of offensive behaviour about, but in general I've noticed that we're all more poopy-poo, humourless and judgmental. Has it always been thus or are we just more exhausted, angrier and therefore a bit hypersensitive? Given that so many of us are baby boomers, are we andropausal and menopausal? Is there something in the drinking water; too many pesticides in our salads; too many growth hormones in the chicken?

Or are we simply feeling disempowered in this environment of terrorism, racial bigotry, increased censorship, political correctness, surveillance cameras, overcrowding and loss of freedom? Anxious, tense, all someone has to say is "hello" in the wrong tone and we're knocked off our perches.

Given that we do seem to enjoy a bit of outrage, I'm changing the blurb on my card. No longer a writer, consultant and public speaker, I'll now be a writer, insultant, etc. In this climate of perpetual hissy fits, being a public insultant for hire should keep me very busy indeed.

www.ruthostrow.com

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