

The Bratz Movie: First Sign of the Apocalypse?

“We've got a generation now who were born with semi-equality. They don't know how it was before, so they think, this isn't too bad. We're working. We have our attache' cases and our three piece suits. I get very disgusted with the younger generation of women. We had a torch to pass, and they are just sitting there. They don't realize it can be taken away. Things are going to have to get worse before they join in fighting the battle. “ - Erma Bombeck

I'd seen the posters sprouting up at local theaters. When I took my niece to see Ratatouille – a movie that espouses the philosophy that anyone can do anything – I couldn't help but shake my head in disgust. What could Bratz, the longtime toy store shelf dweller, a doll that was half Precious Moments, half street hooker – possibly have to offer my niece? Other than an opportunity to talk to her about the obvious ridiculousness of it and the inherent danger in holding up these big-eyed freaks as role models for young women and girls. I took that opportunity, by the way. There were many soapboxes involved, I assure you.

We've been here before. When Barbie's measurements were realistically mapped out, she was exposed as the warped, weeble wobble-esque Jack Skellington that she is. Then there was the Simpson's episode where Malibu Stacy was heard to utter such truisms as 'Let's buy make-up so the boys will like us' and 'Thinking too much gives you wrinkles.' But, as is so often the case – truth is stranger than fiction. Malibu Stacy was merely aping the very real Teen Talk Barbie who spouted such zingers as 'Will we ever have enough clothes?' and 'I love shopping!'. And then there's the German Bild Lilli doll– who said such lines as 'Of course I'm interested in politics; no one should ignore the way some politicians dress!' All great quotes to be used at college commencement speeches.

The Bratz dolls are supposed to be ethnically diverse – where Barbie isn't. What's truly funny – and by 'funny' I mean, 'stab-myself-in-the-eye-funny' – is that every doll looks just as white and slutty as the next. Sure, Jade is supposed to be of Asian descent but, like her discontinued sister, May Lin, their t-shirts sport both a Japanese flag and a Chinese take-out box. Not quite the shout out to United Nations that Bratz had hoped.

Maybe I'm just not totally in touch with my own Bratitude, but I'm oddly not convinced that Steve Beeks, the president of Lionsgate Studios, as he was quoted in the New York Times, has girls' best interest at heart, "The goal is to broaden the appeal by demonstrating to parents and children alike that there is more to these characters than what they think." Does he think we missed the thousands of commercials asking our girls if they were 'ready for a salon makeover?' At the age of 8?

I get what he's trying to do – he's trying to push the whole Legally Blonde angle: That you can be hot and alluring and still be smart and ambitious. The thing is – this is a doll. A doll that is being marketed to girls who range in age from toddlers to maybe 8 or 9? I doubt they're thinking of that college application as they beg their moms for the Bratz Kidz Manicure Bedroom – with "nail polish power," apparently.

As a woman, I've had my own struggles with self-image, trying all the while not to be affected by this oppressive fashion "ideal." This "ideal" has even seeped into this month's Oprah Magazine, a magazine I thought held itself to a higher standard. Adam Glassman, O's Creative Director, will "tell you what your best friend won't." He points out that shorts on adult women in general are ghastly – his word, I assure you. We "adult women" should wear cropped pants instead, because according to Mr. Glassman, "cropped pants do shorts one better while keeping legs mostly covered." What the fuck? Why doesn't Mr. Glassman just design a nice line of burkas for us "adult women?"

Mr. Glassman's psychotic break aside, the revolution starts with us. We all grew up with those images. Remember Twiggy? If we could somehow put down the tabloid magazines, the Cosmo articles about scaring up a man with just 10 minutes of abdominal exercises, or stop bellowing in the mirror about how if you just lost 10 more pounds...

This next generation of women is counting on us. This is not "just a movie."

Wake up. Wake Up. Wake Up.

