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Facebook censors GoTopless statue of liberty

This article appeared last year - Note that this year, GoTopless Day is Aug 26, 2012

LAS VEGAS, July 20, 2011 – GoTopless.org is calling for a public protest after an image at the organization's Facebook page depicting the Statue of Liberty with bare breasts was removed by Facebook staff. The disputed image was a photo of a painting by GoTopless member Donna Grabow.

The incident began when GoTopless president Nadine Gary received an e-mail from Facebook staff on July 18 explaining the reason for the photo's removal. It read, in part:

"You uploaded a picture to 'NEW YORK National Go Topless Day: A March for Women's Equal Rights! AUG 22' that violates our Terms of Use, and this picture has been removed. Facebook does not allow photos that attack an individual or group, or that contain nudity, drug use, violence, or other violations of the Terms of Use."

"Clearly the image wouldn't have been taken down had Grabow also drawn a beard around the statue's face," said Brigitte Boisselier, a GoTopless member who is also international spokesperson for the Raelian Movement. (Both organizations were founded by Rael, who launched GoTopless to promote equal topless rights for women.)

"I'm asking all my friends on Facebook and those who believe in equal rights for men and women to post the picture that was taken down," Boisselier said. "Some frustrated individuals can't see a nipple without freaking out or feeling offended, but we've already had enough discrimination against the female body. I'm asking all women on Facebook to stand for equal topless rights by posting this photo to their own pages. And I'm also asking all men who can appreciate a female body without feeling guilty to do the same."

She added, "The female chest is beautiful and children shouldn't be told it's sinful to look at it. That sort of repression causes frustration and guilt that they will experience as adults, which is such a ridiculous waste. Bare female breasts are seen on all European beaches at this time of year, but as far as I know, incidence of rape and other sexually violent incidents is lower in Europe than in America."

Artist Grabow agrees that Facebook's action was discriminatory and wrong.

"Censorship of this painting denies freedom of speech and expression and reflects American prudishness," she said. "What's funny is that the Statue of Liberty was a gift from the French government, and all the French people I know smile when they see this feminized painting. In fact, Europeans just laugh when they learn that Facebook is censoring innocent images like this one. After all, images of nude statues are displayed everywhere else without protest, including in school books."

Grabow said she feels especially strongly about Facebook's censorship because while teaching at an international school in Saudi Arabia last year, she was approached by religious police, who asked her to cover her head with a veil.

"If I didn't comply, I could have been arrested," she said. "But of course there was no such dress code for men there."

They could wear whatever they wanted to wear.”

Why does GoTopless.org protest any legal or social inequality related to showing or depicting a man's bare chest compared to that of a woman?

“If we don't stand up to these petty discriminatory laws, other rights can and will be easily taken away from us by people disturbed by change,” Grabow replied. “And at huge social institutions like Facebook, social dynamics can make even something like the repressive, stupid censorship of my artwork seem politically correct. So let's put up a protest right now, and let Facebook know it's crossed the line!”



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