

THE ROLE OF GOSSIP IN RESPONSIBLE DEBATE

As part of Visualising Peace's investigation into responsible debate, we have organised a chat over a coffee. A gossip on peace.

Part of our mission at Visualising Peace is to realise peace in a tangible sense and we believe that practicing responsible debate is fundamental to this process. We have organised four debates each taking a distinct form: a formal debate, a more discursive conversation, a collaborative debate and a casual chat over coffee. Through the investigation of each medium, we hope to develop our understanding of how we might debate more responsibly.

Historically organising discussions proved challenging for subjugated parties. Those in power, who could not afford revolution, often shut down these conversations. We propose this coffee chat as a nod to a powerful way that ideas were developed and communicated - gossip.

Gossip

To talk idly, mostly about other people's affairs; to go about tattling
(“Gossip, V., Sense 3.a.”, 2023)

The etymology of the word gossip does not indeed suggest anything to do with women or the negative implications associated with it today. Instead, the word suggests a Godparent figure or even a friend. The word gossip has however become emblematic of the slow degradation that women have experienced through the patriarchal ideology that we live within. Metaphorically representing the subjugation of women beginning in the Middle Ages of England, the term has metamorphosed from meaning a close friend to meaning talk that inspires discord and distrust – the opposite of what the female friendship represents.

Our contemporary understanding of gossip connotes a form of talk that is damaging, toxic and unequivocally women's. Women 'who have nothing better to do' and 'can't engage in intellectually stimulating discourse' gossip. Therefore, gossip represents the devaluation of women, their influence, and their work.

To label the passage of knowledge gossip is to try and disempower women. But for centuries women have used this medium as a method to objectify this effort to undermine and instead empower themselves. Our Chatty Monday session is a nod to this idea.

Come and have a 'gossip' about peace, over free coffee with us.

MONDAY | 11AM - 1PM | PARLIAMENT HALL

REFERENCES

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