



December 7, 2011

Open Letter to The Public

in response to "Formal Letter of Opposition to Nyotaimori "Naked Sushi" Events"
issued by the Safe Zone Foundation dba GirlFest Hawaii.

"If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him."

-- John F. Kennedy

As you may or may not know, Cherry Blossom Cabaret (CBC) is hosting a new event at Chinatown's newest sushi bar, RaKuen Lounge, entitled Naked Sushi. Our Naked Sushi event is inspired by the obscure practice of Nyotaimori, roughly translated as "female body presentation," where sushi is served on the body of a woman who is typically naked. (Please note that due to nudity laws and health regulations, all of our models would have worn a thong and pasties, painted with body art with banana leaves or another barrier between the food and body. Clear rules for interacting with models were set so our models would be in a safe environment. Male models would be introduced at a later date.)

Our Naked Sushi event has recently come under scrutiny by the Safe Zone Foundation dba GirlFest Hawaii. They have issued a public letter in protest of our event because they believe it, "publically demeans women, reducing females to mere objects," and "that events such as these make it more difficult for us to progressively change oppressive cultures that allow for the subjugation of women."

GirlFest Hawaii's website states "Our mission is to prevent violence against women and girls through education and art. Our goal is to change peer culture in order to prevent increasing violence against women and girls through education, entertainment and positive representation of women." One of their main platforms is anti human-trafficking or anti sex-trafficking

As artists and cultural feminists (those that praise the positive aspects of female nature) we feel that self-appointed guardians of morality and taste are threatening our freedom of expression. Why do we oppose the view that our event is an objectification of women? The answer is simple; a free society is based on the principle that individuals have the right to decide what art or entertainment they want - - or do not want, to receive or to create.

Cherry Blossom Cabaret * 1159 Nu'uaniu Avenue * Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

We have supported GirlFest Hawaii both with financial contributions and pro bono performances since 2006. While we support GirlFest Hawaii's fight against human sex-trafficking and commend their work in violence prevention against women and girls, we strongly oppose how they view our event.

CBC has always promoted self-expression, body-confidence and respect and honoring all sexes -- women, men, transgendered and everyone in-between. We embrace the art of burlesque or strip tease as an empowering art form and through art, things that may once have been negative can be transformed into something positive, empowering and be used to educate. Our Naked Sushi night is an artistic-minded event created by women celebrating the art of sushi, body art and performance art with our willing models as live canvases for that art. Our intent was to take this often misunderstood practice and transform it into an art form that empowers and changes perception and protests negative behavior associated with those perceptions.

The history behind Nyotaimori in Japan has been obscured by legend and rumors. Some say it is an ancient geisha practice started in the Edo Period, others say that it was invented by yakuza in the 1980s, and some think that although it may have a Japanese name, it is a practice that was invented by Europeans in an attempt to romanticize Asian culture. Although the origin of Nyotaimori may be unknown, we recognize that it is not a well-accepted cultural practice of Japan and also recognize that some women may be sex-trafficked and forced to perform Nyotaimori, although not all are.

Due to the pressure of GirlFest Hawaii upon RaKuen Lounge, and statements that our event directly negates their efforts in their cause against human sex-trafficking, CBC is reluctantly changing the way we will be doing our event this month.

On Friday, December 16, 2011 from 6:30pm to 9:30pm at RaKuen Lounge, we will proceed with our event with a few changes. The new event will be called The Art of Sushi. Our sushi models will no longer be the canvases for the sushi being served, but will perform as previously scheduled. The Art of Sushi is an artistic-minded event created by women celebrating the art of sushi, body art and performance art with our willing models as live canvases for that art.

We ask the public to stand with us in celebrating freedom of expression and to embrace the difference between the freedom to choose what you want to do and the difference of being forced into doing something against your will.

Sincerely,

Cherry Blossom Cabaret

CC:

The Safe Zone Foundation dba GirlFest Hawaii
RaKuen Lounge

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