

Pro-ANA

by [Wati Koesharto](#)

Welcome. Welcome in the world of Astonishment. Introspection. Disbelief. Question Marks.

The Pro-Ana movement is a social movement stating that anorexia nervosa is a choice, a lifestyle rather than an eating/medical disorder. A movement using the World Wide Web (journals, blogs, websites and forums) to swap THINspiration pictures, exchange tips on how to best bring on vomiting, compete with each other at losing weight, support each other during fasts and they also exchange tips on how to deceive parents and doctors on their weight loss. Most frequently asked question on these forums is : “Hello, my name is... I want to lose weight, how do I become anorexic ?”



I imagine the women followers proudly carrying their red bracelets virtually raising their glasses of water to Ana and Mia ! (Mia being the representation of the Bulimiamovement) “To the two best friends in the world who will keep us from getting fat” !

With several too young international models dying of heart attacks due to anorexia and malnutrition, Spain was the first country to ban underweight models from the catwalk. The fashion world was in shock. Italy had to react. And it did. Renowned rebel fashion photographer Oliviero Toscani reacted as well. You might remember him from the controversial Benetton Aids Campaign several years ago. He launched a (government supported) campaign for Italian label NOLita displaying French actress Isabelle Caro - anorexia victim since the age of 13, weighing 25 kilo's for 1.65m -entirely naked on gigantic billboards.

There was controversy all over. Meaning that the campaign worked. Caro toured every where, giving interviews, warning young women about the consequences of the disease. She told them not to starve themselves blind, and eventually maybe dead, idealizing bone thin actresses, singers and models.

I probably would not be writing this were it not for the fact that several hours later, and still in some sort of emotional shock due to utter disbelief, the subject for my weekly documentary programme on French television was the “Gavage in Mauritania”.

Gavage and Geese are inevitably linked, but there were no geese on Television. The TV-screen showed young girls, young women being “Gavaged” or forced by their mothers. The sheer sight of it made my

stomach turn. I did not have time to integrate the torture that was being done to human beings, to women, to young girls. All for the sake of beauty. Sitting on the tip of my chair I watched mothers explain how they start force-feeding their children at an age of 6 or 7 years old.

Three times a day the children would be fed buckets of camelmilk, bread, couscous, rice.. anything that would fatten them. Some mothers used funnels to get all the liquid down, others would intentionally break toes to create a distraction. When one is being physically hurt, one cries or shouts. When one cries or shouts, the oesophagus opens.

The TV-crew followed a woman to the local market, questioning a salesman about the products on his plastic sheet. Steroid hormones causing important weight gain for horses and cattle are sold here and fed to children and young women. There was a fat-farm “manager”, whose job it is to force-feed the young clients brought to her and to make sure the children leave the farm with layers and layers of fat. “Of course it is not cruel to force feed little children ! It is necessary. Thin girls don’t get a husband. They are no good ! Only fat girls are beautiful. Only beautiful girls can be married”.

The image of the “fat” wife symbolizing wealth is very slowly changing. A small group of divorced women and ex-force feeders are campaigning against its cruelty. Since the government launched a health campaign warning about the medical consequences of childhood and adult obesity, slowly but surely the younger generation is no longer idealizing their overweight mothers.

A good thing ? Seeing the young girls in the streets smiling at images of Hollywood’s bone thin actresses, singers and models, I hold my heart and pray in silence.

<http://www.2nolita.it>

<http://neigeisabelle.blog.mongenie.com>

http://forums.france2.fr/france2/envoyespecial/gavage-femmes-sujet_7642_1.htm