

Naomi Poole – Student, Activist, and Writer of Stop, Don't Eat Me!

Naomi was born in Athens, Greece Sept. 5, 1985. Her mother Penny Poole, a Canadian journalist, and father Rafael Guzman, a Venezuelan metal artist, brought her to Canada in 1987, where she attended Catholic elementary school in Lucan, Ontario. When she was 7, Naomi moved with her mother and sister and brothers to the Philippines, where she would spend the next 10 years, living in the cities of Manila, Davao, and Cebu, with occasional summers visiting relatives in Canada.

In 2002, at 16, she began experimenting with alternative media by publishing a monthly periodical, *'Standing Naked'*, which she conceptualized, designed, and launched as an independent campus paper at her Manila high school. Its aim was to raise awareness of hard issues, such as oppression and blind following.

At 17 Naomi and a friend produced two extremely effective fundraising videos for local organizations in Davao, Philippines. She co-wrote, narrated, and organized the production of the films *'Living Stones'* and *'Imagina'*. *'Living Stones'*, tells the story of the life of homeless children in the city of Davao through interviews with Filipino street kids, police officers, missionaries, and NGOs in order to highlight the growing issue of homelessness in Asian cities. *'Imagina'*, looks at an urban slum upgrading project in a Davao city squatter community, where most residents subsist on daily earnings of between \$1 and \$2.

On her next holiday from school Naomi elected to spend her time off volunteering on the streets of Davao, feeding malnourished kids, teaching pre-school, and visiting the sick at an impoverished government hospital.

At barely 18 Naomi came to Canada alone to complete her final year of high school and lived with an aunt in Kanata. She was stunned at the lack of awareness of global issues among her peers and began working to bring them to light. With her like-minded friend Jon Dickenson (fellow activist and now a student at Ottawa University), she launched *'Blurt'*, an alternative monthly journal that was registered as a business and sold in Fair Trade shops and alternative bookstores in Ottawa. Blurt articles focused on raising awareness of social and political issues such as Fair Trade, mindless consumerism, media monopolies, environmental sustainability, and advertising myths.

Other voluntary activities in recent years have included heading a fundraising project (auctions, food and clothing drives) for Marigot, a small village in Haiti in collaboration with the Haitian embassy, and regular visits to the Mandaluyong Correctional Institute for Women in Manila, where she tried to link prisoners to legal assistance.

Lest she sound like a saint, Naomi is quick to point out that she has done her share of regular jobs too, from waitress to camp counselor, swimsuit sales rep, supermarket cashier and file clerk, to cleaner and cook. She is a sailor, roller blader, certified scuba diver, and loves to read. Currently, Naomi is a student at Carleton University, studying Sociology and Human Rights.

Naomi wrote STOP! Don't Eat Me as a 12th Grade creative writing assignment, and hoped to use it to teach her young cousins about Fair Trade. Naomi finds the fact that she is now a published author "a little weird" but hopes the book's message will help people young and old think about what they buy, where it comes from, and especially about the lives behind the hands that made it.