

BEACH BUZZ

February – March 2002

Volume 3, Number 1

a publication of B.E.A.C.H.E.S. Foundation and its Chapters
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"Keeping Our Beaches Bare"

Benetton Attacked Over Naked Female In Ad

Ananova, October 4, 2001

PARIS (Reuters)

Italian clothing and retail group Benetton landed in hot water recently after a French government official denounced its new advertising campaign featuring a female nudist pensioner as a "pitiful provocation."

Nicole Pery, junior minister for women's rights, said that the image featuring the smiling woman standing in front of three men on a beach amounted

to a caricature.

"Benetton aims to shock but constantly sickens," she said in a statement.

Saying it hasn't meant to offend anyone with the ad, Benetton says the campaign highlights the role of volunteers. The pensioner works for free at a nudist beach.

"Benetton campaigns always divide public opinion a little bit, but this campaign is a very positive one which highlights the work of volunteers," said a spokeswoman for Benetton in France.

The global advertising campaign celebrates the United Nations International Year of the Volunteer and is endorsed by the international agency. It features 10 images of volunteers from across the world.

They include a Guatemalan transvestite sex worker who distributes free condoms, a former Salvadoran gang member who preaches against violence and an Afghan who runs a refugee center in Pakistan.

The nudist, whose image first appeared in France in the daily Liberation, was

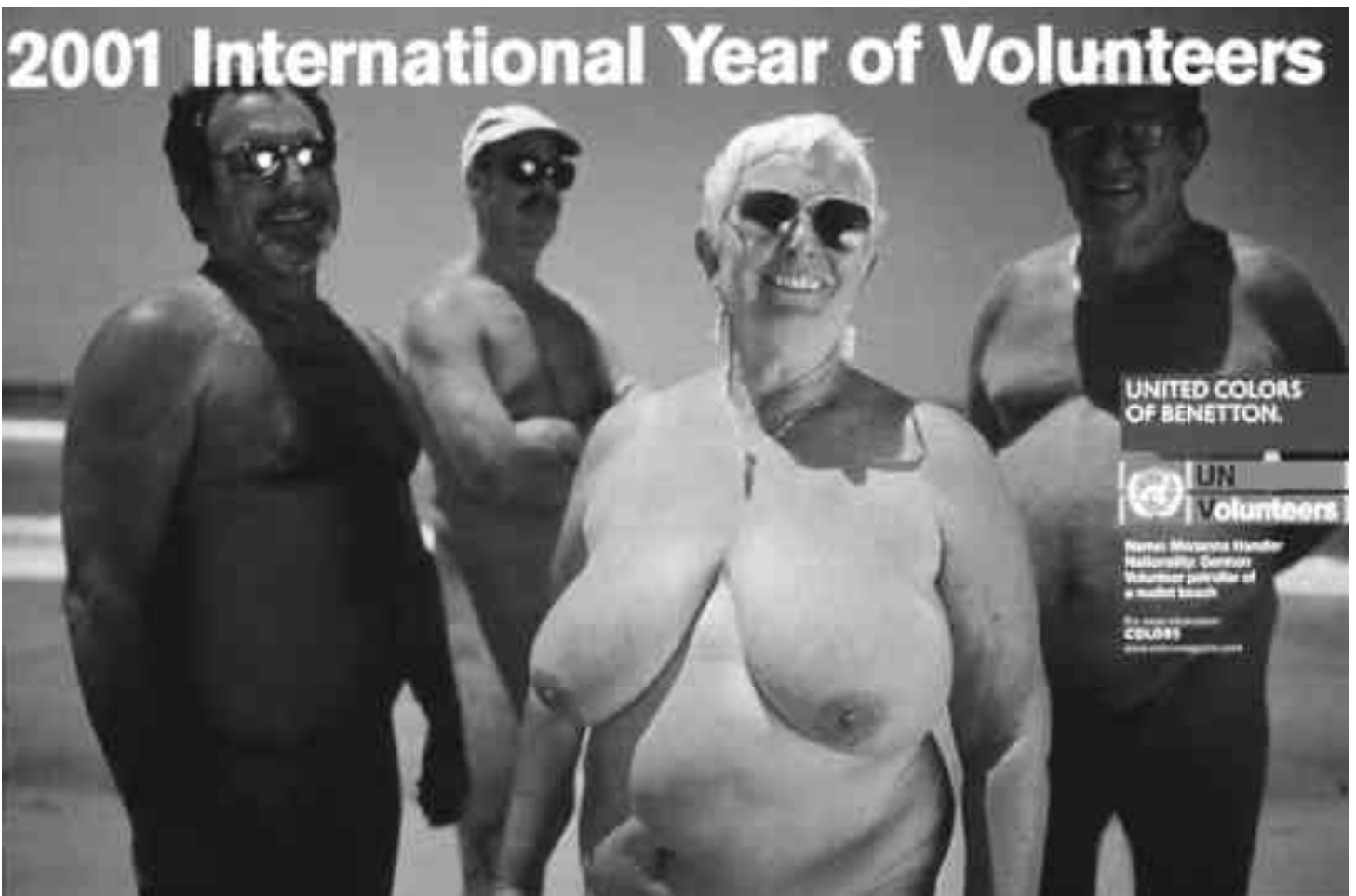


Photo: James Mollison, United Colors of Benetton



Marianna Handler, a retired German photographer living in California.

Handler holds the voluntary post of “Beach Mom” at her local nudist beach in San Onofre, where her duties include making sure people do not engage in sexual activities, obey parking regulations and refrain from littering.

“I wear a swimsuit in the pool at my mobile home park and I wouldn’t want a naturist wedding, but I’ll fight tooth and nail to be naked here (on the beach),”

Benetton’s official Web site, www.benetton.com, quotes Handler as saying.

“My biggest task is to educate people that nude is not lewd,” she added.

The French government said it was not its intention to censor advertisers, but to prevent them from using women’s bodies as objects in a way that was degrading.

Following an inquiry commissioned by Pery, lawmakers in the National Assembly have started work on a reform of a press

freedom bill that would ban sexual discrimination and call on advertisers to show greater respect for women’s dignity.

You may want to check out the pictures at:

www.ananova.com/news/story/sm_415570.html, or at :

www.benetton.com/press under *Photo Gallery-Institutional Campaigns-2001*

or in the Benetton Catalogue at your nearest Benetton retailer. ✨