

DIVERSITY+



By Alisa Clickenger

MAKING MOTORCYCLES SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE

The Power Of Women & The Importance Of Safety

Three weeks ago I was thumbing through a popular women's magazine trying to get some fresh ideas for a new project I am working on. One of the full page ads was for a feminine product, and a woman on a scooter took up about half the page. Two weeks ago I went to log into my American Express online account and was surprised to see a picture of two women on two motorcycles utilized to illustrate the marketing copy "Life's An Adventure, Pack The Perfect Card" message.

One week ago I saw an amazing video sponsored by Dove and aired on MIC.com featuring Black Girls Ride's Porsche Taylor leading a group of riders to Essence Music Festival. The video concluded with a little girl running across the street to greet Taylor who was parked in her Polaris Slingshot. In talking with Taylor, I discovered that this wasn't part of the script or on the storyboard... it was a real-life little girl who saw someone like her (a woman of color) in a cool machine doing something out of the ordinary.

I find it terribly exciting that motorcycling images are becoming such an accepted — to the point of mainstream — part of our cultural depiction of freedom, adventure and independence. Planting a stake in the ground about our own individuality is also incredibly exciting. I've long been standing up and saying that women are the key to the health of the entire powersports industry. Not only do women control 85% of household purchases, but women are also the ones who say, "yes my child can ride, no my child cannot ride."

Our opportunity is also our challenge... Safety!

With electric motorcycles on the rise, as well as the plethora of scooter companies popping, there are more opportunities than ever to ease people into the sport. The equipment (or lack thereof) is no longer the problem. We have access to the best machines ever made, with more safety features and more engine variety than ever before. Now what we lack is imagination and creativity. We're not speaking to the imaginations of new and future riders through imagery in which they can see themselves. We're not being creative enough with or outreach to overcome the #1 objection new riders throw up against the sport: Safety!

Included in their media training, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation taught me to say, "with proper training motorcycle riding is as safe as any other motorized sport" with a camera pointed at me. But that's not enough. Ewan MacGregor and Charley Boorman are doing their part by filming their third adventure *The Long Way Up*, but it's still not enough. We need ten more series just like it. We need more product placement like theirs, real riders on real adventures, not just in fantasy chases in spy films.

Perhaps it's time that women took on some of the starring roles, and we created our own stories about some outrageous and everyday powersports adventures. Because just like that little girl who got to take a ride in a Slingshot with superhero Porsche Taylor, we all want to grow up and be like the people we identify with and admire.



Whether it takes three decades, three years or three months, when we capture the hearts, minds and imaginations of the next generation of riders — and most importantly the women who mother them — that is when the real magic will happen in this industry. 🇺🇸