

TOTAL WOMAN VICTORY

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RESILIENCE & RESISTANCE

SELF-PROCLAIMED RADICALS IN THE FIRST WORLD HAVE ENTIRELY ABANDONED WOMEN IN OUR REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE. FOR DECADES, THEY HAVE OBFUSCATED THE DIALECTICAL REALITIES OF SEXISM TO SILENCE WOMEN INTO COMPLIANCE AND SUBMISSION. **NOW, WOMEN ARE LEFT WITH NOTHING TO LOSE BUT OUR CHAINS.**

Total Woman Victory is a quarterly radical feminist newsletter that aims to amplify the voices of women across the globe. We have a responsibility as students of feminist theory to reach the masses of women in desperate need of radical politics. We are dedicated to making a space where women can speak unapologetically about the issues that affect us. The collection and codification of the stories of survival of Third World women takes precedence to uphold our anti-imperialist line of struggle.

Our Mission

We dare to dispense with the palatability and niceness of liberal feminism.

We challenge the silence of female subordination.

We are radical in our demands, and attack the roots of women's subjugation to male dominance.

No more theatrics in times of anti-woman political repression.

We must build our case for sexual revolution.

Total Woman Victory is a collection of art and writing submitted by feminists from all over the world. This publication is made possible because women have generously given their time, creativity, and ideas for free. Each issue is a testament to the power of community-driven content and the contributions of women who believe in sharing their voices. We invite others to participate as well, as submissions for art and writing will be open for every issue. To stay updated, announcements for when submissions are open will be made on our Twitter, and submission forms will be posted on our website at totalwomanvictory.com.

Special Thanks To Our Contributors

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Call to Return to Consciousness Raising <i>by Winnie Lark</i>	3
Crimson Threads <i>by Saaleha</i>	8
Patriarchal Violence and Zionist Genocide: The Resistance of Palestinian Women <i>by Tifidi</i>	13
If You Have the Baby, You Can't Be the Baby <i>by Lacie</i>	17
Demystifying Femininity <i>by Jahanvi Rao</i>	21
There is Always Hope: Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Being a Woman <i>by E.G</i>	23
October <i>by Orca</i>	28
Body Piercings, Adornment and Modification as a Rite of Passage <i>by Oraibi</i>	29
Q&A: Sisters Speak <i>by the Editorial Team</i>	35
Feminist Funnies <i>by Maya</i>	37
Resilience In Contradiction: Navigating Internal Politics in the Radical Feminist Movement <i>by Judith Lark</i>	37
How to Heal a Broken Heart: A Comprehensive Guide <i>by Alyssa Ressi</i>	43
Legacy <i>by E</i>	46
Early Japanese Feminism: What Can We Learn From Those Who Came Before? <i>by @na74362408</i>	47
NATO Imperialism and UN Interventionism: Sexual Exploitation And its Descent Into Hell for Women <i>by Tifidi</i>	51
Women, Assume Position <i>by Sathi Patel</i>	58
Surviving in Silence: Aboriginal Women's Resistance to Rape and Sex-Based Violence <i>by an Anonymous Author</i>	63
Resilience and Resistance through the Sahrawi Woman: The Struggle of Women from Western Sahara <i>by Salwa</i>	67



A Call to Return to Consciousness Raising

By Winnie Lark @winnielark

After Trump was elected a second time, I was shocked to see women in America speaking online about the 4B movement. 4B, a radical feminist initiative that originated online in South Korea, derived its name from four tenets that all begin with "bi," a Korean term roughly translating to "no." The four "nos" of 4B are as follows: no sex with men, no giving birth, no dating men, and no marriage with men. Following an election where the majority of American men voted against women's interests, American women were desperately searching for something to *do* in response. Considering that their reproductive rights were on the line, 4B started to make sense for some.

The principles of 4B sounded shocking to the average American, and men and women alike began to lash out at the fact that these ideas were even being discussed. On Twitter and TikTok, the masses argued over whether or not 4B was anti-feminist, transphobic, or just plain useless. TikToks featuring women announcing their intention to follow 4B gained hundreds of thousands of views. As I scrolled through these videos, I stumbled upon related TikTok Lives.

Unlike traditional Lives, where creators spoke directly to the camera, these featured a graphic in the background posing a question such as, "What do you think about 4B?" Along the side, you could see the small circles of the profile pictures of up to 9 other TikTokers who were given permission to speak. People clamored for the opportunity to respond to the question, and there were thousands of people watching the debates. Liberal feminists, conservative Christian women, alt-right men and more were voicing their opinions, and the chat rallied in support of or against the speakers.

What I saw was fascinating. A radical feminist movement was being discussed widely on TikTok, of all places. These TikTok Lives lasted for hours and would often shift from debating 4B to sharing personal experiences with misogyny.

One night, I watched a Live that had shifted topics to how feminists in America should be actively reaching out to other women. One woman shared, "my aunt still doesn't understand that her husband should be doing the dishes." The women in the Live joined in with their own anecdotes about how shocked women in their personal lives were when they told them that



their husbands should be doing chores around the house. I thought about how, maybe, there were women watching this TikTok Live that had for the first time had their feelings validated. Maybe this was the first time that anyone had told them that their husbands should be doing the dishes. Now, on this app, they had a little seed planted in their consciousness—things weren't as they should be. I realized that these conversations were small moments of feminist consciousness raising. It was made clear that women were desperately feeling the need to speak out and speak to each other.

After the discussions I witnessed between women online and in person, I believe that now is the perfect time to return to the radical feminist tradition of consciousness raising. In "[Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon](#)," originally written in 1973 and published in Redstockings' *Feminist Revolution* (p. 144), Kathie Sarachild outlined what feminist consciousness raising is and how it worked. It began as a practice when the women's liberator group New York Radical Women realized that "in order to have a radical approach, to get to the root, it seemed logical that we had to study the situation of women, not just take random action." At a meeting, one member of the group, Ann Forer, mused out loud about how she had only recently begun thinking about women as an

oppressed group. She stated, "I think we have a lot more to do just in the area of raising our consciousness." This struck a chord with the other members of the group, and in their next meeting, they debated how best to go about consciousness raising.

What arose from that meeting was a program for consciousness raising (CR) that would be utilized at all future meetings. The women decided they should study women's lives. They read theory on their own and brought what they learned back to the group. However, in a world dominated by ideas about women mostly created by men, they wanted to see if their actual experiences aligned with the theories they had studied. In "[About My Consciousness Raising](#)", Barbara Susan says:

"[c]onsciousness raising is a way of forming a political analysis on information we can trust is true. That information is our experience. It is difficult to understand how our oppression is political unless we first remove it from the area of personal problems. Unless we talk to each other about our so-called personal problems and see how many of our problems are shared by other people, we won't be able to see how these problems are rooted in politics"



(“Redstockings First Literature List And A Sampling of Its Materials,” 1969, p. 44).

At CR meetings, women would go around the room, one person at a time, and answer a question that was posed to them, such as, “Who and what has an interest in maintaining the oppression in our lives?” As each woman answered, the others would listen, learn, and sometimes go off on tangents when they came to important realizations. After these digressions, the group always returned to the central goal: understanding shared oppression and identifying actions to create change. As Sarachild explained, “The idea is to study the situation to determine what kinds of actions, individual and political, are necessary” (Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon, p. 149). New York Radical Women made their first public action after consciousness raising at the 1968 Miss America contest, where they protested beauty pageants by throwing girdles, high heels, razors, and “other objects of female torture” into a “Freedom Trash Can.” This action gained widespread attention from horrified anti-feminists and spurred the enduring myth that feminists in the 60s burned their bras.



Redstockings meet for a consciousness-raising session. 12/12/69 (c) 1969 by Time, Inc (Photo: Mary Ellen Mark)

In 1969, Judith Brown’s handbook published by Redstockings called “How to Start a Group” provided practical advice for other women that wanted to start their own CR groups. Things were different in 1969—women didn’t have the option to connect over Twitter or TikTok. For finding other women to start groups with, she recommended “getting your friends together, calling a caucus in a male–female group you belong to, getting a women’s group you belong to to deal with women’s liberation, placing ads in newspapers,” and most importantly, “distributing literature” (p. 1–3). In many of these suggestions, she



adds anecdotes of women who had been inspired by feminist literature that had been given to them. For example, she recounts about one woman in a southern town:

“This woman had also read a pamphlet about the oppression of women. She got up in the faculty wives club and told about the pamphlet. She complained that women hardly ever talk to each other, and when they do, they often avoid certain topics. She gave examples of some of the unmentionable topics, several of which are listed as (CR) questions in the Appendix. Some of the women there agreed with her, and they decided to attend a meeting at her home about these questions” (p. 3).

When scouting out women for a CR group, Brown recommended speaking to women individually, and never in the presence of a man or her supervisors so as not to put her on the spot. Next, she recommended handing out literature, or even suggesting “movies or television programs which show clearly how women are oppressed by men.” “It is never absolutely necessary to hand out literature in advance, however,” she stated. “You may know that none of it is right for the woman you know. In that case one of the

things your group will want to do is write something that appeals to other women like themselves.” She especially recommended giving her handbook to others in advance of their first CR meeting. “We think that because all women are experts on women, that we can all evaluate literature like this Handbook and then be responsible for helping in the group to carry out our goals. ...Sometimes we call ourselves the “conveners” of meetings since we don’t try to run them, and can’t anyway” (p. 4–5).

So how should one expect a consciousness raising meeting to go? In 1998, Gainesville Women’s Liberation created a consciousness-raising organizing packet featuring Kristy Royall’s essay “What is Consciousness-Raising?” which contained a great general outline for feminists to follow. “Start out with a set of questions that each person in the group answers as honestly and completely as possible. Make sure that participants answer from their personal experience, not what they read in a book or what they think are problems in general.” She warned against letting CR meetings devolve into “group therapy.” This was avoided by setting time limits on each person giving their testimony, alerting participants when they began speaking generally as opposed to personally, as well as leaving ample time at the end for coming to conclusions (p. 19).



This is where the Tiktok Lives that I enjoyed watching fell short. While it was great to see those conversations getting started, since they were conducted without a structure and purpose in mind, they ultimately served only as disjointed venting sessions. As Royall stated, “Without at least trying to draw conclusions, CR becomes merely a rap group, a place to meet other people and get things off your chest. The data is full of potential, but without concisions its power cannot be unleashed. Conclusions is the part of CR where individuals’ experiences are transformed into general theories that we can actually use to make decisions about our organizations and about our movement” (p. 20).

Royall suggested a few beginner questions: “When has a man expected something of you that you didn’t want to do? Did you go along with it? Why or why not? What did he stand to gain if you went along with it? What did he stand to lose if you didn’t?” “When have you used the way you look to get something? Why? What happened?” “Have you ever lived with a man? What did you like about it? What did you not like?” (p. 19). While members answered in their allotted time, there would be a designated note-taker recording testimonies. All names and details which could reveal a person’s identity were removed. She stressed that testimonies and conclusions from CR

must be shared so that other women had the chance to learn from the group’s observations. After all the data had been gathered, members worked together to pool and compare the experiences they heard about, paying special attention to contradictions between peoples testimonies, as often there was a common root problem. Royall advised that “Sometimes these contradictions can show us that there is not an individual solution, because we hear testimony from women who have tried different strategies. For this reason it is important to hear testimony from people with a variety of backgrounds (racial, cultural, and economic) or living conditions (married, single, divorced, with children, without children, older, younger, etc)” (p. 20).

I believe there is no better time than now to begin a consciousness raising revival. Women across the world are acknowledging their feelings that something isn’t right and beginning to voice their dissatisfaction. We have a responsibility to seize this moment and amplify it. Radical feminists in the late 60s were opening their homes to each other to make spaces away from men and speak about their oppression. This led to brave actions being taken and great changes being made. We are now in a digital age where we have the opportunity to connect with women across the world, as well as easily accessing resources provided by the



feminists who came before us. While I firmly believe in the value of in-person consciousness raising meetings to foster local feminist communities, I think we seriously need to consider what we're capable of doing

online. By blending traditional CR practices with modern technology, we can create a powerful movement for collective liberation. I encourage all radical feminists to begin a consciousness raising group, be it in your local communities or online.

Crimson Threads

By Saaleha @A7Tima

The world will not treat a quiet woman kinder than an insistent one. Amina knows this already. She quietly waits for the archivist to return with the diary she put on hold to use for her ethics paper. She is more of a vagabond than she cares to dwell on, fickle not in her convictions but in how she presents them. She holds her tongue more than she ought to and is an oafish fool who bites off more than she can chew. She had brought a bag of empty Red Bull cans to take to the recycling centre, but it would surely be closed when Carlos returned with her diary.

Carlos, the archivist, returns from behind the shelves and hands Amina the diary encased in protective film. 'Due date's on the back, my dear. I extended it for you.'

Carlos is the kindest man she knows. When university feels like a Frankenstein creation—a mesh of ivory-tower pupils who don't care to know the world and an institution that beds great genocidaires—Carlos offers silent support to students in the opposite encampment. He does not even question the bag of cans over her shoulder.

Amina shoves the diary in her bag, bids him farewell, and walks briskly to the recycling centre some blocks away. The gate is shut with a rusted chain. Closed. Amina sighs. No point in dwelling on what is bound to happen. A streetcar takes her to her apartment complex. Passengers eye her as she sits before returning to their phones and books; downtown Toronto stuns Amina with how reclusive yet intrusive its denizens are. She figures the bag of clattering empty Red Bull cans at her feet doesn't help the stares. A boy from her fluid mechanics class happens to sit across from her. He looks at the bruised spot where she had slammed a door into her face that morning, her worn fleece sweater, and then down at the bag. He offers her a tight smile and Amina looks away.



She thinks about the diary in her bag, the mystery in its pages. The library website indicated that it belonged to a 19-year-old Pakistani girl named Safiyyah, who was involved in ‘mutinous’ activities in 1971 to aid Bengalis against Pakistan’s brutality. It is weathered from the decades, which entices Amina.

A parcel sits in front of her apartment unit, which Amina didn’t expect. She drops the bag of empty Red Bulls in the cabinet under her kitchen sink—a problem for another day. The kitchen knife glides against the cardboard and what is inside fills Amina with warmth. It’s a large, embroidered canvas. Intricate paisleys, flowers and geometric patterns decorate the canvas in reds, greens, yellows, and more against a white backdrop. A note is folded neatly atop the art. *Miss Amina, perhaps you don’t remember me*, it starts as Amina reads through it, *but I am Lubna*. Of course, she remembers her. Amina fulfilled a pillar of her faith in this act of charity and love by organising to evacuate this young Gazan mother to her family in Ottawa. *I wanted to thank you, my sister. I made this for you. My daughter has joined a playgroup and I eat fresh fruit here. May God bless you. May you smell the fragrance of the highest heaven*. Amina cannot help the way her throat constricts. Mothers should have sweet fruits and laughing children. And it is Amina’s university that labours to ensure Palestinian mothers have no such things.

Amina sets the canvas on her desk for now and absentmindedly tosses the diary on top of it to read and make notes later. She freezes when she hears a sharp ripping sound like cloth torn and thread ripped from fabric. She turns to look at the baffling noise and finds that the canvas seems to be undergoing some mutilation. The colourful thread moves on its own like a possessed viper travelling and convulsing across the canvas. Amina shrieks and trips over her feet, hitting the desk and knocking the canvas to the floor. The threads continue unfurling from the beautiful work Lubna created to become something not bound by earthly laws. Surely she is seeing things. Surely this is the result of slamming a door on her head earlier. She reaches a trembling hand over to touch one of the moving threads and it stings her before embedding itself back into the canvas. Amina cradles her hand and leans against the wall, watching the beauty become hellish. The threads eventually settle and spell something out. Amina, despite her fright, looks over to the bastardised canvas and finds the thread to spell, *I cannot find my diary!*

‘Whose diary?’ Amina whispers to the canvas. The words are pathetic to her ears. The thread remains still. She crawls to where the diary fell and stares at the pages that somehow are now empty. Some force, perhaps the



same that made the thread sentient, makes Amina begin writing. She doesn't care for whatever fine she'll pay the library for damage.

'Safiyyah?' writes Amina with a trembling hand. The threads come alive again, violently ripping and embroidering themselves on the hemp and cotton to spell out a reply. *Yes! I've done something not human.*

Amina laughs madly. Not human, no, but it makes sense somehow. The fantastical element of reaching for some semblance of familiarity from the past, a plea to be understood by a stranger before you has become real in her hands. She writes back. *'I'm Amina. I'm also 19 and Pakistani. I'm from 2024.'*

The canvas dances with unearthly power as the threads rearrange themselves in reply. *Hm. You have my diary, though.* If Safiyyah is nonplussed at the absurdity of this act, her words don't reflect it.

'Yes. I'm using it as a source in my ethics paper.'

How odd. I lost it, now I use embroidery to hide codes for comrades.

'Brilliant.'

The absurd exchange continues until Amina hears the dawn call to prayer from her phone. She had been writing to an enchanted canvas for hours with an equally enchanted diary. Safiyyah left to reconvene with her comrades as a communist protesting against her West Pakistani state for their actions against Bengalis. The canvas looks like a butchered animal. Some force had ripped the threads like someone ripping ribbons of camera film from a cassette to erase memories committed to celluloid. Amina lies down on her prayer mat and begs God to guide her in making sense of this. Her clasped hands reach not the grand, dusky sky, but her sorry popcorn ceiling. Does God care to hear the plea of a poor madwoman? Does He hear it from the wretched in Bangladesh? Gaza?

The threads that stitched Safiyyah's words expressed that Amina shouldn't concern herself with who God hears when she has the means to do something about the world's wretchedness and her own. It is Amina's resignation to a bitten tongue and an open heart that keeps her so miserable.

Do you aid evacuating ladies of war? Safiyyah asks incredulously.

'I do,' Amina writes in the diary, *'but behind a screen and with great effort.'*

And you are a student of mechanics?

'Yes.'

Then why haven't you decimated those Israeli supply clippers you spoke of?



Good God! Amina almost tears the old page! That's insanity. Whatever mechanical work Amina will produce will be to build, not destroy. The Zionist juggernaut does enough destruction. She has seen Palestinian mothers scream and tear at their clothes over the corpses of their children. She will not do the same to some quayside workers.

Amina completes her ethics paper in a month and receives a B. She forgot all about the infernal paper since her days and nights were occupied with feverishly writing in an old diary that belongs to a girl who speaks through spools of thread.

Things have gotten worse. Safiyyah says through the embroidered patterns. My dear comrade is in a coma. A brick to her head from a nationalist.

'I'm sorry.'

No need. You have the means to do more than I do.

Amina knows she disappoints Safiyyah with her cowardice. She imagines Safiyyah. This confident woman would stare at men if they ogled her. A witty woman who wears her dupatta tied across her torso, not draped over her chest demurely. A wilful academic who gains her knowledge from the fields as much as she does from books. A brilliant revolutionary on the precipice of a great act. The five decades separating them were suddenly not the greatest distinction between them to Amina, it was rather Amina's knowledge of her own cowardice and eternal hesitance. The two women stood on opposite sides of a ravine, and where Safiyyah would jump, Amina would stand, willing herself to muster up the same bravery to no avail.

It is August of 2024 and Amina is kicking empty Red Bulls away from the walkway of her apartment. She hasn't visited the recycling centre in a while. She hasn't eaten well either, not with the finals of her summer physics courses. Nor has Safiyyah.

I heard of a bayoneted woman— a Hindu Bengali. Killed after birthing her child. The thread spells out the words unsettlingly slowly. A rape child. One Pakistani to rape her, another to kill her.

Amina closes her eyes. She's read of the atrocities, but Safiyyah is there while it happens.

'I can't imagine.'

Sure you can. It's happening there too, no?



Amina thinks of the Gazan women. Yes, it's happening. The air is hot and stale here in her downtown apartment, she can't think of the women having to give birth in humid tents only to be murdered by fire and drones and hunger. Intelligentsia from her academic institution fueling a genocidal one.

God forgive you for not heeding me, girl. I adore you. I'd adore your indignation also.

Amina stares at the thread. Safiyyah has been coaxing her to use her engineering knowledge for something militant. Amina now wishes she could.

'I worry for you, Safiyyah.' Amina writes in the diary. *'You want gunpowder from my indignation, but I think yours will harm you, my love.'*

As it happened, God would have to forgive Safiyyah for not heeding Amina. The last time the threads moved in their serpent-like way, they said, *Militia forces crackdown in hostels. Us girls aren't spared.*

Amina frantically flips through the diary. Her writings to Safiyyah in the last months are gone like they were never there. Only the faded ink of the original diary, when she had first gotten it from the library, remains.

In the hours that follow, Amina spends hours on internet archives. *Safiyyah Hayat*. If she died in the summer of 1971, her name should be somewhere, for God's sake. She was the daughter of a Soviet-allied Pakistani literary giant. Dawn turns to dusk and Amina finds the name of the girl she had become besotted with. Death by firing squad ordered by the henchmen under the Butcher of Bengal with charges of mutiny and terrorism.

Amina leans back in the creaky leather chair. The stench of stale energy drinks and the sting of her bloodshot eyes are her only company as she thinks of what to do with her sweet friend's death.

Amina has been waiting in a cafe at the Port of Saint John. Her hands are rough and burnt—all that work from welding the aluminium of empty Red Bulls and stolen motors from her university labs hurt. The clipper on the quay, carrying machines of death, is already unsteady, and soon, her makeshift Red Bull explosive would see to it that the ocean swallows it before it reaches people like Lubna and her children. Safiyyah had challenged Amina on what she already knew. Despite any comfort, a woman's obeisance will not spare her from cruelty. Amina decides that if she remains in her comfortable silence, she must at least allow her machines to speak.



Patriarchal Violence and Zionist Genocide: The Resistance of Palestinian Women

By Tifidi

Israel: Loyal Attack Dog of US Imperialism in the Middle East

Although zionists have real teeth, as do any other jackal of planetary imperialist domination, they have become exposed and weak. As revolutionary leader Mao taught us, which can be found in his seminal *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* written by Hou Bo and the Chairman himself and published in 1964, *they are paper tigers*. When you cut open an occupying zionist soldier, a fragile nazi general bleeds. They haven't been, and will never be, successful in smothering the fire of Palestinian uprising. The zionist stormtroopers cower in the face of Palestinians smashing their bondages of colonial oppression and slavery. There is a deep reservoir of hatred against the israeli occupation that has become seared into the political consciousness of oppressed humans around the globe.

In the context of Palestine's women fighters, they possess a fervor specific to their conditions. They know patriarchal suffering, the oppression of the female sex, is intimately bound to the genocide of

their people as an oppressed nation. This has propelled them towards political organization, taking up arms and stabbing colonialism directly in its neck. The zionists and their legion of imperialist goons believe they have destroyed everything of Palestine—and while it is true that they have left them without homes, schools, electricity, water, and without their parents and siblings, Palestinian spirits will not be crushed. They find a pervading resistance in their homeland. There is nothing but righteousness and heroism in the Palestinian fight against zionist terror and genocide. They are delivering one of the strongest blows to the world imperialist system.

Zionism: its role in the Maintenance of Patriarchy & Femicide

Throughout this most recent explosion of zionist terror and bloodshed against Gaza, we have seen settler soldiers and military pigs break into women's houses to flaunt their undergarments as souvenirs and proof of the forced mass exodus of Palestinians due to zionist parasitism. These can be



properly described as sexual crimes premised on the pornographic humiliation of Palestinian women as colonized and female subjects. This perverted logic used to sexualize and debase the women of Palestine is a political weapon used by israel to justify its ongoing crimes against the Palestinian masses.

While the liberal feminist camp has capitulated to propaganda that supports imperialist and zionist narratives bloodlibeling Palestine's resistance groups as “male rape hordes” mass violating female settlers, Palestinian women and children are being systematically sexually exploited and annihilated by zionist soldiers who rape with impunity. We should believe women in situations of aggravated sexual exploitation and violence, but we should not become mindless stooges that happily absorb the propaganda of the US-imperialist zionist axis which disguises itself as the inhibitor of “unbiased” journalism.

Patriarchal violence through the means of sexual slavery, prostitution and mass institutionalized rape during imperialist wars is a reality—that of which primarily affects the women and people of oppressed nations who are being occupied, exploited and dominated by foreign military and geostrategic interests. More on these manufactured claims can be found in the article *US and Israeli mass rape*

propaganda, without credible evidence, is being used to justify Gaza genocide by Patrick Martin written in 2023 just two months after the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation.

There is also a stark connection between the zionist occupation and prostitution expansionism that we as revolutionary women and feminists must renounce; israel is one massive rape bordello comprised of some of the deepest elements of patriarchy and capitalist sex exploitation. The sex trade in the zionist entity generates \$500 million a year as masses of women from nations in the former USSR, and parts of the imperialized world, have been exported to occupied Palestine as sex slaves, more on this can be found in an article published by Anya Stone called *How the Sex Trade Becomes a Slave Trade: The Trafficking of Women to Israel*; whereas statistics on prostitution revenue in the zionist occupation can be found in their own national reports, which are most likely intentionally deflated.

Furthermore, this isn't even mentioning the barbarous conditions created by the zionists and their allies that have left the overwhelming majority of Palestinian girls and women open to the claws of the commercialized rape market under world imperialist patriarchy. Also, it is painfully true—zionist prisons serve one of the core functions of prostitution itself, which is sexual enslavement



through repeated rape and assault. The Israeli army leverages the captivity of national liberation fighters to punish all Palestinians as dispossessed and colonized subjects. The political economy and social practice of rape is an egregious arm of the imperialist world system.



Who are our Enemies & What is the Revolutionary Line?

It is pertinent for us to be completely opposed to hegemonic liberal feminism, which is the same ideological farce that praises women for flying fighter jets over oppressed nations dropping bombs. It defends female brothel owners that shackle women to patriarchal sex captivity and prostitution, it celebrates women owning neocolonial slave corporations, and in this case it celebrates women in Israel's occupying military. In all of this ruthless

critique, it is not my intention to suggest that the oppression of women will cease to exist once the Zionist military outpost is nothing more than a corpse but, rather, that national salvation must be achieved in order for female emancipation to be a considerable reality.

“Women’s activism” has largely been captured by liberalism and postmodernism, hampering our ability to mount resistance against global imperialism and its fundamental role in maintaining the oppression of women. Today, an abundance of Yankee and Western feminists are mere appendages to democrats. The “third wave feminism” of today has largely worked to reinforce the hegemony of postmodernist ideology, a distinctly nebulous outlook that obfuscates the class relations which generate exploitative contradictions—which has furthered the imperialist reconfiguration of women’s oppression. Imperialism is the worldwide exploiter of women’s labor and degrader of her dignity, it is the primary economic architecture that must be smashed to begin the transformative process of ending the enslavement and oppression of womankind.

The female revolutionaries of Palestine are mothers, students, and everyday people who, through experiencing the extreme oppression of the Zionist occupation and fighting against it, have been



transformed into women-for-revolution. They have been thrown into israeli prisons and sexually tortured as political prisoners for engaging in organized struggle against the zionists and their occupation. They have rejected the entrenched patriarchal backwardness of the old society that positions women as vessels for domestic slavery, reproduction, and sexual submission to men, and have fought as armed combatants for national and women's liberation. They are the faces of the revolutionary women's movement.

The bourgeois feminist position that situates resistance to colonialism and imperialism as a "masculinist" trait explicitly ignores the role of the slave woman, the peasant woman, the working woman, the plundered woman, as a key revolutionary subject in militant struggle. History and ongoing revolutionary momentum paints a totally different picture of the participation of the exploited woman in relation to the imperialist world system; she is not reducible to an apolitical passerby, she is a brave and militant fighter. The Palestinian woman is no stranger to what the revolutionary women's army looks like. **We support them and the entirety of Palestine's resistance to zionism.**



If You Have the Baby, You Can't Be the Baby

By Lacie



In the middle of my first year at university, I found out I was pregnant. On 21 of July 2021, I laid with my feet in stirrups on a hospital bed whilst a male doctor inserted rods into my vagina to dilate my cervix in preparation for my surgical abortion. It was the most intense pain I have ever experienced in my life; I threw up my own stomach bile 3 times from the pain. For the 18 weeks I was pregnant, I cried countless times, threw up after nearly every meal, went up a cup size, and consumed every abortifacient I could.

When I woke up from surgery, I was given a cup of summer fruit squash and a slice of toast, buttered. Before I left the clinic I was told to get in touch if I needed any emotional support for the guilt I would inevitably feel. The car ride home was spent sitting in blood that had leaked through several layers of clothing and into the car seats, but I didn't care, because my body was mine again and I could continue the degree I started.

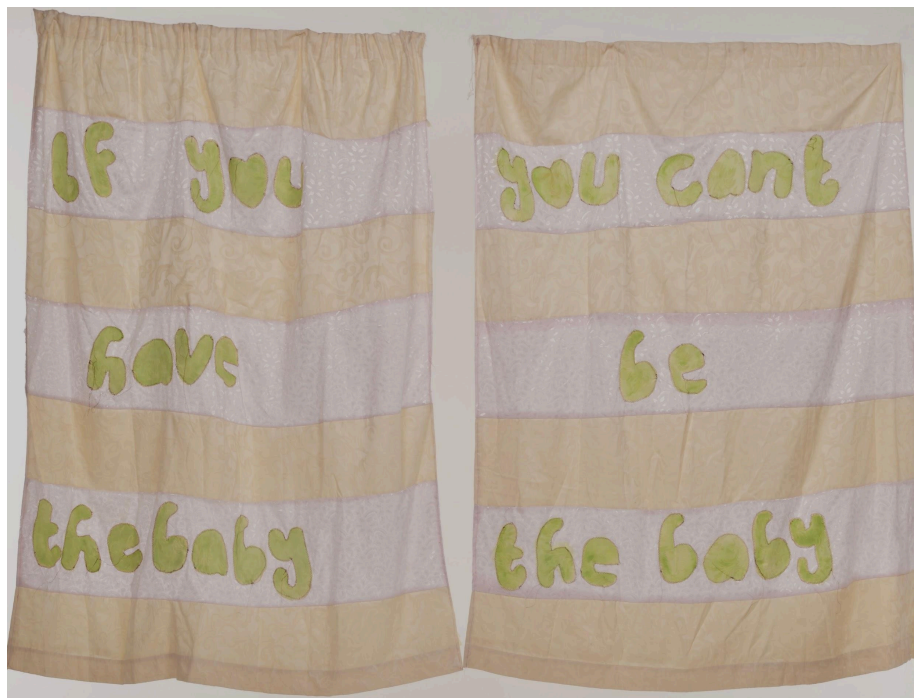
A few days later, I began to lactate. I felt horrible; I felt dirty. My whole life, my body has been reduced to a porn category, but as the milk dripped I transformed from the 'virgin' to the 'whore'. I was a 'milf', I had 'mommy milkers', my body was a fetish. I wanted to grab a knife and mutilate my chest beyond recognition. The shame and embarrassment I felt about lactating led me to create this sculpture. I wanted to shed light on lactation because I never even knew it was possible after an abortion. I wanted to alleviate the shame from any other women who could be struggling with the same thing.



This piece was exhibited for my final year degree show, an anthropomorphic dollhouse with bay window tits and a doorway cunt. The house is hidden inside a small room and protected by a curtain reading ‘if you have the baby, you can't be the baby’. A title inspired by the 1987 film ‘Overboard’, and a phrase I felt summed up the piece well. I thought my only option was to become a teen mum; my life was nearly ruined and my childhood nearly taken. I was terrified of being plunged into selfless motherhood.

The dollhouse is sat on a plinth with the doors cracked open, slicing the vagina in two and spreading the legs apart. When the doors are closed, the arms are positioned to ‘hand express’. This piece served as an allegory for a mother’s milk—mothers are told to be very aware of what they eat whilst being pregnant, so I wanted to create the milk with objects submerged in it to symbolise this production of milk and what milk my body made would look like—a physical manifestation of my personality. I wanted the house to look chaotic. What cannot be pictured is the multiple different music boxes playing simultaneously to overwhelm and overstimulate the viewer. When creating the made up milk substance, i couldn't help but see the resemblance between this and throw-up, especially a baby's vomit after drinking milk.

To attempt to tell the audience that this is breastmilk from an abortion I opted to present the 'milk' as lumpy, gone off, rancid milk. My breastmilk would never be drunk, and so the only option it has is to expire.



For the entirety of our childhood, young girls are socialised to hate everything about themselves and other women. When I was really little I used to love pink—everything pink, all the time, no matter what. I feel I have regressed back into this girl in recent years, perhaps trying to cling to the past. The time between being a small girl parading in pink dresses and a woman parading in bigger pink dresses was an era of self loathing and overcompensation—I hated pink, I hated lace, I hated anything 'girly', I wanted to be taken seriously, please! Everything that women have popularised is publicly ridiculed and demoted—makeup, fashion, fandoms, sewing, women's work. It's very interesting to me that we are taught to hate pink whilst gifts from family consist of a resounding flood of pink. This duplicity is a breeding ground for self hatred that only grows more during adolescence.

I love the rich history behind 'women's work' and sewing circles as an act of rebellion. I feel so empowered carrying on the same art forms women before me created and bonded over with little to no recognition. I am so proud of myself for putting my own needs first and committing the ultimate sin in our society—"one does not abort his victory".

I had two ultrasounds, a dilapan induction, and a surgical abortion: dilation and evacuation. There were 25 calls back-and-forth between me and doctors about why I wanted an abortion. The sheer volume of calls felt like an attempt at making the process so difficult for me that id hopefully give up and give in and have the fucking baby. I exhibited my art in buildings I thought I'd never see again because I'd be sitting at home nursing a baby I resented for ruining my body and my life. I resist shutting up and accepting my role as a woman.



Demystifying Femininity

By Jahanvi Rao

The theory that femininity can be a vehicle to help women gain power is pervasive, to the extent that it is a source of horizontal hostility within the feminist movement. The premise suggests that rejecting femininity is internalized sexism, and the heated polemics in defense of femininity argue that as roles and behaviors associated with the feminine are devalued economically, socially, and culturally, women can reclaim it and give it currency which can be used to gain equality.

It stems from the mistaken belief that by playing into the very tropes and oppressive roles made for us, we are somehow subverting them. That if we embrace and confidently “own” being objectified and reduced to things that are desired by men, we can gain power over them. We are told that it is our fault for resisting femininity, that by viewing femininity as a denigrating role which demands obsequiousness and gradually erodes your sense of self, we are masking our resentment towards our own sex. That we need to redefine what femininity means and embrace it. Paint your shackles pink! Put a bow on it! The shackles are protecting you, really.

“You become what you don’t resist”

— *Liberalism and Death of Feminism, Catherine MacKinnon (1990, p. 5)*

What is femininity? Passive, intuitive, nurturing, graceful, harmonious, and empathetic are popular descriptors. Are there any descriptors that don’t define women in terms of how they should cater to the people around them? Descriptors that define women in relation to their biological functions? Or seek recourse to the natural and mystical? By enshrouding femininity in abstract terms and ascribing spiritual connotations, our society deflects any criticism, almost condemning anyone who dares to question the roots.

The concept of femininity neutralizes treating women as a monolith. Any deviations from this concept result in women being demonized. But what happens when a woman doesn’t want to be nurturing, or doesn’t want to give birth? Or can’t? What happens when she doesn’t want to be self-sacrificial or passive? What happens when



she doesn't want to center her life around pleasing the male gaze? Is a woman allowed to be anything other than desired?

It has always been normal for people who don't perform their assigned gender roles or participate in heterosexual norms to be treated as invisible and ostracized in cultures that strictly adhere to the gender binary. This tactic of social isolation often leads to mental immiseration, and women are often expected to bow out of the public sphere when they don't conform to their gender role.

In "[Republicans think Kamala Harris can't be president because she hasn't had children](#)," written in 2024 and published in the Guardian, Moira Donegan writes about the alarming nature of seeing this played out so publicly in what is purportedly the most progressive countries in the world during their election cycles.

It can't be a coincidence that we've seen a rise in primordial oppressive laws against women; Men's Rights Activists the likes of which are *sui generis*; men in public spaces touting antiquated misogynistic statements around the same time there's been a surge in tradwife content where a majority of the viewers are women.

How did we regress from the intellectualism that gave birth to the likes of Andrea Dworkin to collectively getting conned into believing pre-second wave feminist myths about the glories of being a housewife and having kids early on? Where choice feminism is constantly evoked in defense of these choices? Is the throning of femininity and choice feminism simply a product of our post feminist world? Literacy was previously thought to be a useful tool to combat inequality, but the recent uptick of anti-intellectualism has repackaged ignorance, mental laziness, and a lack of intellectual curiosity as a disdain for elitism.

It will eventually come down to having a clear and concise understanding of femininity and erasing the misconception that femininity is innate, not a set of behaviors that we are aggressively socialized into. We must stop using it interchangeably with "woman" or "female".

Every aspect of femininity means being less human, ranging from the physical — practices such as the removal of body hair and the tradition of foot binding, where we are supposed to resemble men less, all geared towards differentiating women as Other, inhuman — to the mental, with the encouragement of passivity, where we are expected to be okay with being bored and mentally sterile and unstimulated. Femininity requires that we remove our resemblance to humanity. To make any headway as feminists, we must acknowledge and reject the notion that women must conform to feminine standards.



There is Always Hope: Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Being a Woman

By E. G.

This past Halloween I found myself searching for a change of scenery and pace—and more importantly, a good party. Last-minute, I booked a flight to Los Angeles to spend the weekend with my good friend Olivia, who moved out to LA a year prior.

We caught up, cried, and indeed partied in our weekend together. At some point, I brought up the old Fiona Apple meme (“[there’s no hope for women](#)”) as a joke. Olivia straightened to full attention. “But there is!”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

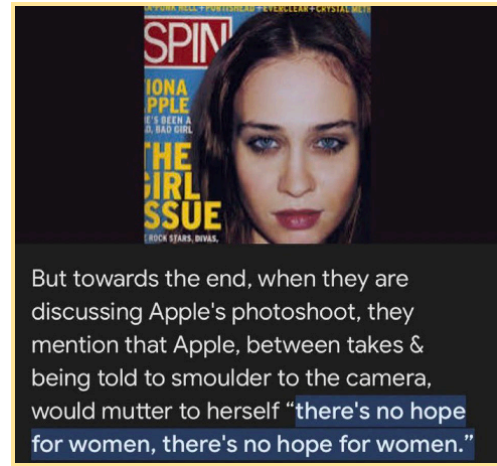
“There is always hope for women,” Olivia said, smiling, before pulling up a [video of Apple](#) proclaiming as much (via Fiona Apple Updates on X).

“There is always hope for women,” Fiona said on the screen, “we are the hope!”

I left LA not only deeply grateful for my female friendships, but hopeful for womankind. I haven’t always felt that way, and it hasn’t always been easy.

The ouroboros of gender nonconformity has trapped me for many years: I would question my natural aversion to femininity; label my aversion

nothing more than “internalized misogyny;” force myself into the femininity demanded of womankind; before eventually eschewing it once more; only for the cycle to begin again anew. I destroy myself and rebuild myself again and again, each time wishing for it to be different, only for it to be the same.



Olivia and I met studying art history at the same university, where we became fast friends—a not insignificant feat for me, as female friendships have been few and far between in my life. We talked about moving to New York City, about our favorite movies and music, about our hopes and fears, and sometimes, fleetingly, about gender.

This last topic was sadly unavoidable, given that



Olivia met me as “M,” my masculine alter-ego: complete with short, shaggy hair, a wardrobe of ill-fitting men’s clothing, and, of course, a preference for gender neutral pronouns.

We met shortly after I exited my first long-term relationship, one that spanned from the end of my teens into my early twenties. This relationship was both my first time living away from home and living with a partner. I was wholly unprepared for the brutal and unrelenting reality of patriarchy, particularly the ways my male partner would take advantage of me in my own home: including domestic labor, sexual availability, and general “mothering”—all things socialization had told me were expected of women in heterosexual relationships.

Gendered socialization is ruthless in its pervasiveness and ubiquity. Moving-image media, including cinema, is a primary locus of this socialization, as described by Laura Mulvey in her 1975 essay [Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema](#). Repetitive viewing of media that presents women as sexual objects both visually *and* narratively teaches viewers that a woman’s worth is only in her sexual attractiveness to men. This view of woman-as-object and man-as-person is further reinforced outside of entertainment: when learning of history, current events, and culture, one is met with a series of great men’s achievements.

Naturally, this begets the question: why have there been no great women? (For answers, read Linda Nochlin’s 1971 essay [Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?!](#)) The void of this history, made intentionally barren, enforces the idea that being a woman is inferior.

All of this became very clear to me as I remained trapped in my relationship due to the COVID-19 lockdowns. As a last measure of regaining control over my life, I developed an eating disorder. Fixing my body, I thought, would fix my life.

I wasn’t the only one with this idea.

Following the successful gay rights “born this way” campaign, transgender activism leaned into “born in the wrong body” rhetoric. Unlike “born this way,” which asserts that homosexuality is natural and does not need to be fixed, the “wrong body” line of thinking asserts transgender people are born wrong and *need* fixing. Once “fixed,” your body will match your soul and all will be well.

It’s an attractive claim. It offers a miracle cure—once you reach the pot of gold at the end of the transition-rainbow, your woes (somehow all attributable to gender dysphoria) will simply disappear.

This spoke to me. Something about having a secretly male soul was appealing to me on a subconscious level. It meant that I didn’t deserve the treatment I was receiving both inside and outside my



home. If I was “fixed,” everything would be better.

Furthermore, the proposed existence of people who truly “feel like women,” who resonate with femininity and all its failings, made me question if I was really a woman. If someone does not want to be feminine—as is the case for myself and many other gender nonconforming women and girls—it therefore must mean they do not have a soul that is inherently female. They (we) are, obviously, not women.

The rise of nonbinary identified females is not a coincidence. It is synchronous with a decline in the condition of womankind globally. Women’s rights have been massively restricted whilst social conservatism and far-right propaganda have become inescapable online. Many young women have watched their male peers radicalize into a form of woman-hate previously restricted to the dark corners of the internet. This messaging is not only from anti-woman pundits in the public sphere but primarily via the ubiquity of hardcore internet pornography. ([Read more in my Anti-Porn Bibliography.](#)) In our culture, being a woman is to be the recipient of relentless sexual violence. It is terrifying, and it is everywhere.

Being nonbinary was a safe haven from a patriarchal reality that was too ubiquitous for me to properly identify and react to. When I left my relationship and started my new life as “M,” I was free.

My nonbinary identity was synonymous with liberation from gender roles and newfound social success.

However, it wasn’t always so smooth. Sometimes people would try to give me tips to be more “masculine” to help me to be more “authentically me.” Sometimes I was offended, but sometimes I would take the advice. I eventually found myself monitoring my behavior in public, making sure I was acting as masculine as possible. My body dysmorphia began to include gender dysphoria. I began to dislike the soft curve of my jaw, wishing it were sharper. I hated the way my hips interrupted the vertical slope of my silhouette. I wished my body looked more and more *male*.

One night last fall, a month before Olivia moved away, we split a bottle of white wine on my couch and talked for hours. Once sufficiently tipsy, I found myself baring my soul to Olivia: “Little girls undergo a schism,” I explained desperately, “where they have to decide if they are a feeling, complete, thinking human, or a woman.”

Olivia said nothing, just looked at me. At that moment I felt very exposed, like she had just figured out the puzzle of my psyche. And, in retrospect, she probably had.

After she moved away, I felt more estranged from womanhood than ever before.



The further I attempted to force my body into a male mold the more extreme my eating disorder, gender dysphoria, and depression became. I found myself trapped in a self-perpetuating cycle of insecurity, body issues, and internalized misogyny that reared their ugly heads as the hydra of gender dysphoria.

One of the forms of gender dysphoria I struggled with most was sexual. I hated being relegated to the role of “woman” during sex and often wanted to be the active, penetrating party. This spiraled into a rather severe case of penis envy.

One night last winter, I tried to masturbate and ended up crying because of genital dysphoria. I wanted a penis. I wanted to penetrate. I hated my genitals. I’d previously investigated phalloplasty but came away resolute that it was not for me. I didn’t want a phallo-penis grafted from my arm, I wanted a real one. I wished I had been born a man. And I cried and cried, alone in my room.

In many ways, it was a wake-up call. I realized then that I was *never* going to be a man. I was a woman, and there was no changing that fact. I realized that I had traded one oppressive beauty standard for another—that I was still a voyeur inside myself, watching myself for any weakness. The further I went down this road and the more I committed to changing my body, the more I would hate my body. My dysphoria

would not get better, it would get worse. It was simply an inevitability, given that I am fundamentally and immutably female.

I had to sit with this realization for a while. Meaning, of course, I bottled it up for a few months until it all exploded one night in the spring. I was drunk at my new boyfriend’s house—I don’t remember what set me off, to be honest. I just remember screaming and crying and being mad at God for cursing me with the ill fortune of being female. “What kind of sick joke is it,” I remember saying, “that humanity is divided into two classes—a class of real people, and a class of sex slaves—and why do *I* have to be one of the sex slaves?”

I then shut up.

Half of me couldn’t believe what I just said—the other half was relieved I’d finally admitted it to myself. My nonbinaryism reflected my deep internalized misogyny: that I wasn’t truly mad at the oppression of women. I was mad (furious, actually) that it affected *me*. On some level, I thought myself superior to other women. My nonbinary identity was me desperately pleading with the world not to treat me as a woman—that I didn’t deserve it.

The truth is that no woman deserves to be treated as inferior. And moreover, we are treated as inferior not because we are, but in fact because we are not.



This humbled me on an indescribable level. I began reading radical feminist theory ravenously and set out to see myself as a woman and work through the ways gendered socialization had shaped me. I realized that being a woman has nothing to do with femininity or beauty or sexuality or submissiveness or anything other than being an *adult human female*. Radical feminism, in this way, saved my life.

The reality that I was a woman and nothing could ever change that fact was no longer stifling but *liberating*. It connected me with a rich female history and active feminist community. Reading writings by thinkers such as Mulvey, Nochlin, & Dworkin put words to aspects of patriarchy I could not yet describe and provided a framework for resisting its pervasiveness. I realized that each individual rejection of womanhood in lieu of nonbinaryism is not only a personal disservice, but an act of betraying our sex.

As Olivia and I sat in the cool California air on her front porch and caught up, one of her roommates returned home. I introduced myself as “Emily” without a second thought.

“Wow,” Olivia said once we were alone. “That was so beautiful.” She reached over to squeeze my hand.

When I asked what inspired that reaction, she gestured like it was the most obvious thing in the world. “Emily, not Em!” She hugged me and expressed

her happiness for me.

In the year between our meetings, I had changed—or maybe I had stopped trying to change myself. During that year, being a woman went from a cursed inevitability to a neutral fact about myself to a liberating truth that I no longer run from. My womanhood is androgynous, avant garde, and alien. None of these things affect my femaleness, just as my femaleness has no bearings on my aptitude or capabilities.

I learned to stop worrying and love being a woman.



October

By Orca



Body Piercings, Adornment and Modification as a Rite of Passage

By Oraibi @themetaplug

As humans, we are continually going through the cycle of Life/Death/Life. In every cycle, there is a movement from one state of being to another. This state could be physical, social, psychological, spiritual, emotional, or financial. Although these transitions are observed differently across cultures, they are universally acknowledged through rituals—parties, thanksgiving, funerals, baby showers, etc. The transitions may stand alone or combine with others; for instance, the development of breasts and onset of menstruation in teenage girls is at once a physiological, psychological, and emotional transition. The rituals or events that mark the occurrence of these transitions are what is referred to as rites of passage.

Rites of passage are characterized by three key features:

1. **Separation, transition and return:** The individual experiences a change that leads to a separation from the familiar. During this period, the individual encounters a trial of sorts: a night of soul that leads to “death”. This is followed by triumph, a realization, or new growth, and the return to society. For an adolescent girl, the onset of menstruation marks the end of her childhood; she becomes knowledgeable about personal hygiene for menstruation, her cycles, and abstaining from relationships with men. She rejoins society as a “young lady”, more knowledgeable about her body. Similarly, in ancient Kenya, among the Kikuyu tribe, adolescent boys were separated into the forest to undergo training, trials, and cleansing in preparation for their circumcision. The circumcision marked their ascent into manhood and earned them a building in the compound, along with the ability to sit with the older men and have relationships with women.
2. **Performance:** Following the completion of the transition, a performance is required to signal to the individual and society that a transition has been made. In this performance, the individual enacts their new role, informing all witnesses of the transition being made. In southern Nigeria, among the Ijaw tribe, young brides are paraded around the village en route to the groom's house accompanied by family, friends, and neighbors with their luggage, food, and gifts for their in-laws. In this instance, the bride makes a performance of her transition from singlehood to being a married woman. The story of Jesus in the bible



also reflects this key feature—after spending 40 days and nights in the desert, his return to society is marked by the miracles he begins to perform.

3. **An audience to witness:** For rites of passage to be complete, collective recognition of the personal transformation needs to occur. It is the audience that gives legitimacy to the performance and then accords the performer the regard demanded by the new status earned. In certain parts of Nigeria, a widow would have to shave her hair off to symbolize the death performers and audience, leaving us with ashes and dry bones of what were once sacred, transformative experiences. Unfortunately, even though we progress and forget as a society, our bodies don't. The participation in these transformations and rites is hard-coded into our collective and individual consciousness through millennia of her husband. She would also have to wear a certain color (white in some cases, black in others) for a year. During this time, she is not to attend social functions and everyone in society is accepting of her gaffes; it is chalked up to grief. Once the grieving is completed, she can adorn other colors, grow out her hair, and rejoin society.

As globalization transforms our world into an interconnected village, the intentional performance of traditional rites has been systematically modified, diluted, or completely eroded. For those rituals that persist, their significance and deeper understanding now elude human experience. The primal need to perform and mark transitions still resonates within us, manifesting in contemporary contexts. A relatable example is our persistent urge to mark milestone birthdays with ritualistic celebrations—cakes, social gatherings, partying, being surrounded by friends, exchanging gifts, or embarking on special trips—all unconsciously fulfilling the need to acknowledge and participate in a rite.

According to Freud, the thoughts and emotions that exist outside of our awareness influence our behaviors, even though we are unaware (unconscious) of these underlying influences. Though we might remain intellectually unaware, we continue instinctively marking our life's significant transitions through our modern, personalized rites of passage.

I became vaguely aware of the unconscious way I was carrying out rites of passage after watching a documentary about post-war culture in Northern Nigeria. The soldiers had to undergo cleansing where blood was let out from their heads to rid them of trauma from the war, remove "bad blood", and renew their spells and



protection. In exploring the rite's features, I came to associate the act of body piercings, tattooing, and body modification as rites of passage.



[Photo of a Samoan woman with a traditional Malu \(tattoo\).](#)

This realization set me down a rabbit hole where I found historical evidence to support this theory. For instance, the Polynesian peoples (Haiti, Samoa, Niueans, Tongans, Cook Islanders) would get tattoos called "Tatau" to mark the coming of age into sexual maturity for women and to mark the man's readiness to take responsibility for a household or the village. A status symbol of sorts, the tattoos were given in a ritual paired with a village-wide celebration consisting of singing, dancing, and chanting. The symbols chosen were sacred, sometimes to reflect a family totem, a person's spirit guide, or

the status they now held in the village. A family could also be distinguished by their choice of tattoos.

I began to tie this historical practice to modern day practices by asking women who have adorned their bodies with tattoos, "What does this mean", "When did you get it", "Why did you get it?" I was searching for the pattern of separation-transition-return, and I have come to always find it. Even when she said it meant nothing, the events leading up to it became proof that these weren't simple aesthetic choices, but complex psychological events manifesting physically, and each tattoo was a ritual performance that meant something.

In between these meanings, I have come to find an even deeper symbolism for women—a discovery of self and celebration of selfhood, the reclamation of our bodies, an initiation into the "wild women" gang characterized by body modification, adornment, and piercings. My friend Amaka's story illustrates this perfectly. She placed a mini anchor tattoo on her feet after leaving a small city and moving to a bigger one. She realized she was her own home and engraved this understanding onto her skin. Shortly after, her life as a travel blogger began. She had psychologically found freedom, enacted her rite and claimed status in the world, with the growth of her career as evidence.

On Body Modification

In Ancient Ethiopia and some Sudanese cultures, lip plates and stretching were practiced as a rite of passage. Mothers made incisions on their daughter's lips and began the process of lip plating when they reached the age of 15/16 and were deemed fertile and ready for marriage. The plates were said to improve the identity, beauty, and worth of the child before marriage. As the girl grew older, she could decide on her style for ear stretching and body scarring. Rather than alienating the women from society, the “designs” were regarded as enhancing beauty and clanship. While I find these forms of body modifications jarring and wonder what form of patriarchal and colonialist norms led to this practice for women, this societal norm became the means through which young women individuated. This practice aligns with the experience of an older friend of mine—MM, a queer woman who recently migrated out of Africa. The first manifestation of her relief to be living out of the closet was a 3-way nose piercing and stretching plates in her ears; she individuated and unconsciously marked this transition with body modification.

On Piercings

Although I have built my premise from limited observations, a consistent narrative emerges: body piercings, tattooing, and modification have been profound historical tools for individuals to negotiate identity, freedom, and self-expression.

In the Ayurvedic belief system, the nose is viewed as intrinsically connected to reproductive organs, and piercings were believed to enhance the activity of Ida and Pingala energy channels. It was believed that piercing the left nose would alleviate menstrual pain and facilitate easier childbirth, and imbue women with more feminine qualities. Thus, young women of marriageable age in ancient India would adorn nose piercings symbolizing a sacred transition into womanhood and reverence to Goddess Parvati—the divine feminine embodiment of marriage often depicted adorned with a nose ring. Similarly, among the Berber and Bedouin cultures of North Africa and the Middle East, piercings transcended mere aesthetic practice, serving as spiritual protection. They believed Jinns—supernatural entities—deeply despised metal, so ear piercings acted as barriers, preventing these spirits from entering the body through those specific points. Within their marriage traditions, a gold ring gifted by



the groom became a symbol of economic and relational security. Upon divorce, a woman could sell this ring, transforming it into her financial settlement—a form of economic autonomy embedded in a cultural practice.

As my friend Roselia delved deeper into her feminist consciousness and explored her sexuality, her need for self-expression intensified. Her double nose piercings emerged as the first manifestation of her rite of passage, symbolically marking her leaning into “self” and balancing of both feminine and masculine energies within her. I recognized her rite through the guided stories from *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype* (Book by Clarissa Pinkola Estés). The placement of the rings when pierced are symbolic, the ears are pierced when intuition and the need to listen to messages from self are heightened, the nose when feminine qualities are being embraced, the lips when said person is involved in advocacy and speaking life, the navel when creative and sexual energy is being constantly carried and transmuted—all serving to protect, reclaim and adorn that part.

So what?

Body Piercings, Adornment and Modification are radical, sacred acts of reclaiming, marking, and owning oneself—an intentional declaration that your body is YOURS. For some, these modifications are deliberate markers of transition—a sacred bloodletting, a spiritual guarding of body parts. For others, the process remains beautifully subconscious, a cellular memory speaking through scars and ink.

Pause and explore your body's narrative. Where were you when each piercing and each tattoo found its way onto your skin? What unspoken rite did you unconsciously commemorate? How can you SHOW UP MORE consciously when performing your rites of passage?

Consider the witnesses to your transformations. Sometimes there are many—like when I got tattoos with friends, celebrating afterward with palm wine, music, and beer. Other times, the audience is intimate—my friend Charmy holding me through my rib tattoo, playing soothing music, talking me through the pain, followed by a quiet, reflective lunch—another unconscious ritual of passage. How can you ensure you have the right audience that understands and mindfully partakes in the ritual being performed?



An Ode

I've encountered countless women—young, middle-aged, and older—who whisper, "I love your [insert body adornment / modification], but I could never get it. My mother/husband/boss would never permit it." In these moments, I recognize they have not yet awakened to their bodily sovereignty so I remain silent, respecting their journey.

This part is for you: you who yearns to reclaim your body but feels afraid.

If you find yourself on the precipice of change, feeling an inexplicable urge to shave your hair, get a piercing, a tattoo, or color your hair—**pause**—breathe deeply, and ask yourself:

- *What journey have I traversed?*
- *What rite of passage is my body demanding to enact?*

Do not shrink from societal constructs or ideological judgments that seek to shame women that have adorned, pierced, modified or tattooed their bodies. Instead, turn inward and listen to your inner witness. It will bring you into the knowing that it transcends "good" or "bad"—it is a sacred act of becoming, a manifestation of inner transitions demanding external expression.

If and when you choose to mark your passage, may you do so with consciousness, and may your ritual be intentional, witnessed, and deeply honored.



Q&A: Sisters Speak

Every issue, Total Woman Victory's Editorial Team will answer questions sent in by our readers!

Q: *How can I introduce my libfem sister to radfem topics without scaring her off?*

A: Maya: So I really think it depends! I actually have experience on your sister's side in this scenario so I can talk about my experiences and state of mind! I know when my friend started getting into radical feminism and talked to me about her changing views, I was so incredibly uncomfortable because I was very much a libfem back then, and this all seemed so blasphemous, especially the gender abolition aspect of it. What let me get over this initial discomfort was the fact that I knew my friend was a kind, smart, and reasonable individual, which made me want to give her a chance and hear her out. Over the course of about a year I started agreeing with her stances and I ended up peaking. So it was definitely a slow process for my friend and I'm thankful she stuck through with it. Regarding your case, think about your relationship with your sister! Does she understand you as a person, and is she typically willing to hear you out? I would also start with less controversial topics like, in my opinion, the radical feminist stances on plastic surgery and makeup since those can be attributed to other branches of feminism as well.

Q: *Any tips for finding like-minded radical feminists in real life?*

A: Winnie: I live in the USA where liberal feminism runs rampant, so I only started looking further into radical feminism after hearing about it on Twitter. As opposed to finding other radical feminists, in my case, I simply began discussing what I was seeing on social media with my friends. My friend group often has long talks about politics and feminism, so I would share quotes from Dworkin books I was reading, or Tweets that generated tons of discussion to see what they thought about it. We all ended up educating ourselves together, and now I have a group of friends in real life that I feel comfortable talking to about radical feminism. Sometimes it can be as simple as speaking to the people you're around every day!

Q: *Are terms like 'gold star lesbian' and general lesbian purism problematic?*

A: Winnie: For readers that are unaware, a "gold star lesbian" is a lesbian that has never had a sexual relationship with a man. This term is something that has been long-discussed and debated within the lesbian community. Now obviously, being a gold star lesbian isn't problematic, but the way that some lesbians have weaponized this term can be. It's no surprise that some lesbians find pride in the fact that they avoided sexual relationships with men their whole life—in a heteropatriarchy, this is



no small feat. However, thinking further about this term brings up uncomfortable questions. If a lesbian has a nonconsensual sexual experience with a man, does she stop being a gold star lesbian? And further, should lesbians really be categorized by whether or not they had a romp with a boy in their younger years, or even lesbians that took longer to come to terms with their homosexuality, like those that have been married to men?

I think that it's normal to want a term or a community of women that have never had sex with a man—it's something that can make you feel isolated and alone when you realize that even fellow lesbians have had sexual experiences with men while you haven't. However, for the lesbian community as a whole, I think it would be healthier to focus on other aspects of being a homosexual woman, like rejecting heterosexual dating practices and patriarchal beauty standards. How much does being a "gold star" matter if you're still male-centered in other aspects of your life?

Q: What's the ideal outcome of the Israel/Palestine conflict? Wouldn't Palestine being absorbed wholly by Israel be better politically and culturally for the Palestinian women? LGB, no pressure to wear Hijab, free to leave Islam, free from Islamic misogynistic culture and rules, etc.

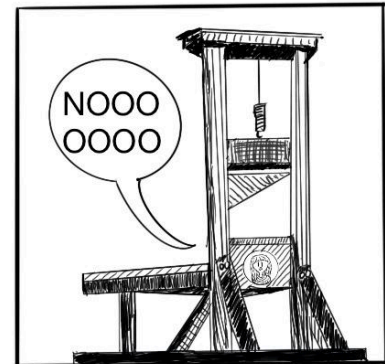
A: Judith: This question is premised on an understanding of events disconnected from historical reality. We need only look at examples of how populations have reacted in the past to different circumstances: What dynamics led to the improvement of women's conditions over time? What dynamics led to their deterioration? Keep in mind the universal truth that women are disproportionately negatively affected by war and poverty. The same tactics Israel is using to occupy Palestine have been used by the US in its occupation and regime change operations in many countries. In both instances, the end result is displacement, impoverishment, mass death, and increased religiosity. Why are all the prominent resistance groups in Palestine today religious? The secular resistance groups were wiped out by Israel. Why is your average Palestinian more religious (and women more likely to veil) today? Financial hardship and psychological distress causes increased religiosity in populations. The ideal outcome of the Israel/Palestine conflict is an economically and politically sovereign Palestinian state where the Palestinian diaspora is free to return and rebuild infrastructure without fear of systemic violence. Only then will the excessive suffering of Palestinian women cease.



Feminist Funnies

By Maya @mayaafem

How Libfems Think Twitter Works



Resilience In Contradiction:

Navigating Internal Politics in the Radical Feminist Movement

By Judith Lark @learningjudith

The radical feminist movement has long prioritized concrete, material actions to support women. However, a recurring challenge within feminist spaces is the tension that arises around identity politics—particularly the inclusion or exclusion of transgender people, among other debates. When we become bogged down in unproductive argumentation, we spend less time on real issues: women’s access to shelter, healthcare, economic security, etc. We have less energy for educating ourselves and others. These issues need to be addressed, not repressed, but two extremes must be avoided in our approach. Indulgence in identity politics and virtue signaling leads to a loss of effectiveness, efficiency, and clarity of language. However, in avoiding this first trap, we can fall



into a second trap by overreacting and ironically adopting the same “cancel culture” tactics with different dogma. The result is the same loss of effectiveness and efficiency in our activist groups because we expend too much energy on infighting.

A deficiency of theory in the modern radical feminist movement is no doubt partially to blame. However, as the hegemonic culture of the west becomes increasingly individualistic, a deficiency of communication among women may play an even larger part. I recently came across the transcript of a speech by Carol Hanisch (a pioneer of the Women’s Liberation Movement) called “Impact of the Chinese Cultural Revolution on the Women’s Liberation Movement”, which can be found on her website. It struck me that the modern radical feminist movement that exists online today has so much to learn from the radical feminists of the past, who were dealing with surprisingly similar issues. The WLM of the past took inspiration from the works of Mao Zedong to great effect, and I wish to reintroduce some relevant elements to current discussion among our communities. Mao’s formula of the relation between theory and practice is sorely needed at a time when we lack both.

There are several tools we can add to our toolbox—tools that can help us cultivate a theoretical framework that prioritizes concrete, material issues and communication among the exploited classes. I will first discuss dialectical materialism and an important distinction between theoretical foundations, then present some main ideas from Mao’s works that are valuable in our context. For further detail, his essays “On Practice” and “On Contradiction” are widely considered the clearest explanations of dialectics (particularly “On Contradiction”) and are short and easy to read. The essay “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People” is extremely useful for understanding how to navigate internal conflicts.

Dialectical materialism is a framework for viewing reality as a dynamic process driven by the contradictions inherent in material conditions. Change results from the internal struggles of a system, not from external forces alone. External forces are not excluded from analysis, but only become operative on the basis of the internal state. In this view, conflicts are not inherently negative, but necessary for development. We should learn to recognize what is and what is not dialectical materialist analysis. Using the language of Mao, a distinction can be made between two world outlooks: dialectics and metaphysics.

The metaphysical worldview assumes stability and permanence, seeing change only as an accumulation of external factors. Cause and effect are linear and mechanical. Everything in the world is static and isolated. This



worldview is incapable of understanding dynamic processes and leads to dogmatism. Mao identifies two main formulations of the metaphysical worldview: idealists who view social hierarchies and moral codes as fixed and eternal, and mechanical materialists (of the 17th and 18th centuries) who thought matter operated according to fixed, predictable laws, regardless of context. A modern analogue to the latter might be reductive materialists, or physicalists, specifically those who believe that all processes can be explained by breaking a system down to its most basic components. For example, an attempt to explain the processes of the brain by exclusively focusing on the level of single neurons would fail without accounting for the macrodynamics of the electrical activity in the brain. Likewise, the oppression of women cannot be understood simply as isolated incidents of violence; violence against women is a symptom of a larger dynamic social system. Such is the distinction between liberal feminism and radical feminism.

In contrast, the dialectical worldview understands reality as a dynamic process driven by contradictions and material conditions. Equilibrium is only temporary. It emphasizes that change occurs through internal struggles within systems, not external intervention alone. Borrowing from Hegel, empiricism (sense experience) and rationalism (internal cognition) should not be thought of as a black-and-white dichotomy, but rather as two parts of the dynamic process that is perception. We learn through a cycle between sense experience and internal cognition via feedback loops (see Active Inference). You may be wondering what this has to do with feminism. We should emulate this same structure when it comes to practice and theory. Rather than advocate for practice over theory or theory over practice, my aim is to specifically advocate for theory to be informed by practice and vice versa. The two areas should be synchronized—not necessarily on the individual level, but those who work in practice need to implement and test theory, then communicate their findings to those who work in theory. Likewise, those who work in theory need to implement feedback from those who work in practice. Mao developed a methodology for this called “mass line.” For the feminist interpretation of this developed by the WLM, look into “consciousness raising.”

A metaphysical approach tends to oversimplify social struggles, reducing them to moral battles of right versus wrong—a tendency that fuels ideological purity contests in activist spaces. Understanding contradictions through a dialectical lens helps to avoid this trap. Mao’s framework distinguishes between two types of contradictions: antagonistic and non-antagonistic. Antagonistic contradictions occur between fundamentally



opposed forces whose interests cannot be reconciled (e.g., feminist movements versus patriarchal or financialized capitalist institutions). Non-antagonistic contradictions arise within a shared framework of common goals, where differences can be negotiated and resolved through constructive struggle. This distinction is crucial for managing conflicts in radical feminist organizing.

Within radical feminist movements, antagonistic contradictions are relatively clear. They include structural forces like patriarchal violence, capitalist exploitation, and reactionary political backlash. These forces must be confronted through struggle and systemic change. However, internal conflicts—debates over tactics, inclusion, or organizational priorities—are often misrecognized as equally irreconcilable, creating destructive factionalism.

Consider debates about trans inclusion within feminist spaces. When framed as an existential threat, these disagreements escalate into antagonistic struggles, fracturing movements and reinforcing exclusion. However, when treated as a non-antagonistic contradiction, this issue can be approached like any other as a conflict within a shared project of ending gender-based oppression. Open dialogue and mutual education should be prioritized. In this way, conflict becomes a driver of collective growth rather than a cause of organizational collapse as we've unfortunately seen affect many radical feminist organizations in the past.

Mao's strategies for managing non-antagonistic contradictions offer practical tools for resolving internal tensions within feminist movements. The first is open criticism and self-criticism, conducted in a spirit of mutual learning rather than punishment. This practice builds collective accountability by enabling members to reflect on how internal dynamics may reproduce oppressive patterns. Second, democratic consultation ensures that all voices are heard and decisions are made collectively, reducing power imbalances that might intensify conflict. This approach aligns with horizontal organizing models already familiar in many radical feminist spaces. Finally, persuasion through ideological education helps align diverse perspectives within the movement's shared goals. This does not mean imposing a rigid orthodoxy but fostering a culture of critical thinking, where ideological development is part of collective struggle rather than imposed from above. As stated above, we as radical feminists must make it a point to be constantly educating ourselves, reading theory, then sharing it with others. Sometimes we may be missing perspectives from radical feminists of the past that could be helping us resolve internal conflicts that exist today.



One of the most destructive tendencies in identity-based organizing is mistaking non-antagonistic contradictions for existential threats. This leads to purity politics, where ideological rigidity enforces exclusion; call-out culture, where public shaming replaces constructive dialogue; and factional splits that weaken movements from within. Recognizing internal conflicts as potentially generative rather than inherently divisive helps avoid these pitfalls. For example, we've seen many fallouts between radical feminists surrounding the transgender debate. Instead of immediately writing other women off, or god forbid even splitting up an organization over such a debate, we can take moments like these as another sign to turn back to our theory and our history. We are not the first radical feminists to ever disagree on something. What did radfems of the past have to say about the questions we're discussing, and how did they go about organizing with women that they disagreed with?

Treating all criticism as inherently hostile is dangerous. Mao warned against suppressing incorrect ideas through authoritarian means, arguing instead for open debate guided by clear political principles. In feminist organizing, this means resisting the temptation to silence dissenting voices through social ostracism or bureaucratic maneuvering. Instead, movements can build resilience by confronting internal contradictions openly, transforming disagreement into a source of collective strength and growth.

A final insight from dialectical materialism is the concept of the "principal contradiction"—the most fundamental struggle determining the movement's success. For radical feminists, this might be the fight against patriarchal violence or economic exploitation, depending on the context. Recognizing the principal contradiction helps prioritize struggles without dismissing intersecting issues like racial justice and imperialism. These intersections are best understood as interconnected contradictions requiring strategic attention, not competing claims for dominance. For example, a feminist collective balancing reproductive rights advocacy with anti-racist organizing might face competing demands on its resources. If framed antagonistically, this tension risks splitting the organization into warring factions. But when understood as a set of interconnected struggles rooted in overlapping systems of oppression, the group can strategize how to address both issues simultaneously through mutual support.

By distinguishing antagonistic from non-antagonistic contradictions, radical feminists can navigate internal politics without sacrificing material goals. Conflict becomes not a threat but a necessary process of growth, enabling movements to adapt and evolve in response to changing conditions. This dialectical approach reframes



struggle as an engine of progress, fostering resilience through contradiction rather than unity through suppression. We must remember that we are not the only radical feminists that have ever dealt with internal conflicts. When we start to feel lost in struggle, I urge us all to turn to our histories and our texts that have been made increasingly available to us in this digital age. Sometimes we don't even realize that we're trying to reinvent the wheel. Our sisters that came before us went through a lot, and we bear the responsibility of furthering their struggle, not repeating it.

As feminist movements face escalating external threats in a world increasingly hostile to liberation struggles, cultivating this capacity for internal resilience is more urgent than ever. Recognizing that contradictions are not obstacles but the very terrain of struggle is key to building a radical feminist movement capable of enduring, transforming, and ultimately winning.



How to Heal a Broken Heart: A Comprehensive Guide

By Alyssa Ressi

I bore my first heartbreak at 15—it was a type of grief I had never experienced before nor knew how to navigate. I drowned my sorrows in Rupi Kaur poetry books and an embarrassing amount of Ben & Jerry's ice cream to cope. Six months later, despite my pitiful attempt at moving on, I got back together with my ex, reopening the wound.

By 16, I was weathering my second heartbreak. With one breakup behind me, I thought I'd be much better equipped for this one. Surely each heartbreak gets easier, right? I soon learned that was a myth and entered a toxic, on-again-off-again cycle that dragged on far too long.

Now, at 21, I lived through my most painful heartbreak yet—with someone I truly believed could be the one. For a week, I could hardly leave my bed; I was overwhelmed by the weight of the loss. I knew this time it was different; I had to be different. I needed to make a choice: stay stuck in this pain and repeat the old patterns of my teenage years, or truly learn how to heal and move forward with my life.

No one is immune to heartbreak, yet it so often feels like an isolating experience. Studies show women

are more likely to forgive and stay in relationships after infidelity or mistreatment, with many prioritizing the relationship's preservation over self-respect, even when it's damaging to them. Throughout the last 6 months of my breakup, I created a list of coping strategies and lessons I wish I had known sooner—insights that could have spared me months of confusion and pain. If I could go back to my 15-year-old self, I would give her this guide, but since I can't, I'm offering it to you instead. I hope that these lessons can ease your heartache, even if it is just a little bit, and remind you that healing is not only possible, but more within your control than you might think.

Feel

Take the time to truly acknowledge and feel the emotions you're experiencing. Breakups are painful, and it's normal to be hit with an overwhelming mix of emotions. Instead of trying to ignore or suppress them, find and focus on healthy ways to express what you're feeling. Listen to that SZA album, cry into your pillow, scribble your thoughts into a journal (and rip up the pages after if that helps), and lean on the people who care about you. Let yourself experience the full range of



emotions; it's the only way through the pain on the path to healing.

Accept

One of the biggest factors that held me back from moving on was the hope that my ex would come back, realize their mistakes, and somehow “get it together.” I imagined they would suddenly realize that I was *the one*, and that they were crazy to think they could ever be without me. This false hope kept me stuck in denial, preventing me from accepting the reality of my breakup. To truly heal, you must first accept that the relationship is over—not because you wanted it to end, but because it has, and you deserve to move forward.

Prepare

In order to truly move on, you need to create an environment that supports your healing. This means removing as many triggers as possible—those things that will make you constantly think of your ex and get stuck in the past. Here are a few things I did (and you can too) to set myself up for success:

- ❖ Return any items that belong to your ex. If it's too painful to face them, consider donating gifts

that remind you of them or putting those items in a box tucked away in a closet.

- ❖ Delete old text messages or move them to a place where you won't be tempted to revisit them.
- ❖ Remove photos that bring up old memories—either delete them or upload them to a file you won't easily access.
- ❖ Delete their number if you know you'll be tempted to text them.
- ❖ Unfollow them on social media to avoid constantly checking their profile and getting sucked back into a cycle of comparison or longing.

One technique I found especially helpful came from psychologist Guy Winch in his TED Talk *How to Fix a Broken Heart*. He suggests making a list of everything that reminded you why it was best that the relationship didn't work out. This list can include big things, like differing life goals, or small irritations, like their refusal to do laundry or the way they chewed too loudly. The key is that we often get stuck by only remembering the good times, ignoring the reasons the relationship ended in the first place. Whenever you start idealizing your ex or feel tempted to get back together, reference this list. It'll bring you back to



reality and help take them off the pedestal you've put them on.

By eliminating reminders and keeping the reality of the relationship in mind, you create space for healing and move closer to your true self again.

Fight

Moving on is not passive—it's a fight. It is a battle against the urges that will try to pull you back from healing: the temptation to break no-contact, to replay those happy moments, to hold onto hope that things could somehow be different. Every day might feel like a battle trying to resist idealizing what was and facing the reality of what is. That is the fight; making the active choice to let go, even when it feels like holding on would be so much easier. Moving on requires a consistent, valiant effort. Some days it will feel unbearable. Others, you'll see and feel how far you've come. Remember that every time you choose to move forward, you're subconsciously choosing yourself.

Move forward

Moving on focuses on letting go of the past, but the most beautiful part is moving forward and creating

a future that is fully yours. This is your time to rebuild your life with you as the center, so shift the focus back to yourself and the life you want to live. Reconnect with friends who make you laugh until your stomach hurts. Rekindle hobbies that once brought you joy, or try something new that you think might excite you. Set goals that are meaningful to you, whether it's big and life-changing or small, everyday victories. Rather than building a life around a partner, shift the focus to building a life that reflects who you are and who you are becoming. Each step you take brings you closer to a version of yourself that feels whole and grounded—not because of someone else, but because of you.

Have Patience

Healing isn't linear; some days will feel like progress while others may feel like you're back at square one. That's okay; even those days are a part of the journey. Healing takes time, but it *will* happen. Trust yourself and the work you are doing to heal. You are doing better than you think, and you are stronger than you feel. You are healing, even now. Time will take care of the rest.



Legacy

By E



Early Japanese Feminism: What Can We Learn From Those Who Came Before?

By @na74362408

Japan's Meiji Period is best known for being the period in which the archipelago saw its first major foray onto the international stage. Prodded into the spotlight by Commodore Matthew Perry, it was in this era that Japan reluctantly entered trade agreements with the United States for basic material support, such as food, water, and firewood. This opened the floodgates for Japan to enter trade agreements—though highly restricted—with other countries, exposing the country to Western influence of all kinds, from policy to architecture, to food, and even to fashion.

This liberal influence invited both male and female thinkers to establish Japan's "Popular Rights Movement", wherein Japan's first-wave feminists were born. Many of these fledgling first-wavers were completely pragmatic in their approach to feminism, believing that Japan's technological advancement couldn't occur without a solid base of equality between the sexes to use as a foundation (Reese, Lyn, [*The Meiji Reforms and Obstacles for Women: Japan, 1878–1927*](#)). However, the male members of the movement were reluctant to sacrifice their dominance over their female counterparts. This sentiment was reflected in the ruling class, which, in an attempt to preserve the Japanese patriarchal hegemony in the face of such rapid Westernization, passed down legislation to restrict women's rights specifically. This included:

- ❖ The Meiji Constitution of 1889 and the Law of Election, in which women were denied voting rights.
- ❖ The Law on Assembly and Political Association of 1889, which would later become Article 5 of the Peace Police Law of 1890. This law denied Japanese women the right to join political parties, attend political gatherings, or even take political science courses in school.
- ❖ The Meiji Civil Code of 1898, which gave the male head of the family absolute authority over family members. Men had the sole right to control family property, determine where each family member could live, approve or disapprove of marriages and divorce, and control inheritance. The male head of each household was authorized to control his household members and assets. If a woman who had children divorced, she had to leave them with her former husband and his family.



These policies had the intended effect—early Japanese feminism was handicapped by the direct and brutal attacks against women’s rights, and it wouldn’t be until the second wave that more significant strides could be made.

One woman who facilitated the shift from the intentionally-stifled first wave to the hatchling second wave was Kishida Toshiko, who, after leaving her service in the Emperor’s court as a teenager over her feminist views, coined the concept of ‘maidens in boxes’, a phrase she used to admonish the traditional Japanese culture surrounding the rearing of female children. She critiqued traditionalists for restricting the lives of young women to that of obedient wives and mothers—insisting that any ‘box’ a girl is raised in should be as big as the world itself—as well as her fellow reformists for their intention to revolutionize all of Japan for the better, while still maintaining customs of the past with regards to women’s rights (Reese, Lyn, [*The Meiji Reforms and Obstacles for Women: Japan, 1878–1927*](#)).



It is this unique intersection of rejection of historical tradition and Japanese cultural practices that characterized the second wave of Japanese feminism going into the Taisho Period. Indeed, Taisho Era feminists found themselves in the dual blades of rejecting both patriarchal tradition (as is the duty of any feminist worth her salt), as well as the traditions of her home country. The women of the Taisho Era found themselves in a position where they could only rely on one another, abandoned by their mothers who rejected their bid for independence and their male compatriots who resisted the loss of female subservience. As a result, Japanese feminists banded together to create organized groups, such as:

- ❖ The Women’s Rights Recovery Association was established in 1907. Founded in Tokyo by anti-Qing members of the Chinese diaspora, it is one of the first anarcho-feminist groups of the 20th century. This

Photo of Kishida Toshiko



group openly rejected the highly-popular Confucian traditions of the time, such as male privileges and female subservience. Members were forbidden from becoming second wives or concubines, and promised to combat societal oppression for its members. This group was also one of the few left-wing feminist groups that openly identified class disparity as a cause of misogyny. Although this doesn't necessarily align with the values of true radical feminism, it flew in the face of the more right-wing feminist-adjacent movements, which identified misogyny as a result of weakness within a morally bankrupt society (Working Class History, [Women's Rights Recovery Association Timeline](#), 2022).

- ❖ The New Women's Society was founded in 1919, and strove to improve women's education and employment rights, as well as protecting women against venereal diseases (notably pointing out discrepancies between the double standards of sexual purity between men and women) and campaigning against the aforementioned Article 5, which disallowed women from forming political groups (Garon, Sheldon, [Molding Japanese Minds: The State In Everyday Life](#), 1997, pp. 104–31).
- ❖ The Red Wave Society (*Sekirankai*) was established in 1921 as a socialist women's organization that published the magazine *Omedetashi*, held seminars and lectures, and distributed anti-war leaflets to the army. This organization openly advocated for economic independence as a means of women achieving liberation, and held firm that the abolition of capitalism would elevate the ability of women to escape economic subservience (Hane, Mikiso, [Reflections on the Way to the Gallows: Rebel Women in Prewar Japan](#), 1988, pp. 125–74).

Now, this isn't to say these groups were perfect—their anti-marriage stances were often conditional, and men played a non-insignificant part in their creation and operations. However, we should take note of these organizations' existence—born in direct opposition to government-mandated submission of women and constantly under the threat of Japan's notorious thought police (Itō Noe, editor-in-chief of the *Bluestocking* feminist magazine and founding member of the Red Wave Society, was murdered by the state because of her views), these women rejected the norms of their country and state, and fought valiantly for gender parity despite the danger (Nelson, David G., "Itō Noe (1895–1923)". [The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest](#) (Volume IV), 2009, pp. 1848–9).



In the year 2024, Western women have the benefit of feminist movements that have come before us—of our foremothers who have fought for our right to vote, to divorce, to gather and share our thoughts, to have financial independence—to utilize these things for the betterment of our material conditions. It, therefore, becomes our responsibility to see those who have come before without these benefits—our sisters, not just in Japan, but across the world, who had no laurels to rest on—and to rise above their means. It is not enough to pick and choose between our rejection of a male-dominated society and a capitalist one, or to limit our activism to something palatable and safe; if women who had everything to lose—their families, their friends, their lives—were able to create organizations that provided material support for women in their community (including non-feminists), so should we take from their example and build upon it.

Just as we must build upon the praxis of our sisters, who have paved the path we continue to walk today, our work will serve as the foundation guiding those who will come after us. The fight for feminism is not a sprint against one another, wherein individual ideologies trump the importance of the goal we all share. This is an effort that is collaborative by its very nature, which serves a greater purpose than the sum of its parts.

It is our responsibility to ensure the only box women are placed in is as big as the world itself.



NATO Imperialism and UN Interventionism: Sexual Exploitation And its Descent Into Hell for Women

By Tifidi

NATO & the UN: “Peacemakers” or a Den of Imperialist Servants?

Dwellers in the western sphere of advanced capitalist-imperialism have been inoculated into the illusion that the United Nations is but a mere “neutral” geopolitical force that serves the purpose of “solving” antagonisms between nations, evaporating its role in maintaining the iron contradiction of US imperialist domination around the globe. The UN was created and is sustained by major imperialist world powers—serving the function of providing a camouflage for the interests of globalization while working to quell oppressed nations of mounting resistance to US hegemony. While the UN is often made out to be a forum in which the masses of the world negotiate “humanitarian” solutions to global issues,; in reality, there is nothing genuinely egalitarian about the UN. The UN’s conception of “diplomacy” is rather a means of dividing the loot of oppressed nations and reinforcing the exploitation of proletarians worldwide.

The UN is a moribund forum for world diplomacy to monstrously express itself in the form of war and aggression. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a yankee and western-led imperialist war alliance created to maintain political and economic hegemony by expanding military control of the imperialized world. Its 32 member nations represent an arrangement of US-led imperialist goons and their military formations. Since its founding in 1949 in Washington DC, NATO has been responsible for destabilizing regions with the strategic purpose of supporting parasitic capitalist-imperialist exploitation and robbing oppressed nations of their right to self-determinate, which can be further demonstrated in an article published in 2023 entitled *NATO and the Long War on the Third World* by Pawel Wargan. Its pernicious attempt at presenting itself as a geopolitical force for women’s equality is a ruse.

In October of 2024, the lackeys of NATO imperialism released a statement called *Women, Peace and Security*. What they strategically omit is their own role in oppressing womenkind; the US-NATO axis has industrialized the sexual exploitation of women, germinating mass rape as profitable industry. Their “peacekeeper” troops are in a



well-funded league of fascist hirelings doing the bidding of world imperialism and raping children and women who stand in the way of their war expansionist agenda. The NATO "policy on women" is a display of pro-imperialist wares, and an affront to the millions of women who've been kidnapped, sexually assaulted, prostituted, and murdered due to ever increasing militarization. They are a pack of phony hyenas whose vision is represented in building a militarized-imperialist future with wealthy women at the helm of fighter jets or at the head of the tables in corporate war rooms, while working and peasant women remain in penury, are being trafficked into sexual exploitation, and bombed by foreign occupiers.

The imperialist-aided UN "peacekeepers" have tortured and exploited Cambodian women in prostitution, industrialized the sexual slave-flesh trade in Bosnia, sold and bought girls in Mozambique for the price of a US dollar, and gang-raped girls and women in Somalia. They have systematized an endless barrage of rape

commodification and sexual abuses in Haiti and Sierra Leone, forcing girls and women into sex because they were malnourished and starving, and established prostitution rings organized around the sexual torture of children, all of which are detailed in *Disturbing the Peace: UN Peacekeepers and Sexual Abuse* by Devon Bowers released in 2020. I ask: what "peace" have they delivered oppressed nations? What equality have they distributed to the most destitute and vulnerable women and children in the world-economy?

It has become increasingly clear that the UN-interventionist bloc is an attack dog of planetary imperialist domination, that which results in a worldwide system of militarized sexual violence. This exposes how deeply tied the condition of female enslavement is to class society and its current global outmoded economic system of production: imperialism.

Prostitution is the political and economic expression of sexual slavery. The political economy of



prostitution is a manifestation of bourgeois economics and its codevelopment with patriarchal sexual ideology, whereby the female subject is expected to submit to the pimp and be raped by the male sex buyer. “Sex work” is the political expression of rape itself, resulting in a repeated cycle of marketed degradation and organized sexual submission of mainly women and girls to male supremacy. NATO and the UN are fully allied with the “sex work is work” liberal dogmatists, postmodernist academics, western NGOs and wealthy philanthropists. The agenda of war and rape profiteering is compounded together by historical factors which drive the global growth of prostitution of women and the imperialist oppression of nations for the capital accumulation of both national compradors and the ruling classes of oppressor countries.

To any so-called “feminist” or women’s advocate that feigns concern about industrialized sexual slavery and prostitution but continues to remain shamelessly apathetic and depoliticized towards geopolitical questions regarding world imperialism, NATO, and UN “humanitarian” intervention: this is a thunderous contradiction you cannot sliver your way out of. Domestic policy has and will always continue to be an extension of foreign policy. Not only do the economic and social conditions of women domestically worsen when war and militarism are expanded to solidify imperialist control for the US, but the rulers of moribund imperialism use the female sex as props to justify their endless wars of aggression. They use the oppression of women as a tool to justify their slaughtering-war campaigns.

One notable example of this is the US-led war on Afghanistan. Let us not forget that NATO and US imperialists pledged to “eliminate” extremists to end the oppression of women when they invaded Afghanistan. Instead they engaged in a 20-year long occupation and slaughtering campaign, plundered their national economy,



Women and girls from around the world—the Philippines, India and Canada—protest against the barbaric imposition of the imperialist-patriarchal sex trade.



and forced women back into the deepest layers of primordial-like oppression, which can be found in an article entitled *NATO and Imperialist Military Expansionism* by Josefina L. Martínez and Diego Lotito in 2022. Now girls and women are caught between the polarity of two outmoded systems of oppression: world imperialism and fundamentalist extremism.

It is abundantly clear that NATO and the UN are exploiting the genuine issues women endure to benefit US corporations and uphold imperialist domination. If there was ever the time for the angry and confused women of the world to come together and clarify a robust and scientific program of women's rebellion against this global system of imperialist and patriarchal terror, the time is right now. It is staring at us all in the face, as NATO and UN imperialist globalization deepens, new prostitution trafficking routes emerge, and the structural subordination and exploitation of womenkind is strengthened.

This hollow definition of "peace" that NATO and UN troops offer is one that reinforces the backwardness of class society's calculated interest in maintaining the mother of all extra-class oppressions: women's oppression. It is one that maintains the national oppression of the imperialized and reproduces the world system of ruling class terrorism which binds the working masses to an economic role of wage-slavery. NATO in particular continues to campaign and strong-arm its member countries into either meeting or outright exceeding the target of spending 2% of their GDP on the military industrial complex by 2030, which can be found in the *Funding NATO* report of December, 2024. How can they stand for the democratic social rights of women when they are forcing the hand of rulers to rapidly burgeon their national military budget costs, resulting in women of the periphery being struck by drone missiles, economically sanctioned, imprisoned, sex trafficked, and murdered?

What is to be Done? Towards A Women's Liberated World

We must pose a question to ourselves that many revolutionary women have before, aided by the great leader Lenin in his seminal work published in 1902: *What is to be Done?* How do we organize around the continued marketed sexual exploitation of women, not just in the advanced core of capitalist empire, but also in the periphery of imperialism? Prostituted women need organized slave rebellions, as opposed to the nonsense offered by western NGOs and liberals that work to provide legitimacy to the insidious notion that commercialized rape is work". This



is the hard truth that the most insidious apologists of commercial sexual slavery and exploitation hide from: a Woman's war.



Progressive revolutions and People's Wars around the world all fought to elevate the social status of women by eliminating the system of prostitution, from the USSR, to Oman, China, Cuba, Mozambique, Eritrea and Vietnam.

Those forced into the sex trade are women and children that people sneer at in the streets, abuse, and ignore as one of the lowest stratum of society. We often find it easiest to ignore the suffering of the slave. Girls and women in oppressed nations are sold off into commercial sexual slavery by militaries and gangs, most often as a direct consequence of the exploitative workings of imperialist economic underdevelopment but, yet, the academic, postmodern, and liberal third-wave feminists proudly romanticize this ghoulish reality as “feminism”. They promote the imperialist conception of “women’s equality” : whereby capital dictates that it’s the “right” of girls and women to be perpetual victims to the omnipresent commercialization of sexual slavery, prostitution, pornography, and other segments of the worldwide sex industry.

The "sex work is work" phrase mongering is anything but accidental; it has been strategically adopted by both liberal feminists and powerful lobbyists in a deliberate attempt to manoeuvre the narrative on imperialist sexual exploitation. The postmodern academic "left" and liberal feminists that have worked hand in hand with

nonprofits and the imperialist ruling class to re-characterize prostitution as “sex work” are nothing short of class enemies to the people, principally women and girls. They have manipulated the political psyche of entire generations into accepting a retrogressive sexual slavery apologism. Their politics convey an emptiness, and are fueled by liberal platitudes that put the fate of the world's oppressed female sex in the hands of imperialist markets to be traded like cattle by enemy pimps and assaulted by rape-minded male customers.

We must come to a sober analysis on this issue, and recognize that there is no way to fully analyze, and more importantly, attack prostitution and commercialized rape within the historical or modern epochs without considering the imperialist context in which it's allowed to economically and politically reproduce itself. Attempts to do so are limiting to the social, political and economic construction of female emancipation.

The masses of women must come together and unite in order to fiercely oppose US-imperialist led military alliances and organize to deliver significant blows to the expansion of capitalist empire everywhere. For instance, do women in the Global South matter to us? Not only in the context of human sympathy for those under the worst possible conditions created by yankee rule, but more importantly, in our theoretical and political practice? Are we not enraged by the US and its league of goon nations continuously using women as pawns to carry out the geopolitical goals of imperialist warfare? Are we not disgusted by these jackals exploiting the plight of the female sex to further their economic looting and militarization?

We are at a critical juncture in the Women's movement where a need to develop an unwavering internationalism and anti-imperialist outlook is more necessary than ever. Gone are the days of “geopolitics” and “feminism” standing in isolation from one another. The struggle of women abroad should be taken as seriously as the struggle of women down the street from you. It is unfortunate that a massive deal of feminist activity has been completely wasted on advancing the logics of capital and its infectious status as a virus that adapts to the interests of imperialist hellfire. Such is the extent of liberal, postmodern, and academic feminist ingenuity; it calls for the breadth of “choice” offered by economic market expansionism, and fetishizes the grandiosity of bourgeois “freedoms”. This is precisely why the mainstream feminist movement has turned its backs on the women masses and will eventually become its very own grave digger.

Instead of liberal-capitalist capitulation, we must strive towards a society that is truly orthogonal to women's oppression, which invariably requires the abolition of class distinctions. We must discipline the



male-dominated left, labor aristocracy, liberal professionals, and high-status workers in the professional managerial sector who continue to sideline the struggle of women and support the interests of imperialism. What is a woman's true perspective on "peace" anyways? Peace does not mean submission or a momentary lack of brutality in a fundamentally unequal capitalist world system. The true call for peace emanating from the world's starving, dispossessed and exploited classes can only be achieved by eliminating oppression as its root.

As Comrade Josina Machel, a Mozambican female revolutionary leader who helped create an armed women's wing of Communists fighting Portuguese colonialism, said: "*This is the time we are all waiting for. Our guns are light in our hands, the reasons of the struggle clear in our minds*", from her poem entitled *This Is The Time*. May we all reject the entrenched backwardness of class society and its particular interest in constructing the female as an ontologically weak passerby with no use outside commodified sexuality and reproduction. **The Women's movement will need to pick up the gun when the conditions are ripe. We will dismantle imperialism and women's oppression one brick at a time.**



Women, Assume Position

By Sathi Patel

Sisters,

No one is coming to save us. No institution, no state, no “community” will step in to liberate women from the brutal systems of oppression that imprison us. If we don’t act, no one will. If we don’t fight for the women cast aside, forgotten, and left to die in the streets, their stories will remain untold, and their suffering will be erased.

But here’s the truth: we *do* have the power to change the world. We just have to rise and take it. It is imperative to act now. Talk to the women in your city. Talk to the women on the streets. Listen to them. Learn from them. Organize with them. Together, we can dismantle the systems that reduce women’s bodies to public property—owned, abused, and exploited by the average man and the state alike.

The recent Department of Justice report on the systemic abuses of prostituted women by the Worcester Police Department is yet another grim confirmation of what we have always known: the state colludes with the patriarchy to exploit and subjugate the most vulnerable among us. These are not “bad apples” or isolated incidents. This is the logical outcome of systems that treat women’s lives as disposable and their bodies as commodities for male consumption.

We refuse to let another generation of women be resigned to this fate. We refuse to let them be brutalized, discarded, and forgotten. The fight for prostituted women is not a separate struggle; it is the frontline of the global feminist revolution. These women are at the nexus of sex and class oppression, where patriarchy and capitalism intersect to maintain their domination. If we liberate the women at the very bottom, we create a pathway for liberation for all women.

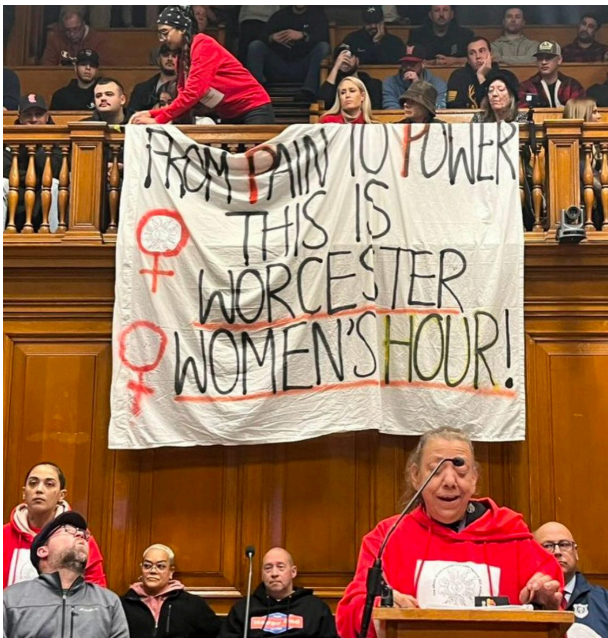
This is our charge: to organize, to resist, to build. Start where you are. Talk to the women who endure this oppression every day. Create spaces of solidarity and organize actions. Build collectives that center their leadership and amplify their voices. Don’t wait for permission or resources to fall into your lap—start with what you have. The world will not change unless we change it.



This is not charity; it is revolution. It is a call to action for every radical feminist who refuses to let another woman die in the streets, unremembered and unavenged. The women that society has abandoned have so much to teach us about survival, about resistance, and about hope. They are the leaders we've been waiting for.

We have the power to change the world. It is our responsibility to do so. Together, we will ensure no woman is left behind, no woman is silenced, and no woman is forgotten. The time is now. The revolution is ours to build. See how the leadership of prostituted women on the feminist front has average people who care shifting their language from upholding the liberal sex-work paradigm to condemning the institution of sexual slavery in front of our municipality? We must because we can and because it works.

On December 9th, 2024, the US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division report detailing the Worcester Police Department's pattern of racial discrimination, excessive use of force, and "outrageous government conduct that violates the constitutional rights of women suspected of being involved in the commercial sex traded by engaging in sexual contact during undercover operations" was leaked to the press. This is Project Priceless's response.



Project Priceless is a grassroots collective of women surviving and struggling to exit prostitution in the city of Worcester. Our vision is to legitimize the struggle for women's liberation from the state-sanctioned markets that commercialize women's bodies and to expose the failures of legal reforms to address the subordinate civil and class status of all women to male dominance.

I am 21 years old, standing at the precipice of a fight that so few are willing to undertake. Without institutional support, without a thriving feminist movement in the First World, I have turned to the women society deems unworthy of care. It is an

Members of Project Priceless speak to Worcester City Council on December 19, 2024



incredible honor of mine to know, to love, and to learn from women who have nothing left to lose but their shackles. These women—homeless, prostituted, dehumanized—are not victims to be pitied; they are leaders in this sexual revolution. Their courage, resilience, and refusal to be erased inspire me every day.

Be inspired by the resilience of the women of Project Priceless while confronting their most powerful rapists: the johns of the local police department. Let this moment in history inspire us all to come together to organize a women's rebellion out of sexual slavery.

December 11, 2024

To the Worcester City Administration,

The initial reactions of Project Priceless to the DOJ report were a mix of disgust, disappointment, and a grim acknowledgment that these findings, while jarring, confirm what we have long known about the systemic abuse of prostituted women by those in power. We are outraged but not surprised by the depth of misogyny and violence revealed. Most importantly, we see this as a critical opportunity to unite all women in Worcester on the feminist front against rape, exploitation, and male violence. This moment demands collective action to dismantle the systems that perpetuate these abuses and to demand justice and liberation for all women.

The recent Department of Justice findings on the systemic violations of women's constitutional rights by the Worcester Police Department are an urgent indictment of the systems of male dominance and patriarchal violence that govern our city, our nation, and indeed the world. These findings, which detail the coercion of prostituted women into sexual acts under threat of arrest and the broader neglect and abuse of our rights, make it clear that this is not merely a local issue. It is part of a global feminist struggle for liberation from subjugation—a struggle in which homeless women are emerging as leaders in the advancement of feminism in the First World, fighting for justice against the overlapping oppressions of sex, class, and state power.

Prostituted women are at the nexus of the global sex-class struggle. Their oppression is not incidental but systemic, rooted in the economic and patriarchal structures that treat women's bodies as commodities. Homeless women are preyed on by the industry of prostitution out of economic desperation, only to find themselves further dehumanized by criminalization and abuse. The revelations about the Worcester Police Department demonstrate that state agents, who should protect the vulnerable, are instead using their authority to perpetuate and deepen the exploitation of destitute women. They are paid, with public taxpayer money, to rape women. This is not simply a failure of policy, "a few bad apples," or so-called gender bias; it is a reflection of entrenched male entitlement and state-sanctioned violence that prioritize power over justice.

This abuse of prostituted women represents the intersection of capitalist and patriarchal exploitation. Under capitalism, poverty forces women into the street economy while patriarchy legitimizes the commodification



of their bodies so men can have public access to sex. Worcester police officers, in leveraging their power to coerce sexual acts, have embodied both systems of oppression, using their authority as a weapon against women who have already been pushed to the margins of society. Prostitution itself is a manifestation of male dominance, where women's subjugation is institutionalized and protected by patriarchal law. The Worcester Police Department's actions, as outlined in the DOJ report, are the logical outcome of a system that sees women's bodies as instruments for male use.

This is a moment of reckoning for the Worcester city administration. At stake is not just the integrity of law enforcement in our city but the broader struggle for women's liberation. The abuse and exploitation of prostituted women are not isolated incidents; they are part of a global war on women, where patriarchal institutions collude to maintain control over women's lives and bodies. Prostituted women stand on the front lines of this battle in the First World. We are leading the charge not because we have the luxury of choice but because we are forced to resist or be crushed under the weight of oppression.

We have already lost too many women to this cycle of violence, criminalization, and neglect. Women subjected to prostitution are disproportionately victims of femicide, battery and assault, and untreated trauma. The lack of meaningful resources for women on the streets—housing, healthcare, mental health services, and viable economic alternatives—leaves us at the mercy of systems that exploit our vulnerabilities. These cops are also not at the crux of our day-to-day survival of male violence; we are the subject of the daily abuse of random homeless men, boyfriends, pimps, and johns. It is precisely because of this vacuum of care that Project Priceless exists. Our organization fills the void left by a society that devalues women's lives and deems our survival unworthy of investment. Every woman in Worcester should be livid about these findings because they set a dangerous precedent: that it is permissible to rape women by virtue of our class position. The systemic abuses exposed by the DOJ send a chilling message—that the lives and bodies of poor women are disposable. This should outrage every woman because it reinforces the hegemonic power of patriarchy and male dominance. Our fight is the fight of all women, and it demands your immediate and decisive action.

We, as Project Priceless, a self-determined and self-organized collective of homeless prostituted women, demand the following from the Worcester city administration:

1. ***Acknowledge and Apologize:*** Publicly acknowledge the harm caused by the Worcester Police Department and issue a formal apology to the women affected. Words alone will not suffice, but they are a necessary step in admitting systemic failure.
2. ***Empower the Work of Project Priceless:*** We are currently organizing outside in the cold. We are in dire need of a building to both shelter homeless women and to securely organize and store the material aid we distribute to the homeless. Knowing what we know about the vulnerabilities of women to exploitation and



abuse, there is no one better to run a female-exclusive shelter than us. We are collecting financial and material donations in general.

3. **Provide Reparations:** Allocate financial reparations and mental health support to women harmed by these systemic abuses. Reparation is not charity; it is justice.
4. **Criminalize exploiters:** The abuse of any woman is a crime against all women. Prosecute men who buy sex & commodify and sell women. Put their names on a list like you have a list of women charged with “sexual conduct for a fee”—give them a Scarlet Letter just like ours.
5. **Commit to Abolition:** Recognize prostitution as a form of systemic exploitation and commit to its abolition. This requires creating pathways out of prostitution by addressing the structural inequalities that force women into it—poverty, homelessness, and the lack of viable economic alternatives. According to the DOJ, women have not been prosecuted for selling sex in Worcester since 2018; this should be the precedent going forward to ensure women are no longer criminalized for what happens to us. The only two organizations in the city taking care of this class of women are both politically struggling to abolish prostitution—we suggest you listen to us if you “care about women”. The struggle for “decriminalization of sex work” in Massachusetts is led by a meth-dealing child rapist. Good luck supporting that front.

We do not support the DOJ’s recommended remediations. It is not enough to pay cops to take equity and “gender-bias” trainings. Men don’t need to be told over and over again that rape and exploitation are antithetical to human rights. The stakes could not be higher. The struggle for women’s liberation is the struggle for humanity’s liberation from systems of domination, exploitation, and violence. Worcester must decide whether it will be complicit in the perpetuation of these systems or whether it will stand on the side of justice. The women who have been failed by this city and its institutions are leading the fight for our dignity and survival. We demand not charity, not pity, but real, structural change.

The Worcester city administration has the power to act boldly and decisively. The world is watching—not only because of the DOJ’s findings but because the struggle in Worcester reflects a broader feminist movement to dismantle patriarchy and liberate women from all forms of oppression. This is your opportunity to be on the right side of history. Your names are all a matter of public record. You want Worcester to be known and remembered? Definitely wasted your breath on that ballpark. Worcester will never be known for WooSox but will definitely never live down the legacy of its brutal misogyny. And we’ll make sure of it.

Signed,

Project Priceless



Surviving in Silence: Aboriginal Women's Resistance to Rape and Sex-Based Violence

By an Anonymous Author

'There are no white women at all. On these the Aboriginal women are usually at the mercy of anybody, from the proprietor or Manager, to the stockmen, cook, rouseabout and jacked'. —[With the White People, Henry Reynolds, 1990](#)

It is no secret that mass rape and sexual abuse have always played a central role in settler colonialism. There has been not one exception to this rule. In early Australia (1788–1900), this sex-based violence was further exacerbated by the lack of female settlers, leaving Aboriginal women as the only female presence in the country and putting them at the mercy of entire working stations.

Settler men found themselves further emboldened by racist stereotypes, conveniently pushing the idea of Aboriginal women having no pre-existing ideas of chastity, and therefore in the eyes of Christian men seen as deserving of their sexual degradation. In one striking example of the complete disregard for Aboriginal women's bodily autonomy, during the South Australia Royal Commission in 1899, a cattle farmer in Nullarbor Plains was quoted saying, '...Every hand on the place had a gin (slang for Aboriginal women), even

down to the boys of 15 years of age'. Similar comments have been observed in Royal Commissions Australia-wide. Mounted constable William Willshire took this dehumanisation to the next level, believing that God meant for Aboriginal women to be used by white men, 'as he had placed them wherever pioneers go.' He, like many settlers in early Australia, regularly found himself bragging about his 'Gin busts' (the practice of gang raping Aboriginal women). Police/law enforcement were not a safe place to turn to, with Aboriginal women reporting being gang raped in their cells.

Predictably, in such a volatile climate Aboriginal women were forced to find alternative measures to protect themselves and their communities.

In this piece I will be speaking specifically about the sex-based violence pivotal to the formation of settler colonies in early Australia while showing my admiration of my people's long-standing fight and our history of civil disobedience in the face of a nation built off our sexual trauma.

The role of opportunity in sex-based violence cannot be understated; when the opportunity to



commit such acts intersects with the pre-existing dynamic of settler impunity against the native population, it creates the uniquely horrible conditions colonialism enforces on women.

Australia was at first a British Penal Colony. This nation's very purpose was to expel undesirables, individuals who, in the eyes of the British government, were not to be trusted with the general populace. In the 1828 New South Wales census, only 24.5% were women (this census only counted the white population of course, with Aboriginals only gaining status of British subjects in 1949). A gender ratio skewed towards men always leads to catastrophe for the few women unlucky enough to be in their proximity. This behaviour was emboldened towards Aboriginal women, who not only were seen as 'promiscuous by nature', but also simply not classed as citizens.

To be a woman classified as 'free game' is a death sentence. The Abo whore-to-be was seen in direct contrast to the pure British Madonnas.

I started off this piece with a direct quote included in *Sexual Assault: Issues for Aboriginal Women* by Carol Thomas, the Aboriginal Women's Policy Coordinator, where it is bluntly stated by a station worker, 'Aboriginal women are at the mercy of everybody'. Early Australia was the perfect storm for

the mass gangrapes, paedophilia and widespread sexual abuse of Aboriginal women. A penal colony, overwhelmingly male, with an open embrace of any practise that asserted dominance over the natives.

This power dynamic was further enforced with the creation of indentured servitude; white men's existing impunity had perceived racial superiority on their side, and with the introduction of indentured servants, class was now another factor of Aboriginal women's oppression. Early 20th century Australia was largely defined by the creation of 'Aboriginal Protection boards', in which Aboriginal girls were systematically taken from their families and groomed to be maids for white families or (depending on their skin colour) adopted by white families to forcibly assimilate. It cannot be stressed enough how severe the mass sexual exploitation was in these environments.

In 1915, Archbishop Donaldson visited Barambah and noted that 'over 90%' of the girls sent out to service came back pregnant to a white man ([Bringing them Home](#) p. 66, Australian Human Rights Commission, 1997).

Aboriginal domestics, despite such shocking conditions, were known to regularly participate in station strikes alongside the men, most notably the Pilbara Strike of 1946–1949. This was an iconic moment



in Aboriginal history with the strike resulting in higher wages and better working conditions. The ripple effect of said strike was felt country wide, with working stations everywhere following suit. Domestic workers ran the inner workings of stations, their involvement drastically impacting the effectiveness of a strike.

'Black velvet' was a commonly used term for Aboriginal women in early Australia, a sexual allegory seeped in racial fetishisation. In a pathetic effort to both alleviate guilt and shift responsibility, the colonists stereotyped Aboriginal women as having insatiable sexual drives and animalistic tendencies. This is of course a laughable assertion, simply further proving the predictability of settler colonialism. The Native American woman, the Black woman, and the Indian woman were all collectively referred to as hypersexual animals by their colonist counterparts. Racial fetishization and the patriarchal eroticization of female vulnerability contribute to a damaging narrative in settler colonies: the idea that the 'native woman' inherently desires rape, driven by an insatiable sex drive. When she expresses that this isn't what she wants, that in fact she is no less affected by gangrape as white women, she is laughed at, because everybody knows us savages do not have the intellectual capacity to fathom

being violated; we were born to simply spread our legs and take it.

As the good Christian man Mounted Constable William Willshire said, God had meant for Aboriginal women to be used by white men as 'he had placed them wherever pioneers go'.

The abuse that Aboriginal women faced often affected them for much longer than the initial attack, which was exacerbated due to overwhelming support for the government's funding of this very abuse.

In the above paragraphs I spoke on sex-based violence, primarily regarding rape, but what about the results of this intercourse? It is in no way controversial to say (at least in radical feminist spaces) that reproduction is a continuation of the trauma of rape. The resulting offspring of this widespread sex-based violence were then further utilised to control and traumatise victims. The lighter 'half caste' children of Aboriginal mothers found themselves preyed on by white families looking for domestic servants, or more bluntly, domestic slaves, as there were no protections in place to ensure wages. It is common knowledge in our community that when the 'Native police', or as it was condescendingly named in later Australia, 'The Aborigines Protection Board', would knock on your door, the fair skinned children would have designated



hiding spots so as to not be taken. 'We were told to be on the alert and, if white people came, to run into the bush, or stand behind the trees as stiff as a poker, or else run behind logs or run into culverts and hide.'—Witness number 681, [National Inquiry into Stolen Children](#), 1995–1997.

The psychological torment inflicted upon Aboriginal mothers is tragically under-researched. These women endured repeated rape by white men, were forced to bear the children conceived through those rapes, and then, once deemed 'old enough' by White Australia, saw their children that they loved despite the circumstances of their birth be torn from their arms.

As with all groups who were dehumanised to such a severe extent, we must come up with our own creative ways to practice self-determination. For example, Aboriginal women would use a mixture of charcoal and animal fat to artificially darken their half caste children to fly under the radar of those in want of a houseslave-in-training, engaging in workers strikes as well as keeping cultural practises, family structures and language alive. Despite the distinctively cruel nature of our oppression as females of the native class, and with few allies outside of ourselves, Aboriginal women have persevered. This country is still of course still the cesspool of the

Pacific. The general population has never and in my (somewhat pessimistic) opinion will never place value in our lives, but alas we persist. **We continue to refuse to leave our land, culture and communities.**



Resilience and Resistance through the Sahrawi Woman: The Struggle of Women from Western Sahara

By Salwa @sahrawiia

Women are fundamentally perceived as a vulnerable group in situations of conflict. Having endured decades of conflict, Sahrawi women (indigenous to Western Sahara), are no exception. As this is a conflict with little to no media coverage, especially when it comes to sex and gender perspectives, it is interesting to analyze more about the effects of the war and the occupation on Sahrawi women and their roles in their society. This topic is also relevant as it pertains to an unresolved and ongoing struggle against colonialism and imperialism.

The focus of this essay will be on the oppression experienced by Sahrawi women due to war, occupation and the patriarchy of their own society. To align itself as closely as possible with the reality of the Sahrawi woman, the concept of “double colonization”, derived from postcolonial feminism, will be applied and elaborated further into this paper.

Postcolonial feminism is a response to Western feminism aimed at transforming the configuration of feminist and postcolonial studies by exploring the intersections of colonialism and neocolonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexuality in various contexts concerning women's rights and lives ([Schwarz & Ray, 2000, p. 53](#)). Postcolonial feminism opposes the widespread notion of the “universal woman” and the monolithic concept of the “Third World woman.” It demands recognition of the differences and cultural-historical complexities of women in different spaces and times, rejecting ethnocentric perspectives, the reproduction of orientalist thought, and acknowledging the global cultural-hegemonic power relations ([Schwarz & Ray, 2000, p. 54](#)).

Regarding the sources, a primary source I will be using is an interview I conducted in 2022 with Suelma Beiruk, the Minister of Social Affairs and Promotion of Women in the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and former Vice-President of the Pan-African Parliament.



Historical Context

Western Sahara is a territory located between Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania in the northwest of the African continent. Following the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, Spain conducted numerous expeditions to secure possession of Western Sahara ([Fuente Cobo & Mariño Menéndez, 2006, p. 14](#)). This was followed by years of Spanish occupation, exploitation of natural resources, and the transition of the territory from a protectorate to a Spanish province in 1958.

After decades of Spanish colonialism, the Polisario Front (Frente de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro) was founded in 1973 with the aim of liberating Western Sahara from Spanish colonialism and achieving independence. However, the expansionist ambitions of neighboring countries, Morocco and Mauritania, led to the Tripartite Agreements of Madrid in 1975, in which Spain abandoned the territory and divided it between these countries without considering the Sahrawis' right to self-determination. This triggered a war between the Polisario Front, Mauritania, and Morocco. Eventually, Mauritania signed a peace agreement with the Polisario Front, but King Hassan II of Morocco carried out the so-called “Green March” in 1976, during which hundreds of thousands of Moroccan civilians invaded Western Sahara. This invasion included attempts of genocide by the Moroccan military and air force against Sahrawi civilians fleeing into the desert, causing significant casualties amongst women, children, and the elderly—the core population fleeing as most Sahrawi men enlisted in the military. Those who successfully fled found refuge in Algeria, in the Tindouf region, where Sahrawi refugee camps are still located today ([Ruiz Miguel, 2022, pp. 44, 45](#)).

Consequently, after the Green March and air strikes, Sahrawi women who left the territory and survived in exile had to assume diverse responsibilities and roles within Sahrawi society. While men took up arms and went to war, women took primary leadership roles in the Sahrawi camps. Many also joined the military.





Suelma Beiruk, female Polisario combatant in El Guelta in 1976, by Christine Spengler.

When Sahrawis fleeing the conflict settled in the inhospitable conditions of the Tindouf desert in Algeria (*lhammada*, as we call it), women were responsible for constructing the refugee camps with minimal resources.

"(...) Women took charge of helping, organizing the camps, channeling the scarce aid that arrived, and distributing it among citizens coming from various places." (Beiruk, 2022).

Meanwhile, in occupied areas, women and weaker elderly individuals predominantly remained, suffering persecution and abuse by the authorities.

Applying the concept of double colonization to the Sahrawi woman

Double colonization refers to the double oppression suffered by women from colonized nations due to their race and sex ([Ahmed, 2019, p. 5](#)). That is, first as subjects of colonization and second as women under patriarchy ([Mishra, 2013, p.132](#)). This dual marginalization stems from them being seen by the imperial power not only as subjects to be conquered but also as female individuals to be used and discriminated against, "whose voices and actions have been silenced, drastically reinterpreted, lost, or consciously erased." ([Nejat, 2014, p.1](#)). In the most general definition of double colonization, it is explained that women from colonized contexts survive under the

imperialist oppression of colonial power and simultaneously endure patriarchal oppression from their cultural context.

In the case of the Sahrawi woman, it can be stated that the double oppression she suffers resides in her identity as a Sahrawi person under Moroccan occupation, her condition as a woman under Islamic societal expectations and ideals, and lastly, her vulnerability to the Moroccan forces of occupation due to gender/sex. According to a study compiled in [The Oasis of Memory, by Martín Beristain and González Hidalgo \(2012\)](#):

"Violence against women in the framework of Sahrawi culture and more broadly in Maghreb countries is experienced as an aggression against collective identity and dignity. While men were treated with particular cruelty during periods of enforced disappearance or arbitrary detentions and torture, women experienced these same violations from the abyss of aggression against their roles and the rupture of respect for their identity simply for being Sahrawi women. (...) Many of them had no political activism and were subjected to brutal repression due to family relations or their status as women."

It is important, first of all, to make a distinction or division between Sahrawi women. On one side, there are the Sahrawi women living in the occupied lands of Western Sahara. On the other, the women surviving in exile in the refugee camps mentioned before. Both have experienced the consequences of the war in one way or another, but their experiences have differed completely due to their diverging contexts.

According to Suelma Beiruk, Sahrawi women in the occupied zones have always been a primary target among the Sahrawi civilian population to suffer persecution and abuse of various kinds.

It is particularly difficult to obtain records of sexual violence cases during conflicts, and one of the main reasons for this is the difficulties female victims face when giving testimonies, in fear of the social repercussions that could result ([Mendia Azkue & Guzmán Orellana, 2016, p. 59](#)).

"In Western Sahara, when trying to ascertain the extent of the sexual violence perpetrated during the conflict and occupation, we encounter these same difficulties. First, **there are no systematic mechanisms to gather these facts**, and second, **most who survive the violence choose to remain silent.**" (Mendia Azkue & Guzmán Orellana, 2016).



In the book *In Occupied Land. Memory and Resistance of Women in Western Sahara* by Idoia Mendia and Gloria Guzmán, testimonies of Sahrawi women are cited, expressing firsthand their fear of sharing stories of sexual violence, preoccupied of being blamed because of cultural and religious reasons. It was also implied that it is not advisable nor worth it to endure such consequences, due to their limited expectations of obtaining justice because of the occupation and the power dynamics in the territory, which guarantee the impunity of the perpetrators. On the other hand, there are threats from Moroccan security forces if the victims report their sexual abuse, which results in great repression for the survivors. For example, [the case of Hayat Erguibí](#), who was kidnapped numerous times by Moroccan authorities and subjected to rape, torture, and abuse during interrogations, declaring about one of these kidnappings that took place in 2009 when she was only 16 years old:

“They threatened me not to say anything, telling me that if I said anything about it, they would rape me again, but worse next time (...). Just because we are Sahrawis, this happens to me and other girls (...). They swore that if I gave any testimony, they would rape me worse that time, and then bury me somewhere that no one would know, and ‘no one would remember you.’”

This is evidence of double oppression, as on one hand, they are raped by the occupying forces, and on the other hand, they cannot report it, not only because of the threats from their rapists but also because they cannot even do so within their social circles due to the fear of rejection. It could be considered “triple” oppression, as they are targeted by the occupying authorities for being Sahrawis, suffer sexual violence from those same authorities for being women, and as a result, are forced to adhere to cultural patriarchy by being unable to publicly report it.

In contrast, in the Sahrawi refugee camps, there is considered to be a “great balance” in terms of relationships between men and women ([Higgs & Ryan, 2015, p.33](#)). In a report by Johanna Higgs and Christine Ryan, it is stated that in the Sahrawi community of the refugee camps, the prevailing idea is that there is “no violence against women” in their society. It is claimed that throughout the study conducted in the camps, women did not talk about violence or rape when asked about the difficulties they faced. It should also be considered that throughout the study, the cultural and religious implications of testifying about the abuses are overlooked, so it is likely that the interviewed women omitted information.

On page 37 of this report, a case is mentioned where a man physically abused his wife in the refugee camps, and she divorced him and took another man as her husband. The man remained alone, as no woman wanted to marry him. In general, it is believed that in Sahrawi society (in the refugee camps, where it doesn't attempt to coexist with and isn't influenced by the occupier's society), men who commit violence against women are condemned and rejected when the act becomes publicly known. Moreover, in Sahrawi culture, unlike in similar cultural contexts, divorce is not demonized; it is viewed positively and even celebrated (Higgs & Ryan, 2015, p.36).

However, it is important not to overlook or dismiss certain social perspectives that harm Sahrawi women and their emancipation in the refugee camps. While Sahrawi women have rights that many women in similar contexts do not, they acknowledge that there are elements in their society that work against them, such as social rejection of unmarried pregnant women, among others ([Martín, 2014, p.23](#)). This contradicts the cited study. Therefore, I believe that the study by Higgs and Ryan does not delve deeply enough and is somewhat simplistic, as it makes generalizations that are not entirely accurate.

Furthermore, these statements highlight a clear contrast between the occupied territories and the refugee camps. In the camps, the experience of the woman is one of respect, leading and fighting for the right to self-determination while asserting her rights, while in the occupied territories, women are discriminated against and silenced by the occupying forces and violently repressed.

According to Suelma Beiruk, although Sahrawi women in the refugee camps have fought for their rights within their own society, this struggle has been respected and not repressed, unlike in the occupied territories. Beiruk states that in the Constitution of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, women have the right to participate, hold positions, and stand for candidacy. Furthermore, there are high percentages of female participation in key institutions of responsibility (Parliament 34%; Diplomacy 22%; African Parliament 45%; Government 21%) (Interview with Suelma Beiruk, 29/09/2022).

Returning to issues such as divorce, another notable comparison is the laws regarding women. There is a significant divide between Sahrawi women and Moroccan women living in the occupied territories due to the cultural gap. For example, the 2004 Moudawana law in Morocco marked a step toward greater equality in divorce, but discrimination against women in the Moroccan legal system still made the process difficult ([March, 2019, p.1](#)).

However, the normalization and celebration of divorce in Sahrawi culture were in contrast to the social degradation of divorced women in Moroccan society.

This disparity would pose a difficulty for Sahrawi women seeking divorce that they would not experience if it were not for the occupying government and its laws. It is also a case of double oppression, as the Moroccan legal system would obstruct certain legal matters for Sahrawi women in a similar way to Moroccan women, and it could even be assumed that these issues would be more difficult for Sahrawi women due to political reasons, something that would not occur in the refugee camps, where the laws of the SADR apply.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Sahrawi women have suffered various consequences due to the Moroccan occupation, which are paralleled in the case of women living in the occupied territories and women in the refugee camps. They are not only targeted by the occupying forces for being Sahrawis, but they are also subjected to abuse, kidnapping, and arbitrary detentions explicitly for being women.

In the refugee camps, where Sahrawi culture has been more preserved and the laws of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic are adopted, women have had to assume primary roles and also became part of the liberation movement in a more direct manner. However, despite the positive aspects related to their rights, many social, cultural, and religious ideals limit them, particularly concerning their image and ostracism. This has resulted in an internal oppression related to pressures that influenced their decisions in social and family matters. The external oppression, on the other hand, corresponded to exile itself and the refugee status, a consequence of the occupation and the abuses by Moroccan security forces.

On the other hand, women in the occupied territories are deprived of even more rights. Both Sahrawi men and women suffered torture and kidnapping, but sexual abuse was more prevalent against women (which have also gotten pregnant from rape in some occasions). In this case, external oppression corresponds to the shared problems faced by Sahrawi men and women in the occupied territories. Meanwhile, the second layer of oppression is attributed to their condition as women, whether from the authorities or from the religious and cultural customs and perspectives of Sahrawi society, as seen in the case of women in the refugee camps.



In sum, both women, in the camps and in the occupied territories, have lived through double oppression, which in some cases has even been “triple”. Each woman has had her individual experiences conditioned by her environment, whether under the harshness of the occupation and its oppression or the survival challenges in the desert, constituted by cultural expectations and the assumption of roles.

It is therefore relevant to state that, in the event of independence and the return of people from the refugee camps to Western Sahara, there will be an imbalance between women due to the rights gap. This will be a consequence of the lack of education for women in the occupied territories and the repression of their freedom of expression.

However, it is crucial not to overlook the active processes of Sahrawi women working to improve their reality, and all their efforts to fight against all forms of oppression they are victims of. Furthermore, their role in the fight for liberation has been nothing short of admirable, which is why they’re living images of resistance and resilience.



