

Quote, Unquote

The feminization of poverty is thus growing because of women's reduced access to increasingly scarce resources. In the context of competitive unregulated markets, women are affected by the fierce scramble over scarce resources, in particular land, and the means of livelihood. When resources are scarce, gender hierarchies tend to be more rigid in the allocation of resources. In the absence of safety nets, the coping strategies of families in crisis are also usually gender-biased. Women's assets are often sold before men's assets. Women often end up having no land, fewer livelihood resources, less food, less health-care, less education, and lower economic returns for their labor. In the extreme cases where children are sold off as family resources, it is the daughter, not the son, who is the first to be sold."

(Women in Action No. 1 1996, P. 20)

"The 'invisibility' of women's work explains in part why employment does not automatically lead to a redistribution of power in either the family or public sphere. In other words, the perceived economic contribution of women does not necessarily correspond to reality ... women continue to work in agriculture without being considered 'working women' or employees, since their labor is seen as part of their everyday tasks. In urban areas, the poorer segments of the population are highly dependent on women's household production and income-substituting activities; these non-monetarised activities are not socially perceived as women's 'economic' contribution... in cases where households are dependent on women and young girls' wage income ... the financial contribution of the women is not automatically acknowledged. A non-negligible proportion of the Tunisian population for example, believes that the success of marriage lies in the traditional gender division of labor; where married women work, they 'should pretend that they do not work and men should pretend that they do not gain any financial benefit from the income accrued by the women.'"

(The Thousand and One Paths to Empowerment, 1996, P. 94)

"You want to know how I define poverty. How can you ask that question when you yourself see that I live in poverty? The definition of poverty is right in front of you. Look at me: I stay alone. I don't have enough food. I have no decent clothing or accommodation. I have no clean water to drink nearby. Look at my swollen leg. I can't get to the clinic which is too far for me to walk. So what kind of definition of poverty do you expect me to give you which is better than what you are seeing with your naked eyes?"

(Bernard van Leer Foundation Newsletter, # 81 January 1996, P. 20)

"Although the internationally recommended minimum age for work is 15 years (ILO convention No. 138) and the number of child workers under the age of 10 is far from negligible, almost all the data available on child labor concerns the 10-to-14 age group... more than 73 million children in that age group alone were economically active in 1995, representing 13.2 percent of all 10-to-14 year-olds around the world... Available statistics suggest that more boys than girls work. It should be borne in mind, however, that the number of working girls is often underestimated by statistical surveys, as they usually do not take into account full-time housework performed by many children, the vast majority of whom are girls, in order to enable their parents to go to work. Girls, moreover, tend to work longer hours, on average, than do boys. This is especially true for the many girls employed as domestic workers, a type of employment in which hours of work are typically extremely long. This is also the case of girls employed in other types of jobs who, in addition to their professional activity, must help with the housework in their parents' home."

(World of Work, No. 16, June/July 1996, P. 12)

"Maternal mortality rates in Africa and South Asia are over 30 times those in developed regions. In Sub-Saharan Africa nearly 700 women die in childbirth for every 100,000 live births; in South Asia the figure is over 600; in Latin America, 200. A major contributing factor is the lack of trained birth attendants: in sub-Saharan Africa, 62 percent, in South Asia, 74 percent and in South-East Asia, 55 percent of births are not attended by trained medical personnel. Fifty-one percent of pregnant women in Africa and 59 percent in Asia are anemic, adding to their susceptibility to complications in pregnancy and childbirth."

(Briefing prepared for ODA by Bridge, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, P.1)

"Distraction is, always has been, and probably always will be, inherent in woman's life. For to be a woman is to have interests and duties, raying out in all directions from the central mother-core, like spokes from the hub of a wheel. The pattern of our lives is essentially circular. We must open to all points of the compass; husband, children, friends, home, community; stretched out, exposed, sensitive like a spider's web to each breeze that blows, to each call that comes ... With a new awareness, both painful and humorous, I begin to understand why the saints were rarely married women. I am convinced it has nothing inherently to do, as I once supposed, with chastity and children. It has to

do primarily with distractions ... The problem is not merely one of Woman and Career, Woman and the Home, Woman and Independence. It is more basically: how to remain whole in the midst of the distractions of life; how to remain balanced, no matter what centrifugal forces tend to pull one off center; how to remain strong, no matter what shocks come in at the periphery and tend to crack the hub of the wheel."

(Gift from the Sea, by Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1996, Pp. 27/28)

"Science next tells you something that runs counter to your expectations and is probably calculated to confuse your feelings. It draws your attention to the fact that portions of the male sexual apparatus also appear in women's bodies, though in an atrophied state, and vice-versa in the alternative case. It regards their occurrence as indications of bisexuality as though an individual is not a man or a woman but always both - merely a certain amount more one than the other."

(Beyond the Veil, by Fatima Mernissi, 1987, P. 35)

"Why can feminists speak against everything from wars and presidents to tobacco companies, yet if we use our free speech against pornography, we are accused ... of being against free speech? Why do images of violence and bigotry that would be socially condemned, even though legally protected, become off-limits when disguised as sexuality? I think much of the answer lies in the power of the multibillion dollar international pornography industry. We've made progress in explaining that rape is violence, not sex; that sexual harassment is power, not sex; but not in explaining that pornography, from the Greek word porno, is about female slaves - the women who were considered the lowest of the low among prostitutes - while erotica, from Eros, is about sexuality and pleasure."

(Ms. Magazine, March/April 1997, P. 76)

"... Saudi officials, writers, and religious leaders sanction nursing as a suitable occupation for Muslim women. So what are the constraints on Saudi women's participation in nursing education and practice? ... In Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, gender-role expectations and female socialization are a major obstacle to women's entry into the work-force. The prevailing view is that a woman's place is in the home and that outside employment is justified only when necessary. The pressure to

get married, and to stay at home and care for their families, compels many young women to either forgo employment completely or to choose an occupation such as teaching, which is easy to integrate with family responsibilities. Very few are willing to venture into a demanding education and career, unless it has the prestige that justifies the sacrifice, such as medicine. Saudi society has not fully accepted the idea of women's work outside the home, despite the thousands of employed Saudi women, most of whom are in the education sector."

(Suha Sabbagh, Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint, New York, Olive Branch Press, 1996 P.75)

"It is impossible to tell a man's political beliefs from his clothing, it is relatively easier to tell a woman's. Militiamen all look alike: regardless of which side they are on, they wear similar uniforms and carry similar weapons. Their wives and daughters, on the other hand, do not look alike. From the bikini to the chador lies a range of clothing that bespeaks a parallel range of belief and action. And yet, while perhaps nothing has created so much passion as the sight of the chador on the streets of Beirut or the bikini on the beaches, nothing is as easily misunderstood or as prone to simplistic interpretation as these items of clothing."

(Jean Said Makdisi, Beirut Fragments, P.142)

"I don't describe myself as a feminist, but I am a person who believes in Women's rights and it's very difficult to suppress this view. However, when I'm asked about issues that have to do with negotiations I have to address this issue and not women's rights. Yet, the way in which I have dealt with the issue in the period when I was the spokesperson for the Palestinian delegation was very much through a woman's approach: honest, straightforward, direct, and never self-serving. I sought the moral approach to politics; I addressed issues from the humanist point of view and I always dealt with the truth. There were times when as a speaker I was asked to forget about the occupation and to deal with women's oppression only. This is not possible, of course and women who ask this of me had their own political agenda. We women do not live in a vacuum: how can I not speak of women who abort as a result of tears? If women are to address only women's issues then our lives will be very short-sighted and narrow. This is reminiscent of arguments that were used against the emancipation of women out of the kitchen - it serves to oppress rather than increase their participation in all walks of life. It is not in any way a liberating stand.

(Suha Sabbagh, Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint, New York, Olive Branch Press, 1996 P. 22)