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Why do men avoid taking responsibility for patriarchy? In the simplest sense, most men don't realize that patriarchy exists and therefore don't know there's any responsibility for them to take in the first place. Also, the path of least resistance for members of any dominant group is to see themselves as not having to do anything. The status quo is organized in their image and in their gender interests. Why, then, change it? Why question, much less give up, what they've got and risk other men's disapproval, anger, and rejection, not to mention feeling disempowered, diminished, and "softened" to a position of equality with women? And why should they do this when they may not feel terribly good about their own lives in the first place?

(Ms. Magazine November/December 1997 p.60)

"I was raised by a mother that never had the western education that I have, but she went about the business of living and survival every single day of her life. She never hesitated to use the tools at her disposal to demand and obtain what was rightfully hers. Her children, her husband, her family (extended as well), were her world. She, like millions of African women, will never know the word "feminist" or what it means. Yet, she was and still is, in my eyes, one of the most important feminist figures that I shall ever know, as I also go about the business of living and survival."

(Canadian Woman Studies, Spring 1997, Volume 17, No.2, p.146)

The ARAB WOMAN is a most fascinating creature. Is she veiled? Is she not veiled? Is she oppressed? Were her rights greater before Islam? Are her rights greater after Islam? Does she have a voice? Does she not have a voice? Book titles and book covers in the West tell part of the tale: behind the veil, beyond the veil, veiled women, partially veiled women, voices that have been heard, voices that are waiting to be heard, and on and on. Advocates of opposing sides unceasingly cheer one view or another. ... This futile dialogue on gender and women has long attracted the West. The image of women languishing under the yoke of Islam titillates the Western observer and permits him to place himself in the superior position. Women and their role become a stick with which the West can beat the East. "

(Fedwa Malti-Douglas, Women's Body, Woman's Word: Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing, 1991 p.3)

"On one occasion he hit me all over with his shoe. My face and body became swollen and bruised. So I left the

house and went to my uncle. But my uncle told me that all husbands beat their wives, and my uncle's wife added that her husband often beats her. ... One day he hit me with his heavy stick until the blood ran from my nose and ears. So I left, but this time I did not go to my uncle's house. I walked through the streets with swollen eyes, and a bruised face, but no one paid any attention to me. ... It was as though they were blind, unable to see anything. The street was an endless expanse stretched out before my eyes like a sea. I was just a pebble thrown into it, battered by the waves, tossed here and there, rolling over and over to be abandoned somewhere on the shore."

(Nawal El Saadawi, Women at Point Zero, London, Zed Books, 1983, pp.44-45)

"Reductions in health and child-care services mean that women must assume even greater responsibilities in these areas. Cuts in educational services usually fall on adult literacy classes for women or on the extension of schooling for girls. Where schools are closed and the distance between home and school is increased, girls, who must help with household tasks, have less opportunity for education. Elimination of food subsidies, falling wages and rising prices reduce women's spending power as food providers, and they must daily cope with the sheer survival needs of their families. ... women are both producers and carers; they care for children, for old people, the sick, the handicapped, and others who cannot look after themselves. They serve the household with food, cleanliness, clothing, and in many cases water and fuel. As long as these jobs are done by women, they are not assigned any economic value, and their expansion is therefore taken for granted in times of economic adjustment. When food prices rise and wages fall, a woman must spend more time finding ways to satisfy her family's hunger, traveling further to cheaper shops or markets, preparing cheaper food, and often eating less herself in order to feed her husband and children."

(Jeanne Vickers, Women in World Economic Crisis, London, Zed Books, 1991, p.15)

"To explain the dichotomy - it is one which I have been observing and puzzling over for many years - one has to come to terms with another dichotomy, which I have also puzzled over and which I have finally rejected as invalid, misleading, and full of a clouding series of mythologies which have obscured historical vision and have utterly blotted out common sense. This false dichotomy is precisely the one which pits 'modern' against 'traditional' women. In this vision a 'modern' woman is usually and loosely, not to say carelessly, defined as one who is 'educated', and/or 'working', and/or 'well-dressed'. I use

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each of these words with self-conscious caution as they are, though apparently simple and naive, in fact loaded with hidden meanings and are responsible for half the falseness of the false dichotomy. The 'traditional' woman, in this same view, is often but not necessarily wearing national costume, or, if she is a Muslim, even hijab; she looks after home and children, and is dependent on her husband for her livelihood. The variations in these formulae are endless; what remains constant is the fuzzy thinking and governing mythology."

(Mai Yamani (ed.), Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literacy Perspectives, London, Ithaca Press, 1996, p. 238)

"My generation was trying to find the linkage between the traditions of our parents and modernity ... We were singing the Beatles and reading everything about feminism, about democracy, about freedom. I thought everything was possible. We thought that Algeria would be the Japan of the Mediterranean. People had the right to dream. We were so happy to see that the world was open for us ... Now I'm sad because for my daughters it isn't the same. I can't say that everything is possible now ... If young people cannot dream and everyone in a society is afraid - of death, of economic problems, afraid of everything - it's impossible to live.

(Ms. Magazine January/February 1998 p.67)

"Women are important environmental educators. Young children first learn to see and understand what is happening around them and begin to feel how they are related to it through contact with their mothers. As they grow older, education at home is fundamentally important in planting ethics and in stimulating change in attitudes. Women can also stimulate changes in behaviour that would lead to marked savings in food, water and energy consumption. Women's education is, therefore, of fundamental importance to enhance their role and active participation in environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources."

(United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), 1988, para.60)

"We active women must be out in the streets, plan how to continue the Intifada, build relations with other groups, face the secret police, and mobilize other women, and we also have our duty at home, do all the household work, are responsible for everything. If your husband is a conservative man, he puts his legs up, reads the paper and develops himself. I can't struggle against the occupation if I need so much strength in my struggle with men. If the active woman don't raise the social question, who should raise it then?"

(Ebba Augustin (ed.), Palestinian Women: Identity and Experience, London, Zed Books, 1993 p.35)



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