Issue 2
December 2023

EVAW

ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



COURSE MAGAZINE

By the participants of "You Can Eliminate Discrimination Against Women"
GCED Online Campus instructor-led course
November 1 – November 23, 2023

This magazine is designed to exhibit the voices of the participants from different countries. It comprises participants' original pieces of writing on the theme "YOU CAN ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN."

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WHEN DID YOU FIRST REALISE THAT GIRLS AND WOMEN EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION OR UNFAIR TREATMENT?

Makabelo Sehlabo, Lesotho

In 1993 when I was to begin my secondary education. As young as I was, I felt discriminated when my father denied me the right to education just because he believed that to educate a girl child is a waste as she will later in the future get married and enrich another man's house. This badly affected my mothers as well, just because she fought for my rights to the extend that she left home to seek for a job as to cater for her children's education.

A struggle as big as being a WOMAN

Shiva GH, Iran

I was 5 years old that for the first time I felt discrimination against women. My mom who was born in a religious family never had the chance to study at the university. After marriage my dad helped and encouraged her to continue her education. My mom entered to the Medical school. I was 5 and the only child and I can remember all days which my mom begged my grandma to watch me when she is not home. My grandma and his sons set a condition for helping my mom: "wearing black veil – Chador". My mom inevitably accepted. In the same year my aunt was forced to marry by her older brother and again in the same year I was raped for the first time by my aunt's new husband. I was raped by that man for 5 years and my aunt who was forced to marry him, continued to live with him about 10 years. Now all those hellish days are over. My mom graduated and now she is a good doctor. My aunt, despite the opposition of the family got a divorce. Now she works as a teacher for young girls. And me... I'm here... I'm standing and hoping for a bright future for all the women of the world... But I never can forget the first thing that life showed me. It wasn't beauty of childhood. It wasn't justice, It wasn't a normal world without violence... It was "Discrimination against women"

WHEN DID YOU FIRST REALISE THAT GIRLS AND WOMEN EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION OR UNFAIR TREATMENT?

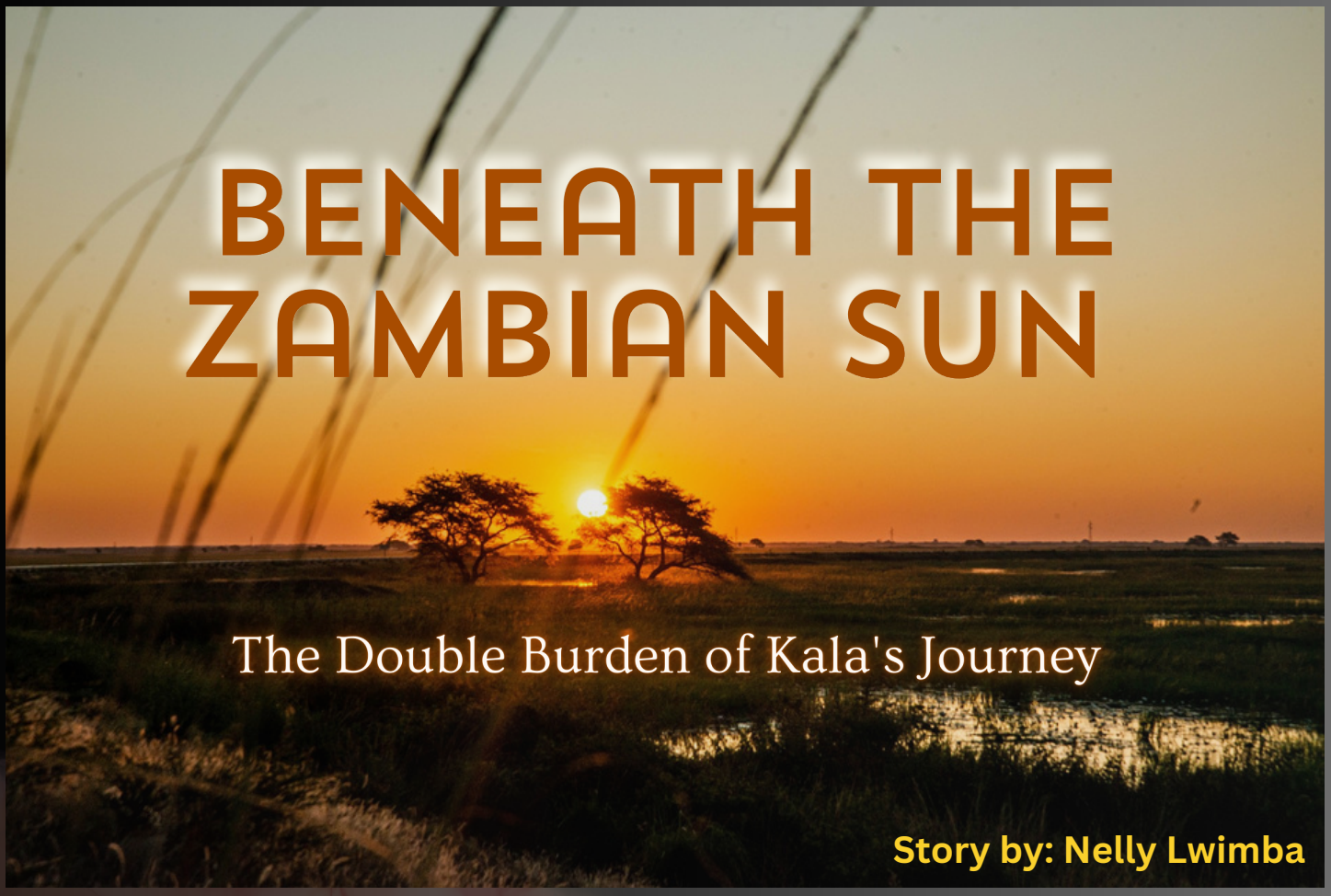
Taiba Zulfiqar, Afghanistan

When I was just six years old, I had a friend, and her name was Batol. She was seven years old, and she had two elder brothers. Her brothers went to school, but her father didn't allow her to go to school because she was a girl. Also, her father always ignored her and constantly reminded her that you are a girl, you have to stay home and learn how to cook, wash, knitting, and etc. Her father's speeches and behaviors really hurt Batol. This kind of discrimination is a widely seen in Afghan families.

Hansol Lee, Republic of Korea

There are literally hundreds types of discrimination and unfair treatment against women. But I'll only talk about the first time I realised it. I realise this when I was 10, I saw only women buy, prepapre ingredients, cook, arrange the tables and wash all the dishes on Korean holidays. No single man do the work and all the man in the house played games, watched TV, ate the food women cooked.





BENEATH THE ZAMBIAN SUN

The Double Burden of Kala's Journey

Story by: Nelly Lwimba

In the heart of Zambia, where the sun painted the landscape in hues of warmth, lived Mwila, a resilient woman grappling with a double burden. Her days began at dawn, not with the promise of a new beginning, but with the weight of responsibilities pulling her in opposite directions.

As a mother, Mwila woke early to prepare a modest meal for her children. The rhythmic sounds of grinding maize echoed in the kitchen, a daily ritual that symbolized both sustenance and struggle. Her children, wide-eyed and innocent, bore witness to a mother who carried not only the weight of their dreams but also the burden of societal expectations.

However, Kala's challenges did not end at home. She navigated the labyrinth of a demanding job, striving to break through the glass ceiling that confined many like her. The professional world demanded her time, intellect, and resilience, leaving her emotionally drained by day's end.

In the twilight hours, Kala's silhouette against the Zambian sunset told a poignant tale of a woman shouldering the dual responsibilities of nurturing a family and challenging societal norms. The double burden, like a shadow, followed her through the night, a silent reminder of the strength that lay within her and the societal transformations yet to unfold in Zambia's tapestry.



WOMEN AND TALIBAN

Penned by: Taiba Zulfiqar

This is Taiba Zulfiqar from Afghanistan, as all we know that Afghanistan is famous for its beautiful and historical places, traditional and opulent clothes, and delicious cuisines, but besides all these Afghanistan is also famous for its discrimination and violence against women.
Therefore, let's have a short view of women's history in Afghanistan;

Between (1919-1923) Queen Suraya established the first school and hospital for women by the name of Mastorat in Afghanistan. In addition, Queen Suraya was the first lady who participated in parliament without Hijab or Burqa. Unfortunately, all these changes led to enormous catastrophes for women in Afghanistan and next kingdoms in Afghanistan prohibited the education and work for women and forced them to wear Hijab and Burqa and the king of Afghanistan imposed many restrictions on women.

After a decade, the new king of Afghanistan "Zahir Shah" granted the right for women to educate and work. In addition, in 1950 Parwin was the first lady who sang a song on radio. Afterwards many other women got interested in music, cinema, and theater. Moreover, in 1959 Dawod Khan the prime minister of Afghanistan announced that women are not allowed to wear Hijab or Burqa and it is voluntary.

Consequently, this was the brightest and the most successful period for Afghan women, but unfortunately, this period was not sustainable in 1996 Taliban regime took the control of Afghanistan, and the darkest and the most sorrowful period for Afghan women started. In this period, women were the most invaluable persons in the society, and they no longer had the right to educate, work, vote, and even they weren't allowed to go out without their Mahrams.

Also, they were forced to wear Hijab or Burqa.

In this period, Taliban did many violence on women such as, killing, cutting their noses, hands and ears, and even Taliban raped and beat thousands women in Afghanistan. This gloomy period lasted for five years and in 2002 the new government established in Afghanistan, and all those restrictions which were laid by Taliban were abolished. Unfortunately, again this period wasn't sustainable and in 2021 Taliban regime took the control of Afghanistan and Afghan women forced to experience that gloomy and dark period once again.

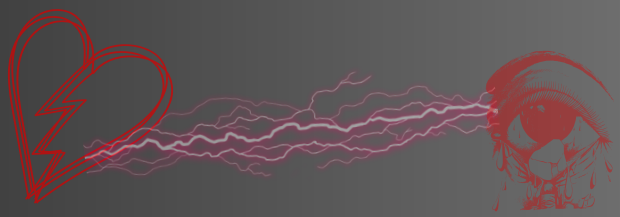
Now, in Afghanistan schools, universities, parks, and gyms are closed for women and even they are no longer allowed to travel lonely.

Discrimination is one of fundamental challenges that world faced and unreported due to silence and shame surrounding it .
From childhood up to ages , in this stages we have violence against us .
I really want a world with gender equality
(men and women) .
Women's aren't weak so if you think like that you're completely wrong. We are so powerful creatures. We can shine like a diamond in ever stages .
Nowadays we can see a lots of discrimination against women and girls.
My story based on real life : I witnessed of a discrimination it was one of my relatives those have
4 children (two daughters and two sons). All of them married only one of them is left.
At the beginning of childhood girls up to marriage have been live with discrimination when I talked with girls told me we are like a prisoner only we can eat and sleep .
This thoughts was really makes me sad ; why we are always selected to deprived of own rights ?.

By the way , when the biggest girl of family married. His husband wasn't treated like a couple, always punished her and told her you're so ugly and envy .
As the same time , the biggest boy of family married with her daughter of his uncle, it was arrange marriage and it wasn't accepted by two sides .

Mother of family appreciated work of her son but she was opposite with her daughter's. Girl of family when saw that is treated like a animal she was disappointed from everything she decided to get her divorce; but , her husband completely rejected her decide .
In addition, son of family decided to get divorce from his wife parents show satisfaction with decide of his son . Even girls don't have right to choose her life family must be a engineer of a girl's life .





She must tolerated cruel and disappointments, boys can choose his life and can do anything they want this is a kind of discrimination in Afghanistan and all around the world .

When she went to her mother's house fisrt , all of family members punished her a few weeks passed her mother of girl decided to killed her daughter in so terrible manner I can't express my emotions through the words even , a animal can't do among each other's.

When I was informed it makes me shocked and mortified. They daughter was killed by axe and knife. How can a mother killed her daughter with own hands only for getting her divorce!

Now , children of her daughter is left it without any asylum . All of her dreams and wishes were buried to the ground. They girl's story was over but children's story are left it in terrible condition.

Penned by: Tooba

A TRIUMPHANT DAY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

An uptick in the Philippines' ailing human rights record happened just before the deadline for submitting this essay to our UNESCO APCEIU's online course You Can Eliminate Discrimination Against Women. On 14 November, former senator Leila De Lima was released on bail six years after the previous regime of misogynist President Rodrigo Duterte detained her for fabricated drug charges.

Female politicians face barriers not only because of the unwanted presence of misogynists and conservative politicians but also from cynical people feeding on these harmful stereotypes. As one of Duterte's fiercest critics in the legislative branch, De Lima was at the receiving end of Duterte's tirades over the former's clandestine affair with her married driver. The frenzy soared to its climax when a broadsheet brandished De Lima's picture, clad in a bathing suit, on its cover page.

Unlike their male counterparts, female politicians are more vulnerable to slut-shaming and cyberbullying—and De Lima is not the only target. The former vice president and opposition standard-bearer, Leni Robredo, and her daughters were not spared from sexist attacks during her presidential campaign in 2022. Two of her daughters are victims of vile and fake sex videos online.

Female politicians with no relatives or powerful "backers" in the government are doubly disadvantaged because of their limited machinery and resources to imprint their political clout among the electorate. Despite their leverage, wives or daughters of incumbent male politicians embark on a lucrative political career in the shadows of their male relatives. It's high time we change these putrescent standards plaguing female politicians like De Lima and Robredo.

By Gianna Francesca Catolico

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A QUEST TO END DISCRIMINATION

Eliminating discrimination, our noble quest,
A universal call, where we invest,
In promoting inclusion, we're truly blessed,
For unity in diversity, humanities at its best.

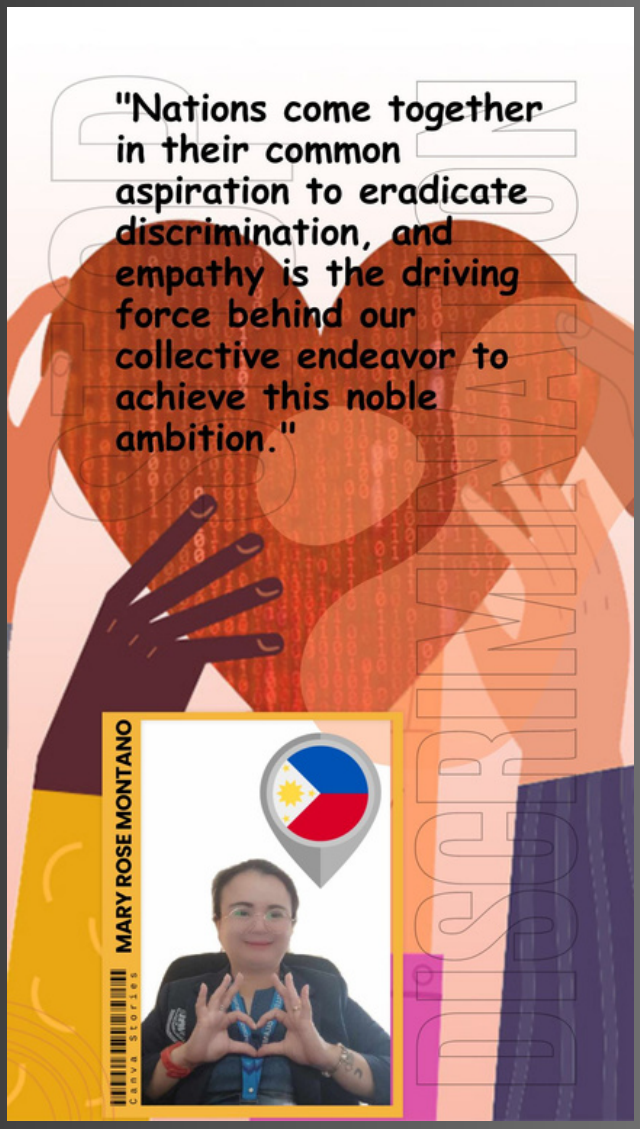
Ending violence and oppression,
Enshrined in our legislation.
Confronting biases and misconception,
Our shared moral direction.

Teaching acceptance, love, and deep respect,
Breaking the chains of bias, let's not deflect,
In peace and harmony, we shall connect,
Regardless of the sect, a bond we'll resurrect.

Promote gender equality through education,
Empower women to chase their aspirations,
For it's a beacon of hope and a vital foundation,
To create a world of true liberation and salvation.

Demolish the barriers, let them crumble and fall,
Inclusivity, we'll answer the collective call,
In this goal, together we'll stand tall,
Achieving equality and justice for all.

On this journey, let each of us do our part,
With open minds and a compassionate heart,
Removing the walls that keep us apart,
Understanding, acceptance, it's a beautiful start.



Poem by Mary Rose F. Montano

A QUEST TO END DISCRIMINATION

While the Philippines has achieved remarkable progress in many areas, the issue of gender inequality exists, and it is essential that we recognize it and work together to eliminate it. To begin, we must acknowledge that women's discrimination exists in the Philippines, as it does in many other regions of the world. The gender wage gap is one of the most obvious inequalities. Despite their skills and devotion to their careers, females sometimes earn less than males for the same labor. This not only has an impact on women's financial freedom, but it also feeds the cycle of injustice.

Furthermore, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is a major problem. Women's ideas and insights are underrepresented in decision-making processes in politics, business, and other fields. This lack of representation hinders the creation of inclusive policies and activities that meet the special needs of women.

Another serious concern is violence against women. Domestic violence, sexual harassment, online gender-based violence and other types of abuse continue to be rampant. Women are robbed of their physical and mental well-being, as well as their independence and potential, as a result of these various types of discrimination.

To fight women's prejudice, we must first educate them. Education is a significant social transformation instrument. We can deal with prejudices and biases, teach respect for all persons, and promote gender equality through education. We must guarantee that females have equal access to high-quality education and encourage them to follow their aspirations without constraints.

In addition, we must cultivate an inclusive and respectful atmosphere. Discrimination is frequently the result of well rooted biases and preconceptions. It is our obligation to combat these preconceptions and to foster workplaces in which women are not only accepted, but also respected for their distinct perspectives and talents. People must be educated about the negative impacts of gender discrimination and the necessity of gender equality. Gender sensitivity and respect should be actively promoted by families, schools, and communities.

We must also encourage women's economic empowerment. This involves expanding chances for women to enter the labor sector and providing equal pay for equal effort. Economic empowerment not only improves women's lives, but it also helps the country's economy flourish.

In this struggle, legislation and regulations are essential. Domestic abuse and harassment laws, for example, must be vigorously enforced to preserve women's rights. Also, laws that encourage gender diversity in leadership roles and equitable opportunity for women in many industries are vital.

Supporting groups and programs that promote women's rights and empowerment is also important. There are several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and grassroots groups all over the world committed to combating gender discrimination. Supporting them and their causes can make a major difference in the world.

In conclusion, while there is still work to be done to eliminate gender discrimination, it is a worthwhile objective to pursue. We may advance towards a fairer society by economically empowering women, fostering education and awareness, and implementing laws that safeguard women's rights. Gender equality is not just an issue of fairness and injustices, but it is also a driving force behind social and economic advancement. Let us work together to make the world a place where every woman may live free of prejudice and reach her full potential.

Mary Rose Montano



Let Your Feet Be Your Wings

What is this path I tread today?
I do not know which guiding way.
Where will it lead, this lengthy road?
Me and it, through life, we're stowed.

In the midst of this journey, I reflect,
Who walks beside me, whom to expect?
Just me and this sentiment that churns,
My steps may falter, but my spirit yearns.

Lost in thought, I seek familiar faces,
Guiding lights in these distant places.
I chase their glow, with hope in my stride,
Towards a city's light, where dreams reside.

For a fleeting moment, dreams and I unite,
In the shimmering glow of hope's pure light.
Step by step, I'll traverse this unknown domain,
Shedding darkness, breaking free from the chain.

The armor of hope, deep within my core,
Sometimes obscured, but never ignored.
Roaring and sighing, a tempest within,
I'll conquer shadows, let my journey begin.

Keep your words brief, my heart implores,
Why battle yourself on endless shores?
I close my lips, gaze at the boundless sky,
Unconsciously whisper, to the dark, goodbye.

Break my pen, not my unyielding might,
Through weariness and strife, I'll reach the light.
Though fatigued, I'll never give in to despair,
In the face of adversity, I'll stand strong and fair.



Asma Safi

SUDAH JATUH TERTIMPA TANGGA PULA

Written by: Debby Stevani

The Indonesian proverb "Sudah jatuh tertimpa tangga pula" means "someone who suffers successive misfortunes." I chose this proverb to illustrate how the social construction of sex-based violence results in a cycle of violence against women and children.

In 2017, I volunteered with an organization in Yogyakarta that helps victims of domestic violence find a safe place to live. One of the victims, "A," who shall remain nameless, and I had a conversation in the safe house. A told me at the time that her husband had beaten her repeatedly because he had emotional problems, to the point where A was once doused with hot water because she was late making tea for her husband, who had just returned home from work. A said that her husband was a neighbor who raped her when she was 15; because of the shame of the incident and the belief that no man would marry A because she was tainted, A was coerced into marrying her husband; and since their marriage, A has been subjected to repeated violence. When asked why she hadn't filed for divorce from her husband, A responded that she was financially reliant on him. A has not attended school since her marriage, which makes she concerned that their divorce will render her incapable of providing for herself due to the challenges she will face in the workforce.

A is not alone in suffering this fate; many victims, like A, are coerced by social construction into marrying an obvious perpetrator because the alternative is social disgrace. I believe it is imperative that we put an end to this unethical social practice.



Cultural norms, legal inadequacies, and social pressures all play a role in the troubling phenomenon of the coerced marriage of rape survivors. Legal reforms, social empowerment, education, and community engagement are all necessary to effectively address this issue. Understanding the factors that contribute to this practice and implementing targeted solutions can help societies create an environment that prioritizes justice, empathy, and support for survivors.

Survivors' stories reveal how economic factors played a role in their decisions to wed their abusers. Economic empowerment emerges as a beacon of hope, providing survivors with pathways to independence through vocational training and job placement programs. As the need for outside resources decreases, those who have survived are able to take back control of their lives. Overwhelming pressures within the close network of social and familial ties often prove too much for survivors. It becomes clear that community involvement is a potent force capable of shifting norms and beliefs across communities. Teachers, ministers, and community leaders can make a difference by spreading awareness about the harm caused by forced marriages and helping survivors feel safe and understood.



The pressure on survivors to marry their abusers is exacerbated by religious beliefs that are often misunderstood or misinterpreted. To promote a nuanced understanding of religious values that prioritize compassion and justice, it is essential to involve religious leaders. Formerly coercive religious communities are now allies who oppose harmful practices. The fear of retaliation becomes a formidable barrier, preventing survivors from resisting coerced marriages. Safe spaces, counseling, and legal representation form the backbone of a safety net that shields survivors from harm. Having these protections in place gives victims the strength they need to end the cycle of abuse.

A society that values justice, compassion, and unwavering support for survivors is what the world need now. Therefore, the important message for the all survivors is that "They have every right to be happily married."

A Short Story on the theme

"YOU CAN ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN"

Onovo Chioma Sandra

In the lovely village of Nkanu, where the laughter of children echoed through narrow pathways, Chioma's story unfolded like a gripping drama. Growing up in a tight-knit Jehovah's Witness family, she dreamt of wearing a white coat as a medical doctor. Little did she know, her journey would take a turn through a storm of teenage pregnancy.



As whispers of Chioma's unexpected pregnancy spread, the village, once a rich fabric of communal warmth, became a stage for judgment and mockery. Her congregation, bound by strict moral codes, expelled her, leaving her isolated from the familiar faces she had worshipped with since childhood. Peers, fueled by ignorance, turned her name into lyrics of scornful songs, a relentless soundtrack to her daily life.

Even the teachers, instead of offering support, unwittingly made her the star of cautionary tales during assemblies. Chioma, however, refused to let the storm of humiliation drown her dreams. With an unwavering spirit, she faced the pointed fingers and laughs, determined to show that teenage pregnancy wasn't the end of her story.

After giving birth, Chioma returned to school with her child in tow. The whispers persisted, but so did her determination. Repeating a class became a stepping stone, not a stumbling block. In a plot twist worthy of applause, Chioma emerged not just as a graduate but as the school's brightest star, outshining those who had once mocked her.

Her journey didn't stop at academic success. Driven by an unyielding belief in herself, Chioma pursued higher education, turning her childhood dream into reality. The girl once ridiculed for her detour became a symbol of triumph over societal stereotypes. Her story wasn't just about overcoming teenage pregnancy; it was about proving that a woman's ambition knows no bounds.

Dr. Chioma's tale rippled beyond Nkanu, resonating with hearts far and wide. Her journey became a beacon for anyone facing judgment and discrimination. Chioma's message was clear – with resilience, determination, and an unshakeable focus on your dreams, you can rise above the noise of societal prejudice.

In the end, the girl who faced ridicule and judgment became the heroine of her own narrative. Dr. Chioma's white coat wasn't just a symbol of medical expertise; it was a cape of triumph over adversity, a reminder that every woman's journey is defined not by the challenges she faces but by her unwavering commitment to conquer them.

STOP FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

The origin of circumcision in the Holy Bible never included women and girls.
There is nothing like female circumcision.
It is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
It is violence against women and girls.
There is no known health benefit of FGM.
It is an attempt to suppress and control women.
Every girl deserves to grow up safe, healthy and whole.
STOP the tradition NOW!
Protect our Girls; Preserve Human rights!

#ProtectHER
#STOP FGM
#EVAWG

Uzunma Emele Isiani



YOU CAN ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Discrimination against women is a deeply ingrained societal issue that has persisted for centuries, manifesting in various forms across cultures, economies, and educational systems. However, the path to eliminating discrimination against women is not only possible but imperative for fostering a fair and just society. By addressing root causes, promoting education and awareness, implementing policies, and fostering cultural change, we can pave the way for a world where women are treated with equality and respect.

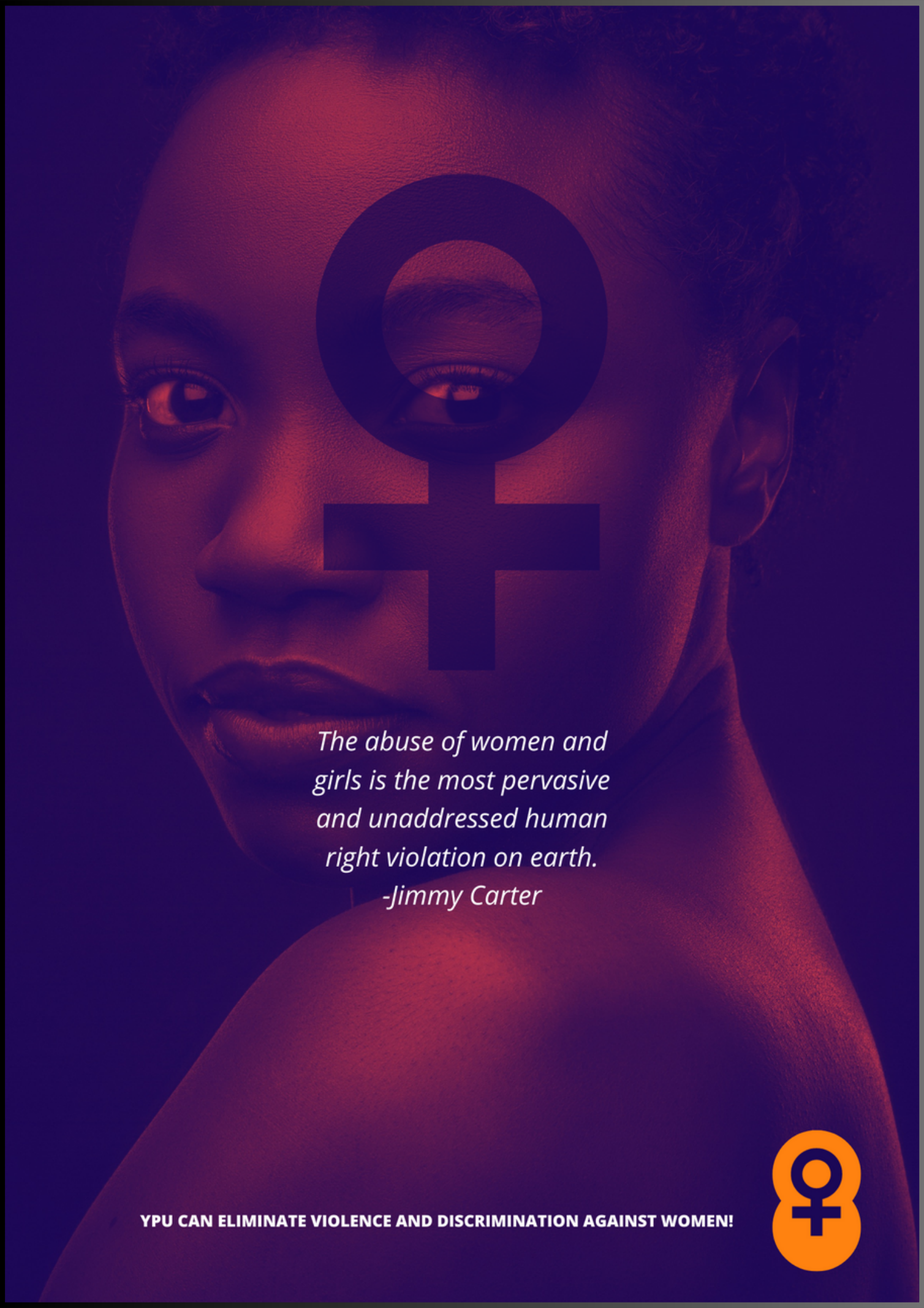
One crucial aspect of eliminating discrimination against women is addressing deep-seated gender stereotypes and biases. These stereotypes often contribute to preconceived notions about women's abilities, roles, and potential, perpetuating discriminatory practices. By challenging and dismantling these stereotypes through education and awareness campaigns, society can foster a more inclusive mindset that recognizes and values the diverse talents and capabilities of women.
Education plays a pivotal role in the quest for gender equality. Providing equal access to quality education for girls and women not only empowers them but also breaks the cycle of discrimination. Education enables women to pursue their aspirations, contribute to the workforce, and actively participate in decision-making processes. Moreover, educational institutions can actively work towards dismantling gender-based biases within their structures, fostering environments that promote equality and diversity.

Policy initiatives are essential in eliminating discrimination against women. Governments and organizations must enact and enforce laws that protect women's rights and promote equal opportunities in the workplace, education, and other spheres of life. Policies addressing issues such as pay equity, maternity leave, and protection against gender-based violence are critical steps in creating a more just and equal society. Additionally, initiatives that encourage women's representation in leadership roles can help challenge traditional power dynamics and promote diversity.
Cultural change is a nuanced but vital aspect of eliminating discrimination against women. By promoting positive role models, challenging harmful cultural practices, and celebrating achievements regardless of gender, societies can create a more inclusive narrative. Engaging communities in conversations about the value of gender equality fosters a collective commitment to change, encouraging individuals to question and challenge discriminatory norms.

Eliminating discrimination against women is not a task for women alone; it requires the active involvement of men as allies in the journey towards equality. Engaging men and boys in conversations about gender equality, dismantling toxic masculinity, and promoting healthy relationships can contribute to breaking down the barriers that perpetuate discrimination.



By Teclah Jebet


The abuse of women and girls is the most pervasive and unaddressed human right violation on earth.
-Jimmy Carter
YPU CAN ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN!

THE EFFECTS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN A SOCIETY

Zahra Shojae

Discrimination against women has far-reaching effects on individuals and society as a whole. From economic inequality and limited access to education and healthcare to higher rates of gender-based violence and underrepresentation in leadership positions, the impact of discrimination against women is significant.

One of the most notable effects of discrimination against women is economic inequality. Women often face lower wages, limited career opportunities, and higher rates of poverty due to discrimination. This not only leads to financial instability for women and their families but also results in a loss of potential economic growth for society as a whole.

Additionally, discrimination against women can result in limited access to quality education and healthcare. This can have long-term consequences for their well-being and opportunities for personal and professional development.

Another concerning effect of discrimination against women is the higher rates of gender-based violence, including domestic abuse, sexual assault, and harassment. This can have severe physical and psychological impacts on women and their communities.

Furthermore, discrimination against women can lead to a lack of representation in leadership positions in politics, business, and other sectors. This limits the perspectives and experiences that are brought to decision-making processes.

On a psychological and emotional level, discrimination against women can lead to feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem, and mental health issues, as well as a sense of powerlessness and hopelessness.

Moreover, discrimination against women perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes and norms, leading to a lack of respect for women's rights and contributions to society.

Overall, it is crucial to address the effects of discrimination against women in order to create a more equitable and inclusive society for all. By addressing these issues, we can work towards reducing inequality, injustice, and creating a society that allows all individuals to reach their full potential.



NOT HAVING FREEDOM

I was just 15 years old when I tried to go to an English course, but the Taliban stopped me in the middle of the street. They told me that I was not allowed to leave my house wearing those clothes because I was a girl. According to them, girls were not permitted to wear such clothes, even though my dad and brothers had given me permission. They said that I did not have the right to choose my own clothes, and that my male family members, such as my father and brothers, were responsible for deciding what I should wear. I was shocked. I had never imagined that one day I would be forced to wear clothes based on the idea that being a girl meant I could not wear my favorite clothes because I don't have the freedom to choose for myself

Bahara Afshari

Unveiling Gender Equality Through Personal Reflections on My Favorite Latin-American Narratives

Sheena Mae De Ocampo

As an English teacher, I have always found literature to be a powerful tool for exploring the complexities of human existence and the societal structures that shape our lives. Through the written word, we gain access to diverse perspectives, allowing us to empathize with characters, their struggles, and their triumphs. Due to our shared humanity, we are able to not only understand but also protest the injustices that women experience in a society where patriarchal values predominate.

In my teaching, I have found Gabriel García Márquez and Paulo Coelho to be particularly compelling authors who offer profound insights into the intricacies of gender dynamics. Their narratives, set against the rich backdrop of Latin American cultures, delve into the intimate lives of women, exploring their experiences, aspirations, and the challenges they face in navigating a world that often prioritizes male dominance.

Unveiling the Silent Struggles of Womanhood in "Chronicle of a Death Foretold"

Márquez's "Chronicle of a Death Foretold" offers a stark reminder of the historical subjugation of women's choices. The story of Angela Vicario, a woman forced into an arranged marriage, resonates with my own understanding of gender inequality. Angela's tragic fate serves as a poignant commentary on the oppressive cult of virginity and the suffocating expectations placed upon women in patriarchal societies.

In my classroom discussions, I encourage students to examine the societal norms that contributed to Angela's downfall. We explore the deeply ingrained beliefs that perpetuate female subordination and the devastating consequences these beliefs can have on women's lives. By critically analyzing these oppressive structures, we begin to dismantle the biases that hinder gender equality.

Embracing Self-Assertion and Challenging Societal Norms in "Eleven Minutes"

Coelho's "Eleven Minutes" presents a compelling narrative of self-assertion and the pursuit of personal agency amidst societal constraints. The protagonist, Maria, embarks on a journey of self-discovery, transforming from a naive young woman trapped in the confines of a repressive society to a self-empowered individual navigating the liberating yet challenging streets of Switzerland.

Maria's evolution from innocence to self-assuredness serves as a powerful testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the unwavering pursuit of freedom. In my teaching, I use Maria's story to inspire students to challenge the societal norms that limit their potential. We discuss the importance of self-determination and the courage to defy expectations, even in the face of adversity.

Confronting the Legacy of Colonialism and Catholic Doctrine

Both Márquez and Coelho's works illuminate the enduring influence of colonialism and Catholic doctrine on gender roles and expectations. Their narratives highlight the hypocrisy of these societal constructs, as male sexuality is celebrated while female agency is castigated, perpetuating a deeply rooted inequality.

In my classroom, we engage in critical discussions about the historical and cultural factors that have shaped gender norms. We examine the impact of colonialism and religious doctrine on perceptions of women and the power structures that reinforce gender discrimination. By understanding the roots of these inequalities, we can begin to address them effectively.

Subverting Conventional Mores and Embracing Personal Agency

In defiance of superficial metrics and societal constraints, both Márquez and Coelho create characters who challenge conventional norms and reclaim their agency. Maria Alejandrina Cervantes, for instance, embodies this spirit of rebellion, leveraging her allure to empower herself rather than being defined by societal standards of beauty.

In my teaching, I encourage students to recognize and celebrate the strength and resilience of female characters who defy societal expectations. We discuss the importance of challenging conventional narratives and the power of embracing one's individuality. By celebrating these characters, we inspire students to believe in their own potential and to challenge the status quo.

The Power of Literature: Inspiring Contemplative Reassessment

I firmly believe, as an English teacher, in the power of literature to illuminate the realities of gender inequality and inspire us to work towards a more equitable world. Márquez and Coelho's works serve as powerful reminders that literature has the profound ability to prompt critical discourse, challenge the status quo, and advocate for change.

In my classroom, I strive to create a space where students feel empowered to engage in open and honest discussions about gender issues. We explore the complexities of gender dynamics, challenge stereotypes, and celebrate the diverse experiences of women around the world. By fostering a culture of empathy, understanding, and activism, I hope to empower my students to become agents of change in their own communities and in the world at large.

A STORY BY JULIAN SABIITI

When I watched, recently, Chimamanda Ngozi's Speech "We should all be feminists", I started to realize I was raised by a feminist mother! A woman who encouraged, and advocated for, girl child education, who made it her mission to rescue girls from early marriages. A woman who worked hard despite so much judgement about her "neglecting her family to look for money" because she worked in the city and not our village home; where her only options would have been small scale retail trading and/or subsistence farming, things that could hardly feed her family or educate her daughters. A woman who stood up for her daughters when people tried to make them believe their appearance was what mattered most. A woman who encouraged free speech. A woman who didn't think having four daughters and no sons was a punishment from God and who continued to advance her education even if she had already achieved what society deemed the epitome of success, a husband and children.



I did not hear the word feminism or the phrase gender based discrimination until much later in life. Surprising how, living with a woman like my mother, these words had never come up! I thought that maybe it was because she'd rather not be identified as a feminist and deal with the stigma that came withthat, especially back in the 1980s and 1990s. Lord knows she already had enough backlash in her life! OR!! Perhaps in her books it didn't need a name because it was everyday behaviour that didn't need to be described in a different special way, given a title.

Working under the Ugandan Ministry of Health years later, I would discover what discrimination against women meant, through adult eyes, and as an outsider. Women who shy away from furthering their education because a highly educated woman is considered too ambitious and "unmanageable', women who can't speak in public because their societies have convinced them that a woman who speaks up is a shame, coarse, vulgar even. Women giving birth every year, experiencing marital rape and dwindlinghealth because their bodies are exhausted, all in silence.

Daughters staying home, helping with chores and being groomed for marriage while their brothers are getting an education.

I started to fully appreciate the power of dialogue and creating awareness while sitting in GBV and VAWG workshops. These women detailed the injustices they were suffering, albeit fearfully. In time, the spirit of togetherness grew, of discovering that they were not alone and what they were going through wasn't a result of their bad behaviour or of them being unlucky. Eventually they started to share about the small ways in which they were starting to take back their confidence. Women have been constantly reminded that they are too emotional and never logical or objective. Therefore, when we identify something we believe is an injustice, our first thought is to suppress whatever we want to say. I've realised that the people who met out these injustices to women are not strange people that we meet very rarely in special circumstances. They are the people we interact with every day, people we look up to and people whose opinions, ordinarily, we'd value!

I believe that awareness and advocacy are the first major steps because ignorance has oft hindered progress. I refuse to believe that there's no hope, that we must accept things as they are. We need to not tire of speaking up, to continue telling young girls, young adults and even adult women that their opinions are valid too and are not always as a result of their biological build up. That they have rights, legally documented or natural. A right to being respected, to being treated decently, a right to not live in constant fear of what physical or emotional harm might come to them for doing what they believe
is right or for wanting more for themselves than what their societies have told them they are entitled to.

Realising, accepting and vocalising injustices against women isn't a burden that has been placed by a higher power on a few people's shoulders. It's our role, each and every one of us, to understand the imbalances, the common stereotypes used to keep women from opportunities to better their lives, to serve, to lead, to be equally part of the conversation. It is also not, or at least shouldn't be, a matter of contention that needs a discussion to give it context. Discrimination against women is a violation of human
rights!

We, indeed, should all be feminists!

By **Julian Sabiiti**

Being a woman seems to be a sin. In a patriarchal society a woman cannot raise her voice, a woman cannot question, she is just meant to be seen but not heard.
When a woman raises against the norms they call her a rebel. Someday this war will be won by women speaking up and men supporting their daughters and sisters. We can change our world by being heard.

By **Dorothy Mamwacha**



HER VOICE, THEIR DOUBT: THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION AND JUSTICE

by Olivia Opere

The situation in the courtroom was thick with tension as Amala stood before the judge, accused of sexual assault. His accuser, a young woman named Moraa, recounted her harrowing experience in a soft, trembling voice. She described how Amala had cornered her in his office, making unwanted advances towards her. She narrated how threatening to scream provided an escape out of the dangerous situation.

Moraa's story was met with disbelief by multiple people who dismissed her claims as lies. They pointed to her lack of physical evidence and questioned her motives. She felt humiliated and helpless, her pain further compounded by the skepticism she faced. She sobbed as she struggled to describe an incident she would rather forget.

This case brings to light the challenges that women face when reporting sexual violence. Often, their stories are dismissed or minimized, and they are subjected to scrutiny and judgment. They may be accused of lying or seeking attention, and they may be blamed for the assault. Moraa's experience is all too common. A very small percentage of sexual assaults are reported to the police inspite of the existence of a gender desk at the police stations. Sadly, of those that are reported, only a small percentage result in convictions.

This is due in part to the difficulty of substantiating sexual violence. Often, there are no witnesses or physical evidence, and the victim's word is the only evidence available. This makes it challenging to prove the crime beyond a reasonable doubt. In addition, victims of sexual violence may be reluctant to come forward due to fear of retaliation, shame, or disbelief. They may also worry about the negative impact that reporting the assault could have on their lives.

This case highlights the need for more support and resources for victims of sexual violence. There is need for establishment of a system where victims feel safe and supported to come forward, to report their experiences and where their stories are taken seriously. Further, awareness creation about sexual violence seeking to dispel the myths and misconceptions that surround it will ensure the realisation of a culture where sexual violence is not tolerated and where victims are not blamed or shamed.

Only then can we begin to address the epidemic of sexual violence and create a safer world for all. Indeed, we can eliminate discrimination against women!



WIVES AND MOTHERS AS INDIVIDUAL

In Indonesia, the erasure of married women's identities—known only by their child's or husband's name—fuels gender inequality, curbing their autonomy and perpetuating violence. This loss extends beyond names, inflicting psychological harm, invalidating them, and hindering personal growth. To empower women, norms sidelining them from individual recognition must change. Acknowledging their identities is pivotal in combatting entrenched violence and fostering inclusivity.

To drive this shift, media portrayal and community involvement are crucial. The media can reshape societal perceptions by highlighting women's diverse roles beyond norms. Concurrently, community initiatives offer platforms for women to connect, share, and empower each other.

Sustaining this change demands continuous advocacy and commitment. Ongoing dialogue, awareness campaigns, and creating a room for married woman or single mother to grow are key to progress.

Through embracing media representation, community engagement, persistent advocacy, and unwavering commitment, Indonesia can cultivate a culture celebrating women's individuality wholeheartedly. This collective effort will pave the way for a more equitable and inclusive society, honoring women's contributions for a prosperous future.

Diana Izati



A STORY FROM

NEPAL

I am from Nepal. I work for ministry of Education under the local government at the office of the municipal executive as an education officer. My duties are to supervise school environment, conduct teacher training, co-ordination among stakeholders, students' motivation programs etc. One day one of a secondary school from my municipality brought a case about a ten years old girl student. She was being harassed for a year by her math teacher. She was a bright and cleaver student studying in class three. But gradually she started becoming dull, sad and she stopped being opened with her teachers and friends.



By Saraswati Koirala

There is a nurse post in many secondary schools in Nepal as well as in my municipality. The head master talked with the nurse about her condition and requested to find the reason. She started asking her problems in a different way. But she didn't say anything to her. Day by day the girl student's situation was being worse.

After some days, the girl talked with nurse about her problems. She was being harassed by her math teacher for a year. she was broken totally and all time afraid of being harassed at school. Her parent both alcoholics and were working on daily basis. Their financial conditions were very bad. Her parents had no time to listen daughters' problem so she couldn't share that teacher's behavior to them.

The school nurse informed head teacher about the wrong behavior of math teacher. He contacted to the women and child section of municipal office and municipal office contacted safe house. Safe house staff went to that school and take the girl student to the safe house to protect her. The victim girl gave her verdict to the police. Safe house took that girl for medical test. later on, safe house on behalf of the victim girl filed a case against the teacher. The teacher is in custody.

Marianne P. Villaruel

from the Philippines



My Phenomenological Experience on Discrimination Against Women

This is the first time that I will publicly present my personal experiences on discrimination against women. I intended to share these experiences because I already found peace in my turmoil in the past and because of the feeling that I am not alone in this battle.

Yes, I am a victim of sexual harassment!

My abusers are my cousins. It's started during my puberty stage. My female cousin (she is 15 years older than me) touched my clitoris and other sensitive parts of my body. I do not understand her purpose that time. However, during my adulthood stage, I do understand that she has a deviancy related to sex. She is a sex-maniac.

My second abuser is my male cousin (he is 20 years older than me), he asked me to touch his penis and assisted him in doing his masturbation. I think, he does it for more than five times, whenever I am with my grandparents' house, because he is their care taker.

My third abuser is also my male distant cousin (he is 22 years older than me), he attacked me while I am going home (our house is isolated from the community that time). He rode in a tricycle with his companion and he purposely touched my left breast. Fortunately, another tricycle came and I asked assistance. It happened when I am in my 1st year in the university. Due to stress, I had cyst in my left breast and I undergone three operations. Good thing, based on biopsy, the cysts are benign. However, another cyst is also present in my right breast which needed medical attention as soon as possible.

Did I experience trauma? Yes, because of these experiences, I do not trust other people easily and my feelings about sex is dirty.

How do I cope? Thankfully, I have support group. My best friends and fortunately, I took-up Bachelor of Social Sciences major in Behavioral Studies. It really helped me a lot to cope successfully. Another thing is my faith and my active engagement in our religion (I am a member of the Church of Christ).

Who am I right now? I am an advocate for gender and development and mental health. I learned to love and accept myself. I always value things and situations within my control. I let the universe control things and situations beyond my control.

Message to other victims of discrimination: Do not let your past dictate your future. Our best revenge to our abusers is having a successful life and achieving freedom from the negative situations in the past. Aja, we can be victim-survivors and achieve the reasons why we are here on earth (whatever your perspective is.

POETRY TIME

Hey guy!
I'm physically weaker than you, YOU ARE RIGHT!
I'm socially lower than you, YOU ARE RIGHT!
I'm economically poorer than you, YOU ARE RIGHT!
But why...?
If you think these all just my fault, YOU ARE WRONG!
If you're not blaming the social structures, YOU ARE WRONG!
If you think "equality" make situation better just for me, YOU ARE WRONG!
Hold my hand... Let's fight... for me... for you... for our children
Because all of us need a better world
And
WE ARE RIGHT!

By Shiva Ghanei

In a world where hearts should unite,
Discrimination casts a shadow, not light.
But we hold the power to change the way,
To make a brighter and more equal day.

With empathy as our guiding star,
We break down barriers near and far.
For prejudice, we'll stand and fight,
To create a world that feels just right.

It starts with kindness, love, and grace,
In every heart, every place.
Together, we can break the chain,
And end discrimination's cruel reign.

By Farahnaz Ahmady Noorzai

STOP DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN!

Women, who deserves to shine from the depth of their body,
Women, as beautiful as an angel from the heaven,
In some corner of the world, some women are still treated worst and that's a real concern,
I beg my pardon, but may I know why women has to go through hell?
Women are the glory, yet
Some women are still treated as dowry, I am sorry dear women you had to go through so much pain without any gain.
Women are supposed to be embraced, women are the reason for all the life on earth, they sacrifice their body, their parents just to be treated worst in the society?
As a responsible global citizen, lets join our hands and stop this discrimination against women.
Let's stop this discrimination by creating awareness and campaign.

By Yeshey Wangmo

A WOMAN IS HUMAN LIKE A MAN

Being a woman is not a defect - It is an honor,
Being a mother, sister, daughter, and wife is not a defect-it is an honor.

My right is equal to men- It is a truth,
Being my father, brother, son and husband is not a defeat- it is a truth.

The people of this world are hypocrites between men and women
-This is not separation but hatred,
No one can determine gender in the first place- This is not separation but hatred.

We all have skin, ears, eyes, and mouth- Both sexes are alike,
We all have red blood, colorful skin, and hair - Both sexes are alike.

If I fail— you defend me
I promise that if you fail — I will defend you

A woman's right is freedom, prosperity and permanence,
As a man has them all.

Women have strength, as well as Men too.
Women can do, what Men can do!





penned by: Morsal Hemayat

PORTRAIT



In the realm of words, I shall paint a picture, A poem that illuminates the power of women, And the importance of equity and equality.

Behold, a face emerges from the canvas, A woman's visage, strong and fierce, With eyes that hold infinite wisdom, And a smile that radiates hope.

In her features, the world finds inspiration, For she embodies the strength of generations, The resilience of those who dared to dream, And the fire that fuels the quest for change.

Her eyes, windows to a world of possibilities, Reflect the struggles faced by countless women, Yet they gleam with determination and resolve, For she knows that her voice holds great power.

Her nose, a symbol of discernment and wisdom, Sniffs out the inequalities that linger in our society, And she breathes in the winds of transformation, Yearning for a world where justice reigns supreme.

er lips, the gatekeepers of truth and love, Speak words that echo through the corridors of time, Demanding justice for the silenced voices, And heralding the arrival of a more compassionate era.

Her cheeks, flushed with the hues of resilience, Bear the marks of battles fought and won, And serve as a reminder that scars are badges of honor, Testaments to the strength that lies within.

Her chin, firm and resolute, Defies the constraints of societal expectations, For she knows that her worth is not defined, By the confines of gender norms.

And as her face takes shape, I am reminded, Of the countless women who have paved the way, With their unwavering spirit and fierce determination, Creating a legacy of empowerment and change.

Let this poem be a testament, To the power of women to shape the world, To the importance of equity and equality, And to the urgent need for a more humane and peaceful existence

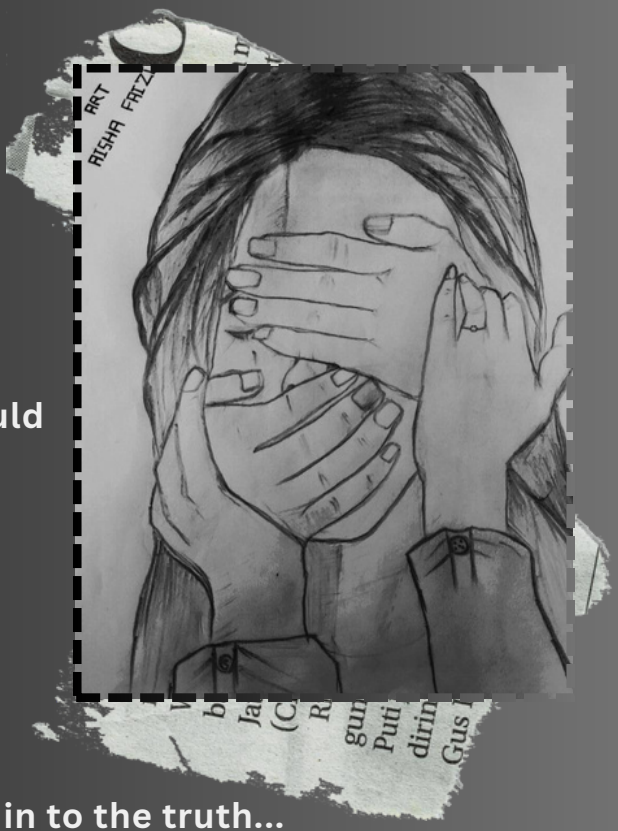
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May it serve as a call to action, To empower women to rise and lead, To break down the barriers that divide, And to forge a future where all are seen and heard.
For in the face of women, Lies the key to a brighter tomorrow, Where love triumphs over hate, And where humanity thrives in harmony.

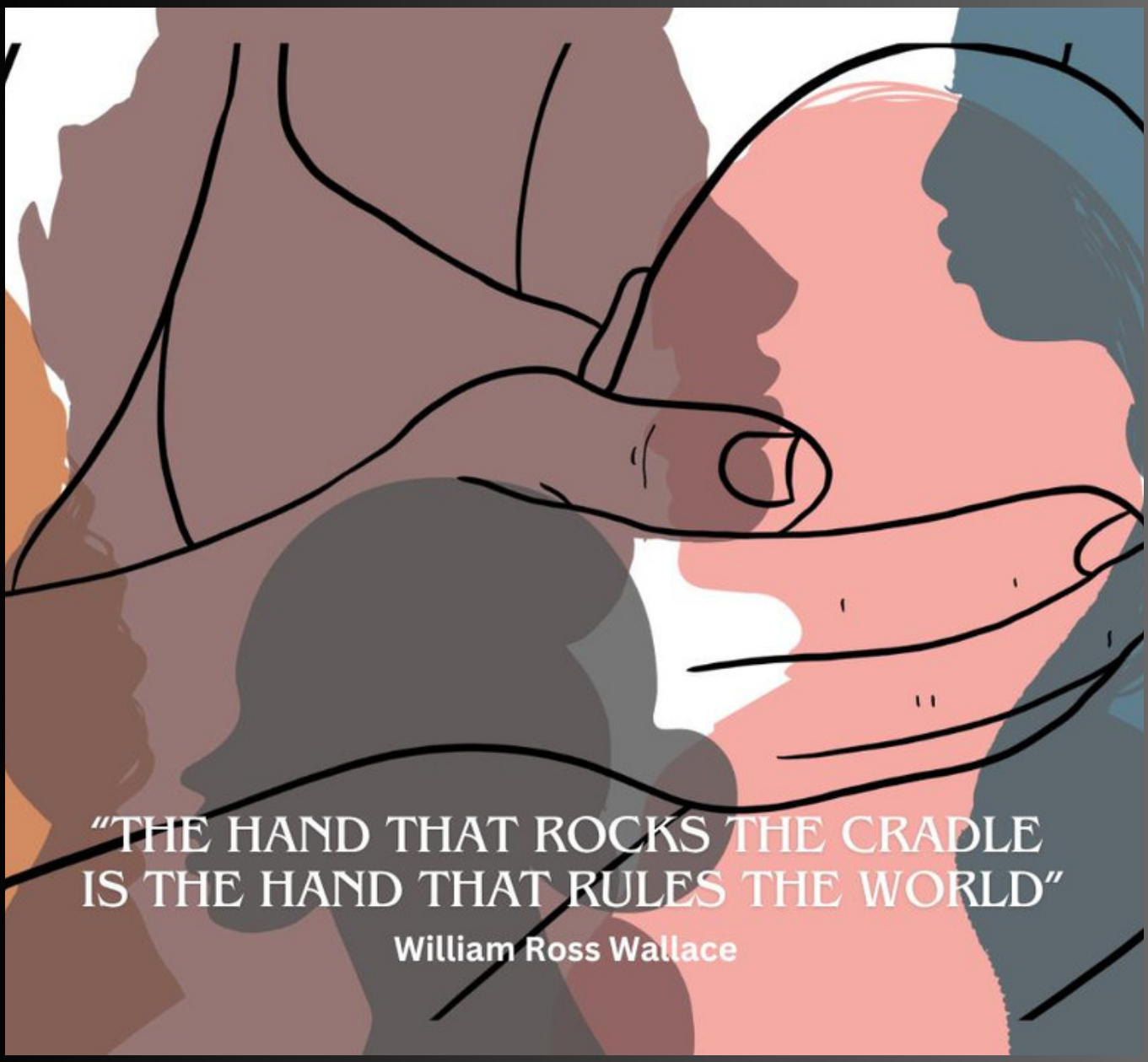
By Johana Pabon , Colombia

I cried secretly

Aisha Faizi



I cried secretly' for iam a girl...
I cried secretly' for gender discrimination that would be for us...
I cried secretly' for my races,for language, for my lineage...
I cried secretly' for family violence...
I cried secretly' for my deprivation of society...
I cried secretly' for to make me worthless...
I cried secretly' for my hidden wishes or dreams...
I cried secretly' for my dreams thath never turned in to the truth...
I cried secretly' for my being imprisonment in tired body ...
I cried secretly' for ignore it seems never she does not exist...
I cried secretly' below the black veil...
I cried secretly' for closed university gates and schools...
I cried secretly' for I hadn't allowor right to choose...
I cried secretly' for be traded as goods or things...
I cried secretly' for to be there is a girl but it does not value it seems that I am animated dead...
Just I breathing and just movement to the way make for me...
My emotions, my dreams and my feelings do not mean for you,
I Am faded, i am faded...
I wish you know and I wish understood me and you knew by seeing to my eyes wich how much I cried in secretly...
How to see my heart spots, how much have pain pulled this girls becauseof you limitations know due to the worthlessness of women's and girls , yet though of things no human...
Just considered our body not her feelings...!
Finally again I cried secretly because I can't defend her rights and because I can't open the chain of her hand and legs...
I cried for myself, I can't to make my dreams come true ,I think lock is on my bondage chains do not have the key.
You said womens and girls are insurance by their fathers, brothers and husbands ; means they are safe...
I don't think we are insurance in live ,we are bondage insurance
You forbidden girls from education we don't want this insurance
Just abandon us from bondage we are the most tired because I cried secretly... .



Prepared by: Eranga.S.Perera





WOMAN RISE

From the beginning, God created a woman.
The most valuable creature.
An adorable angel of peace, love and happiness,
An estate meant to bear awesome fruits.

You love, care and support unconditionally.
You do a lot for your loved ones.
Without you, life becomes meaningless.
You are given power to create life.

Rise woman, rise and create a better world
For women and coming generations of the world we need.
Rise and shine to end the era of darkness,
Darkness of Violence Against Women (VAW).

Woman rise, for you are beautiful
Woman rise, for you are capable
You are an agent of change,
Change the world needs to do away with VAW.

Composed by ʾMakabelo Sehlabo - Lesotho



I AM A WOMAN

By Aida Mohammadizadeh



I am a woman
I have said once that I am in pain
You responded :so do I!
Even though you are not!
You never know,
How I unify
every part of me
in my spine
and how you easily tear it apart
consciously
And I have suffered, I screamed.
You responded: so do I!
Even though you are not!
I am a woman
I am a woman
I am a woman
Who's you'll never be one
Lonesome and a society
Hurtful and tribally in pain
Standing on my legs inspite of in plaste
knees
Everything I say,
You said you were,
But have you ever been a women
I am a woman
I am a woman
I am a woman

YOU CAN ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN!

·*Violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights.*
·*Seventy years have passed since the signing of the universal declaration of human rights an now is the time for all women and girls and their families to be aware of their rights.*

Get to know the bitter truths of the lives of Afghan women and girls:

1.FARKHUNDE MALEKZDAH:

ONE DAY BEFORE THE NEW YEAR,FARKHUNDE MALEKZDAH WAS TORTURED BY ANGRY MEN WHO ACCUSED HER OF BURNING THE QURAN,
THIS HAPPENED IN 2014.

2.THE END OF TEN YEARS OF FATHER-DAUGHTER RAPE:

THE STORY OF AN AFGHAN FATHER RAPING HAS DAUGHTER FOR TEN YEARS WAS ONE OF THE CASES THAT CAUSED A LOT OF NOISE IN 2018.
THIS GIRL WAS PREGNANT BY HER FATHER SEVERAL TIMES DURING THESE YEARS AND HAD TOW CHILDREN BY HIM.

3.CUTTING OFF THE NOSES OF AFGHANS:

RIZEGOL WAS A WOMAN FROM THE RESIDENT OF FARYAB WHOSE HUSBAND CUT HER NOSE AND PART OF HER UPPER LIP WITH A KNIFE AT THE END OF THE HOLY MONTH OF THIS FAMILY QUARREL.

4.A GIRL WHO WAS KILLED BY HER F FATHER'S AX :

OUT OF 190 CAS ES OF NUMBER OF AFGHAN WOMEN DURING THIS PERIOD , 101 CASES WERE JUSTIFIED BY HONOR ONE OF THESE HONOR KILLINGS, WHICH CAUSED A LOT OF NOISE IN SOCIAL NETWORKS AND MEDIA OF AFGHANISTAN, WAS THE KILLING OF AN 18 YEAR OLD GIRL LIVING IN SAMANGAN , BY HER FATHER WITH AX BLOWS.
THE GIRL'S FATHER WAS ARRESTED AND SAID THAT HE KILLED HER BECAUSE OF "DISOBEDIENCE ".

5.THE CAPTAIN OF A HANDBALL TEAM IN SARPOL WAS KILLED BY HER EX-HUSBAND:

LOCAL SOURCES IN SARPOL PROVINCE CONFIRM THAT NOORYEH TABESH , THE CAPTAIN OF THE "PEACEMAKER "HANDBALL TEAM OF THIS PROVINCE, WAS KILLED BY HER EX-HUSBAND IN SARPOL CITY.

6.THE STONING OF A 17 YEAR OLD GIRL BY THE TALIBAN:

RAHKSHANA , SHE WAS STONED TO DEATH BY THE TALIBAN FOR RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME. AT THE AGE OF TEN ,HER FATHER MARRIED HER TO AN OLD AND TALIBAN PERSON, BUT SHE RAN AWAY FROM THE HOME WITH A 23- YEAR OLD BOY, BUT UNFORTUNATELY, THE TALIBAN CAPTURED HER. HE STONED THE BOY AND WHIPPED HIM WITH ONLY 100 LASHES. AND AFTER THE MURDER OF RAHKSHSNA'S LITTLE SISTER, THE TALIBAN TOOK HER SIX- YEAR OLD SISTER WITH THEN INSTEAD.
THIS HAPPENED IN 2016.

7.THE KILLING OF HORA SADAT:

AFGHAN YOUTUBER HORA SADAT WAS KILLED BY MYSTERIOUS PEOPLE AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF DISAPPEARANCE.

· Every woman and girls deserve to live a free life free discrimination and violence!
· Let's make the world safe for our kind !

Make the world (orange)!

Written by: Adiba Hassan Zada

LEYLA KARIMOVA - AZERBAIJAN



This year the UNESCO shared a post about philanthropist and oil magnate Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev's 200th birth anniversary. Mr. Taghiyev is known in the history as person who built the first boarding school for Azeri girls in the Muslim East.

Hi Everyone! I am Leyla from Azerbaijan. You may be curious why the article starts from Mr. Taghiyev.

This is because I am so inspired by his timeless quote, that **“an educated girl means an educated mother and an educated family in the future."**



My strong dedication to the actions related to the improvement of awareness topics such as women empowerment and gender equality is resulted by my personal experience.



During the life time, I have met a tremendous number of women that do their best to grow up the children without any financial or psychological support, women who trying to inspire other women and girls for achieving the higher results in their career and private life, and many others.



Nevertheless, my country is doing a large amount of projects to support women and girls, I think there is always the room for improvement, where the influencers may play a vital role.

By sharing our stories (both successful and not) we can and we will encourage other women and girls to find their own way to live and grow.



Despite the achievements that are already in place, we have to remember that the gender gaps still exist and even the small steps may change the big picture.

Thus, never underestimate the value of the experience and motivation sharing.
Don’t forget, that timely assistance and support makes wonders!

THANK YOU!

LEYLA KARIMOVA - AZERBAIJAN

I picked up some inspirational quotes to share with YOU today....

DON'T FEEL GUITY FOR DOING WHAT IS THE BEST FOR YOU



YOU ARE
THE ONLY ONE
WHO CAN GIVE YOU EVERYTHING



CHOOSE TO GROW THROUGH THE LIFE



YOU ARE THE GREATEST PROJECT YOU'LL EVER WORK ON



TRUST YOURSELF,
YOU CAN DO
EVERYTHING!

JUST KEEP
CLIMBING



Digital Harassment of Afghan Women and Girls in Kabul
Nov 14, 2023
By Tamana Ahmadi

Introduction

In the bustling streets of Kabul, a disturbing layout has emerged, casting a shadow over the lives of Afghan women and girls. Due to the misuse of social media, digital harassment has become a widespread problem. Women's images were taken from several places in Kabul without permission and shared on platforms like Instagram. This article explores the concerning instance in which victims' privacy is violated, and the culprits take advantage of them for personal benefit.

Although cyberbullying is a global issue, its effects are more severe in places like Kabul, where women face particular obstacles.

The invasion of women's privacy via social media platforms is a severe setback in a society that aspires to grow.

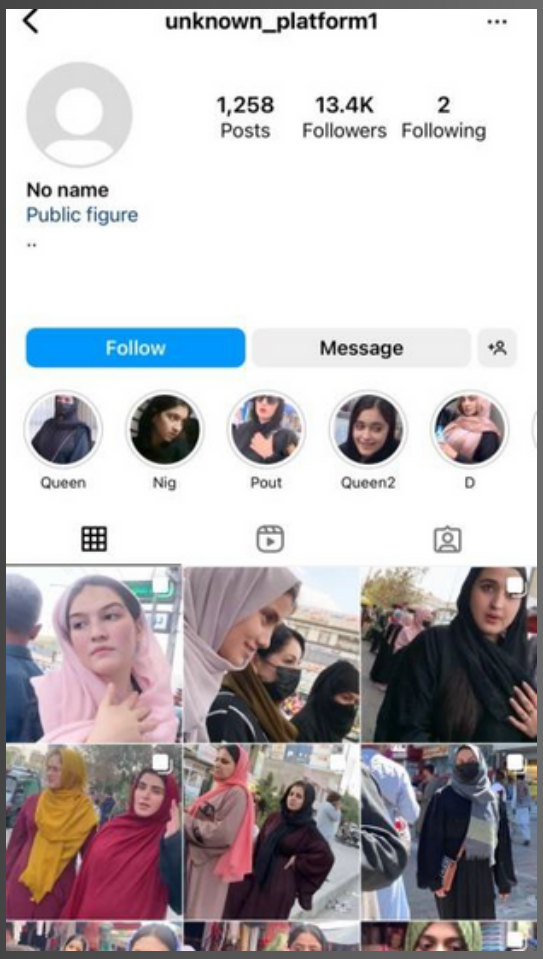


Figure 1 shows Instagram posts with pictures of women from Kabul, revealing the distressing implications of digital harassment.

A Case Study

Parisa is a young lady whose picture was secretly taken in a bazaar in Kabul and then shared on Instagram without her permission. Parisa describes how her life took an unexpected turn after this incident. In her words, "I went to Sarak-e-du Bazaar, eager to find something special for myself as it was my cousin's wedding. I was ecstatic." However, this happiness was brutally stolen from her.

A few days later, one of her friends sent over a WhatsApp message with the devastating news that Parisa's photo had been posted to Instagram without her permission. At first, she couldn't believe it, and the initial shock quickly gave way to a flood of anxiety. When the image appeared on her phone, the reality washed over her like a tsunami. Tears streamed down her face as she stared at her image. It was a painful incident that adversely impacted Parisa's mental health for a long time. This heart-wrenching event demonstrates the severe emotional and psychological effects that cyberbullying has on Afghan traditional society, where women are very thoughtful regarding their privacy. Parisa's story illustrates how victims can be subjected to extreme pressure from societal norms, invasion of privacy, violation of privacy, and violation of personal dignity. Parisa narrates what happened following the incident: "I felt my life was about to end. Even my family was ashamed.' Why didn't you cover your face?' my father said. Your picture is now on the Internet"

Impact on Victims

In addition to the invasion of privacy, victims suffer severe psychological and emotional charm. Parisa's poignant experience serves as an instructive case study in this regard. It not only leaves a sense of vulnerability but also precipitates long-lasting emotional scars that manifest as constant anxiety, distress, and a severe decline in mental health.

The societal repercussions of such digital offenses are equally pronounced, contributing to a culture of shame and blame that exacerbates the misery of those subjected to harassment. Parisa's father's questioning highlights the harmful social dynamics that are perpetuated by similar instances and is representative of a broader victim-blaming mentality. As a result, the victims experience further hardship as they become entangled in a web of societal expectations. Moreover, the consequences of cyberbullying frequently surpass the individual and have an impact on the dynamics inside families. As exemplified in Parisa's story, the resultant familial humiliation highlights the pervasive nature of harassment.

As Parisa's story is revealed, it becomes evident that digital harassment is an attack on Afghan society's fundamental values rather than just a privacy infringement. Long after the pictures are taken down from the internet, the emotional damage inflicted on the victims persists, underscoring the urgent need for legislative measures and social transformation to address this widespread problem.

Community Responses

In the context of digital harassment affecting Afghan women in Kabul a collective initiative spearheaded by numerous Afghan individuals, both men and women, was crucial in addressing the problem. Through concerted efforts and collaboration with the current government authorities, the nefarious activities of the offending page were denounced and terminated, resulting in the removal of all of the captured images, exceeding the singular instance of Parisa's photograph from the page.

In light of Parisa's terrifying experience, we need to work toward a world in which the internet is used as a tool for assistance and empowerment rather than as a place to abuse and humiliate people.ii



Figure 2 illustrates the terminated Instagram page with all women's pictures removed, marking the end of this intrusive online activity and the removal of captured images from the page.

Conclusion

Parisa's harrowing story highlights the alarming reality of cyberbullying and the pressing need for legislative action and public awareness to safeguard people in the digital realm. Beyond the obvious invasion of privacy, the victims' severe emotional and psychological effects highlight the necessity of a radical change to a digital environment that values assistance and empowerment over humiliation.

EDITORIAL NOTE

We did not edit for language and grammar as we wanted to present the original work. Thank you to all the participants who wrote and contributed.

This magazine was collated by the PARTICIPANTS OF THE COURSE Asma Safi, Bahara Afshari, Taiba Zulfiqar and Gianna Francesca Catolico.

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