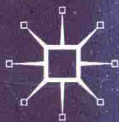


RONA M. FIELDS

AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Case for Gender
as a Protected Class



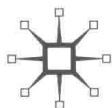
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Rona M. Fields



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AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
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Against Violence against Women

To my grandmothers; my mother (who gave me life); Dr. Ylene Larsen, who has contributed to maintaining that life; my daughter, my granddaughters; and my spiritual sisters throughout the world:

A woman of valor, who can find? Her worth is far above jewels... She renders good and not evil all the days of her life. Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman of valor is much to be praised. Her deeds speak her praise.

*She is more profitable than silver
and yields better returns than gold.
She is more precious than rubies;
Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.*

She opens her hand to the needy, and extends her hand to the poor. She is robed in strength and dignity, and cheerfully faces whatever may come. She opens her mouth with wisdom. Her tongue is guided by kindness. She eats not the bread of idleness.

*Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are Peace.
She is a Tree of Life to those who embrace her,
those who lay hold of her will be blessed.*

—Proverbs 31: 10–31

*The World stands out on either side
No wider than the heart is wide;
Above the world is stretched the sky,—
No higher than the soul is high.
The heart can split the sky in two,
And let the face of God shine through.
But East and West will pinch the heart
That can not keep them pushed apart;
And he whose soul is flat—the sky
Will cave in on him by and by.*

—Edna St. Vincent Millay

Preface

Each chapter in this book was inspired by the story of a woman or women with whom I became acquainted in my research travels to these and other places or in my clinical practice in Washington, DC. In some instances, a remarkable woman either young or old, synthesized in her experiences the meaning and horrors of femicide. In other cases, a male colleague, with remarkable sensitivity and wisdom lit the path that facilitated my knowledge. One such man is Salman Elbedour, a professor but always a Bedouin from Lakia in the Negev, Israel, into whose family I was introduced and welcomed. In the wreckage of Sabra and Shatela, nine-year-old Hulda whose big brown eyes and thin little body had absorbed scenes of horror and violence beyond her comprehension; 16-year-old Fadia sang in French to the UNIFIL soldiers who came to her parents' café but her nightmares about defending her ancestral Phoenician village, Myeh- Myeh from PLO invaders persisted after the café emptied and the family retired to their rooms behind it.

More than two decades ago, Dr. Sheila Jahan, neurologist and immigrant from Afghanistan explained why the Afghan women she referred to my clinic for psychoneurological testing had suffered brain injury. It was not only the TBI induced by war, but beatings on the head and other direct blows to the face and ears from husbands, mothers-in-law and other male relatives. That and listening to their stories informed my perspective on Afghanistan as did my late friend, Barbara Bick. I knew Asia from involvement with refugees in Southeast Asia and my very good friends in China, Shu Hong, her husband and parents who hosted me in their country and taught me so much from art to philosophy and beyond. Shu patiently guided me to the last Toy Maker (of traditional Chinese toys) in China and then to the ancient antiquarian where I found my icon of the Cultural Revolution—the Goddess of Compassion wrenched from a

temple where she'd been installed four hundred years earlier—her hands in prayer position broken but her face so wise and compassionate that I felt embraced in her aura. Masha Bayzie and her American parents gave me my first real insights into Siberia and I hope that will be the introduction to a much-deeper study of the people and the place of anomie and anonymity. I had the honor, pleasure, and finally the sad loss of my very good friend, Wangari Maathai to learn so much about the combined degradation of the environment with the degradation of woman—Mother Earth; and my host in Liberia and friend, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to experience the savagery unleashed on women and experienced by children in west Africa through greedy exploitation. And then how one courageous woman from Cameroon hurdled the obstacles and survived by her wit and energy, Desiree. Through all of them and more, I came to a new understanding of and appreciation for my grandmothers who were struggling immigrants making their way and overcoming obstacles more than a hundred years ago in the United States. Celtic women are another marvel of social history and during the past 40 years of my life, I've been involved in their struggle and success and now I know more about how and why.

From start to finish, my colleague, Dr. Sheila Pfafflin has provided every kind of encouragement and support. She has been a wonderful friend. Her commitment to women's issues and to expanding her own and others' horizons on the consequences of transgenerational violence on Irish women is an inspiration. In Ireland, many friends and colleagues have been illuminating and supportive. Pauline Murphy, Mary Caulfield, Hester Dunn, Trish who epitomized the tragedies of childhood in Lower Falls Belfast as a little girl wearing trousers because she wasn't considered sufficiently important in the family scale of priorities to be given her own clothes and an education. Eliane Montouchet and Marie Gatard, experts in French law, history, and women's studies broadened the perspective and provided fresh insight.

I learned long ago that supportive friends like Fr. Ray Helmick S. J. of Boston College, Rabbis Michael Berenbaum and Matthew Simon have been there for me to listen and advise. My cousin in Israel, Lili Traubmnn and her daughter Tamara, her brother Denis in Chile and Miryea Garcia, his partner, have battled the forces of murder and torture in Chile, injustice and idealism in Israel, and remind me of who I am and want to be.

My daughter Miriam, whose research on the first woman pharaoh is incorporated in her book, *The Tocharian*, published on Amazon Kindle (2010) and my sons, Marc and Sean have been confidants and consultants. Their children, Kyle and Lauren are my reason for telling and teaching.

I am grateful to my editors at Palgrave Macmillan, Lani Oshima and Burke Gerstenschlager, who have sustained our conviction that this book is important and must be done. And finally, to the many clients, both clinical and forensic, whose stories spurred me on relentlessly, to completing this book. In belief that justice can ultimately overcome injustice and that there is awesome strength in even the most abused women; that women can reach over the abyss of ethnic and linguistic differences to provide support.

Over millenia and civilizations, the finger fossil of a woman survives to lead her descendants in learning that we are all related to each other, and descended from Woman.

Washington, DC
October, 2012

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Violence begins as a threat against identity and physical integrity, and escalates to dehumanization, making it possible for the perpetrator to rationalize the destruction of human life. The ultimate violence is genocide.

Violence against women, whether in the form of genital mutilation or honor killing, was never sanctioned or prescribed by any of the Abrahamic theologies. Those violent practices devolved from preAbrahamic tribal practices in Africa and probably Eurasia.

It is not a new phenomenon, but in the contemporary world, gender violence is practiced under the guise of religious or cultural “law” and historical custom. In fact, much of Africa and Asia functioned under tribal law, which subsumed as “protection of women,” the assumption that women’s bodies are the encasement for family honor. This tribal or “customary” law is a direct outgrowth of a militaristic society that is patrilineal and patriarchic. There is only an eighth of a step from “Protection” to Control. And protection of women in this context is control as with other property. (See figure 1.1.)

Militarism is predicated in vendetta. Implicit in this ideology is revenge that extends to all members of the opposition or competitive group and is, according to Jean Piaget, the second stage of moral development. When this is the mass ideology and children are truncated at this level, transgenerational violence is inevitable.

Many societies that have, at one or another time, practiced female infanticide or other destruction of females at an earlier point in their prewritten history had been dominated by women. Misogyny in many instances would be referred to psycho diagnostically as a “reaction formation.” In other

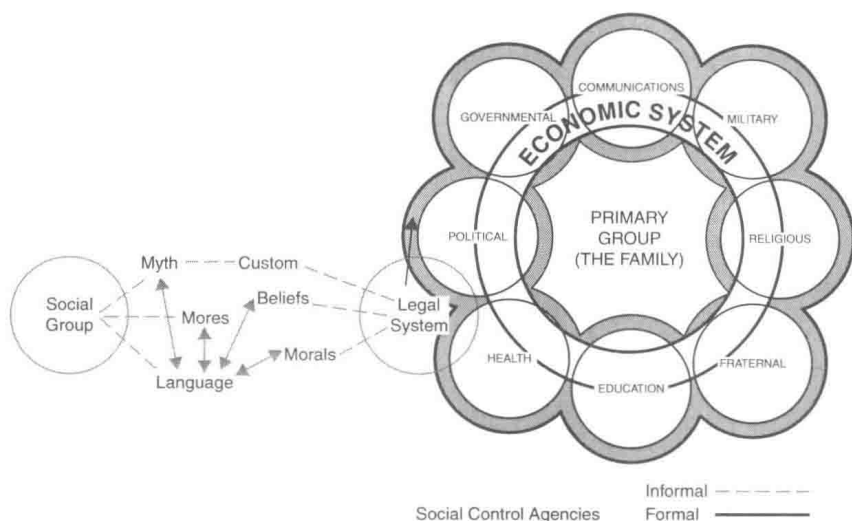


Figure 1.1 Institutions in a society.

instances, it has apparently evolved from the primitive myths of the female as power over life and death, natural disasters, and reproduction.

For example, the Ban Po culture of central China was a Neolithic civilization believed by some Chinese archeologists, to have been matriarchal that may have had their own language and extraordinarily symbolic architecture and practical arts. They are credited as the foremothers of the Han people, who eventually dominated a large swath of central China and extended their boundaries into neighboring kingdoms.

The aristocracy in China had a very different culture from commoners, and women in the Han Dynasty were highly educated, and often, because of widowhood and prolonged regencies, they dominated the political life of the dynasty.

The society was monogamous, but kings and emperors had many concubines, and employed eunuchs to guard them. It was not unknown for the eunuchs to engage in internecine physical combat and even wars to assert the dominance of one empress dowager over another.

At the same time, and through many dynasties, the common people were mostly farmers and strongly patriarchal. Although marital fidelity and filial submission were two pillars of societal values, men were allowed to engage in sexual activity outside of marriage, and if they could afford it, to bring a concubine into the family home where, however, she would be subject to the dominance of the primary wife. Choices of marital partners were commended by the parents of the bride and groom. Not all of

these were arranged through matchmakers but each marriage was always a complex contract, and was enacted through a very complicated set of ceremonies.

Daughters-in-law that came into the husband's abode also served their parents-in-law. If there were several sons, one remained in the family domicile, and all would work the family land together. Each son, however, would get a piece of the family land as his inheritance and each daughter, although not mandated by law, had her share as her dowry. Women often had remunerative work outside the home. They spun and wove cloth, and made clothing and ornamental objects.

Predictors of Women's Status

In one of my earlier books, *The Future of Women* (1985), I listed eight geopolitical and social conditions that are predictive of women's status. I had derived these principles from extensive historical research and studies of the reports and proposals submitted to the United Nations Decade for Women. I think these predictors are useful in some instances in revealing where gender genocide will occur, including each of the cases discussed in this volume. They are:

1. Women's position is always directly related to the society's social and political conditions. Unrest, disorder, or distress in a society, will especially adversely affect women.
2. The status of women is a function of that society's definition of marriage and family, which are defined by childbearing/rearing practices
3. There is no firm evidence that women as a class have ever enjoyed all the prerogatives of power equally with men. Certainly, individual women have been accorded power, but only on the understanding that they behave like "one of the boys."
4. In most countries, rape, kidnapping, and enslavement have been used to control and terrorize women.
5. The denigration of women, like the denigration of a racial minority, provides an excuse and rationale for their economic exploitation. Assigning women to an inferior position in the workforce, for example, makes it possible to get more work for less pay, thereby preventing the full employment of all workers, including men.
6. The subordination of women is worse within groups that are themselves oppressed. In such instances men are put in subordinate positions in relationship to other men, which slights his masculinity, and he seeks to restore it through sexual domination of women in his group.

7. The more a society is vulnerable to the whims of the natural environment, the more it is oppressed by mystical taboos, which tend to polarize the roles of men and women and regulate relationships between them.
8. The status of women is adversely affected by wars and violence. These glorify the stereotypical qualities of masculinity, but further restrict women to the role of breeder and feeder, because of the threat to the survival of the group. Furthermore, wars and violence require a psychological dehumanizing of the enemy and, in particular, of the women of the enemy society. (Fields 1985b)

Long before scientists recognized how mitochondrial DNA is uniquely important in tracing ancestry through matrilineal origins, Jews had traced the origins of individuals through their mothers, although they identified their caste lineage through their fathers. In the early polygamous societies, offspring took their identity as much from their mother as their father. If the father was high status, the status of the mother determined the offspring's position. This remains the case in Pashtun and Bedouin societies today.

What inspired the diminution of women's status and credibility in decision making is unclear. Certainly ancient pre-Judeo-Christian symbolism is replete with earth-mother and goddess images, both believed to celebrate fertility, the essential value for human continuity. Yet, in nearly every religion, goddesses also are associated with death as with birth. Several hundred years ago the professional who facilitated childbirth was the same person who assisted the dying. She came to be called the Midwife.

The Pieta, the image of the mourning mother cradling the dead son she brought into the world, reflects this duality in Christianity. In his book, *The Mary Myth* (1973), Andrew Greeley argues that Christian veneration of Mary is a way to incorporate the quintessential femaleness in the God idea. Mary elevates women from the pagan idol.

Before Christianity the Israelites took particular care to distinguish between their women and the pagan women surrounding them. Among the many stories illustrating this are those of Samson and Delilah and of Abraham and Sarah, who are clearly intended, in part, to illustrate the sharp divide between Israelites and the other peoples of their time and geography (Fields 1972).

Abraham, for instance, falsely described his wife Sarah as his sister when they tarried in Egypt as guests of the Pharaoh, so that he would not have to share her with or give her to the ruler. As was the custom, he received one of the Pharaoh's concubines, Hagar, as a handmaiden. On the opposite end of this spectrum, is the woman Delilah, who was used by her brothers and tribe

to seduce Samson, and lure him to disclose the secret of his strength while she drugged him so that his hair could be cut off.

The ancient Greek goddess, Hera, was celebrated as wife and mother but was also destructive, even killing her own son. The ancient Greeks somewhat mitigated this conflicted omnipotence of the female by way of the myth of the warrior females, Amazon. The word literally meant “without breasts” because they supposedly cut off their right breasts, to facilitate notching and drawing an arrow in a bow.

While there is no indication any such society existed, the idea of an all-female society in which men were used for sexual gratification, and where male infants were killed at birth, was perpetuated in other times and cultures with certain consistent features. Gaelic mythology presented the Danum, who were skilled practitioners of the martial arts residing in Alba (Scotland). They were said to be the teachers of the great warrior hero of Ulster, Cuchulain (Fields 1973).

Herodotus related that the demise of the Amazons came about because the women yielded to the Scythians, with whom they preferred sex to victory.

The Athenian lawmaker Solon institutionalized for the Greeks, and later for the Romans, the dichotomy of sexuality, in which sexually restrained women were seen as respectable whereas sexually active women were whores. Solon’s legislation, which minutely regulated Athenian life, was intended to block women from arousing conflict between men.

Yet another embodiment of the contradictions ascribed to women is Kali, the Hindu goddess of death, who is also the earth goddess and the goddess of light.

The profound enigma of life’s beginning and end is inextricably imbued with the mystery of female cyclic bleeding and pregnancy. Ignorance and powerlessness beget the divergent roles of women as goddess and witch, saint and seductress (Fields 1985b).

Ancient religions, such as that of the Israelites, for instance, identified the moon as female and as representative of procreation. The new moon represents the monthly renewal of women and is usually a cause for differentiation in rituals and other behaviors. In fact, to this day, Jewish tradition (which is quite different from ancient Israelite practices in many respects) includes special prayers on Rosh Hodesh, the new moon, which honors women.

The First “Pharaoh”

Among the Egyptians, the Israelites’ neighbors and sometime adversaries, was a well-documented example of the conflicting images and roles of women. There was no question but that males dominated the pharaonic dynasties, although a

woman could be a regent if the descent fell on a very young male child, as happened with Tutankhamen. Still, the daughter of the great King Thutmose I, married by her father to a weak and sickly half-brother, had an extraordinary reign of more than 20 years. Hatshepsut, meaning “foremost of noble ladies,” ruled from 1508 to 1458 BCE as the fifth pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty of ancient Egypt. Egyptologists generally regard her as one of the most successful pharaohs, ruling longer than any other woman of an indigenous Egyptian Dynasty (Cleopatra was not born of an indigenous Egyptian Dynasty).

Although records of her reign are documented in ancient sources both numerous and diverse, early modern scholars diminished the importance of her contributions, describing Hatshepsut as a co-regent in power from about 1479 to 1458 BCE, during years 7–21 of a reign previously identified as that of Thutmose III.

Today, it is generally recognized that Hatshepsut assumed the full position of pharaoh and ruled 22 years. She outlived her half-brother/mate King Thutmose II and ascended the throne, discarding her female robes and assuming the crown and kilt of kingship. Initially this created some complications because all of the titles attributed to the high king were in the masculine. It is believed that her ascendancy gained her the title of Pharaoh, which was gender-neutral (Mertz 1964).

Hatshepsut was attributed a reign of 21 years and 9 months by the third century BCE historian, Manetho, who had access to many records that now are lost. She and Thutmose II had four daughters before his early death. Thutmose II also had a son with a non-Egyptian slave that became Thutmose III, who was considered Hatshepsut’s nephew. She at first served as his regent, but actually took the throne over the course of 20 years that historians originally attributed to the reign of Thutmose III. He was not happy about this, we’re told, and plotted to overthrow her. But this came to naught, as she had secured the support of several viziers who had served her father, and with whom she maintained a politically astute alliance. Her death is known to have occurred in 1458 BCE, and her nephew successor was determined to destroy all evidence of her accomplishments and importance (Fields-Babineau, 2008).

Her peaceful reign saw the completion of great construction projects and of artistic and cultural developments. Depictions of her in her tomb show that she extended trade to places beyond the bounds of her predecessors, who are depicted, significantly, with maces in acts of war.

Religious myth had it that she was actually the child of Amman-Re, the sun god. It was believed that all kings were offspring of Amman-Re and the queen, royal wife of the king (Mertz 1964).

The power and accomplishments of Hatshepsut sharply contrast with the successive generations of Egyptian women generally and in the Middle

East and Africa. Her successor's backlash against Hatshepsut may well have brought about the destruction and defacement of her images and monuments. This parallels a methodical "gender-cleansing" effort to destroy the vestiges of the Ban Po civilization in China.

The Epistemology of Violence

Violence starts as a threat to identity and bodily integrity and spreads like ripples on water, into ever-widening and inclusive circles to the ultimate brand of destruction: genocide. Each widening circle incorporates all of the earlier ones and encompassing still more.

Genocide is the largest of those ripples of political violence, and moving along the tangential evolving circles, requires a vector. That vector or continuous force is, in human society, delivered through and to the woman. It is, from the earliest phase, the threat to identity and bodily integrity, the female child who suffers psychodynamic and social experience that transmits as the intergenerational force (see figure 1.2).



Figure 1.2 Violence.

Giving birth to a girl child in many societies does not warrant celebration. In some places, such as in Afghanistan, and among rural impoverished peoples, such as Bedouin of the Negev, it demotes the mother, and in times of war, drought, and famine gave way to female infanticide.

This is particularly typical of militaristic, patriarchal societies accustomed to fighting for survival. On the other end of the spectrum of aggression-violence, is altruism, the selfless giving or helping others. In a 1984 conversation with Jane Goodall in Tanzania on social behaviors in apes and humans, she noted that only those chimps who had high-status mothers exhibited altruism.

Considering what I had observed of the behavior of children toward their peers in civil war zones, including Northern Ireland and Lebanon, I realized that the parents' social status and whether they were impoverished and thus highly stressed; victimized as a group, or secure and comfortable, made an enormous difference in the choices their children made. In both Northern Ireland and Lebanon, adolescents from families of the unemployed, imprisoned, and desperate, were far more likely to become members of violent gangs, paramilitaries, or "political" fighters.

During my studies for a book on martyrdom some years following that conversation, I found that Palestinian suicide bombers were more likely to have come from poorer families in Gaza when religious extremists opposed to the Oslo accords were actively recruiting for jihadists. On the contrary, these accords had, at the time, given new hope to much of the Palestinians, so recruiting jihadis had not been very successful except for prospective "martyrs," usually the disaffected and marginalized sons of the least-affluent families. (Fields 2004)

Woman, the primordial mystery, is a threat to masculinity (Freud 1905; Horney 1942). From Neolithic times onward, subjugation of woman has been the sociological key to patriarchy from which evolves the sustained traditional formula for tribalism and militarism. Psychologically, "we vs. they" is the essential formula that turns fear into hatred and into violence (Fields 1976; 2006). The bifurcation of gender and the social economics of gender roles provides a natural "we-they" dichotomy.

While colonial powers attempted to impose national boundaries, in many earlier campaigns to impose colonial rule on a less divided and factionalized tribal society (compare English domination or colonization of Ireland in the fourteenth to twentieth centuries), they stimulated the growth of nationalism, setting the indigenous population as an antagonist to their colonizers.

Women as Vector and Victim

These glimpses into the circumstances of women in ancient societies that permitted their ascent to leadership, and their subsequent descent into