



The Good Men Project:

Compendium XII

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

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Scott Douglas Jacobsen

January 6, 2026

Preface: Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Human rights in this collection from The Good Men Project act as a working toolkit rather than wallpaper. The various international rights documents are operational. You can evaluate reality from them, not simply cite them. Women's equality within this framework becomes a lattice of contexts and conventions, resolutions, and agendas, e.g., UDHR, ICCPR/ICESCR, CEDAW, UNSC 1325 and follow-ons, SDGs, etc.. These signal a continuity across institutions and decades of the importance of gender equity.

In these documents, women's health is seen as a governance issue. They have various goals, measurements, and timelines. They have mechanisms of action and inter-ministerial and inter-governmental coordination to implement the aspirations. Women's health in this selection of articles centers on the moral urgency and socioeconomic consequences of women's health: individually, familiarly, and societally.

Another ubiquitous and socially contiguous issue is violence against women as an impediment to development, equality, and peace. Violence crosses class and culture and spans physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, primarily. Private harm is publicly consequential; therefore, it is an issue derivative to the Commons. The practical elements of this can be seen in expectations and organizational rules.

Indigenous issues are centred here, too. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was central to this period of Canada's national history. An actionable roadmap has been developed and is partially underway, including monitoring neglect investigations, community resources for families, and training investigators on the impacts and realities of the residential schools. Conceptual hygiene is central to rejecting "race" as a scientific category centring on species and, perhaps, on ethnicity, and to the conceptual language. An acknowledgement is made of the harms caused by the belief in race. Bad science harms.

A praxis of conversation continues with leaders in various areas at this time as well, e.g., Gissou Nia and Waleed Al-Husseini. In those cases, Nia is a leader in human rights, and Al-Husseini is a leader in ex-Muslim organizing.

Social analysis and advice comprise a significant chunk of the text with commentaries on workplace gender dynamics, counselling/psychotherapy, failures in social/psych sciences, demography, religion/nonreligion ("nones"), Israel/AIPAC discourse, and more. The argument should strive to tether to evidence with as much moral clarity as possible and a focus on human consequences.

I prefer conversations over articles, but the article format for distributing thought matters. Conversations equate to reasoning between two interlocutors, represented in a third, greater than the two in the air and statistically abstracted in both minds, averaged over both.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

January 6, 2025

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. C. Women and Health – Paragraph 110(d)-(e)

How are explicit goals and reasonable timelines important for the equality of the sexes?

November 21, 2018

Strategic objective C.5.

Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health

Actions to be taken

110. By Governments at all levels and, where appropriate, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, especially women's and youth organizations:

d. Develop goals and time-frames, where appropriate, for improving women's health and for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes, based on gender-impact assessments using qualitative and quantitative data disaggregated by sex, age, other established demographic criteria and socio-economic variables;

e. Establish, as appropriate, ministerial and inter-ministerial mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of women's health policy and programme reforms and establish, as appropriate, high-level focal points in national planning authorities responsible for monitoring to ensure that women's health concerns are mainstreamed in all relevant government agencies and programmes.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

Paragraph 110, in sections (d) and (e), of the Beijing Declaration deal with not only the targeted objectives/concrete goals but also the timelines in which to do them.

It speaks to the areas in which women's rights are not fully respected and, in fact, where, unfortunately, this is important and integral for the social and economic development of societies.

That is to say, the increased respect for and implementation of women's rights is a boon to the socio-economic livelihood of nations around the world. This is an international generalization based on the empirical evidence for the moral rightness, economic soundness, and social benefits of the moves for the advancement and empowerment of women.

This includes, as has in part been discussed before, the planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating of the programs and initiatives that are done for the explicit benefit of women.

It has not, even in 1995, been done haphazardly in most cases. There is a focus on the forethought and analysis. The forethought to set about a plan to be set in motion, eventually – potentially competing among others for viability based on feasibility of the timeline and available resources.

But this requires some things mentioned in prior articles that include the development of criteria for evaluation of the efficacy of the programs and initiatives, as noted: “sex, age”, socioeconomic status, educational level, and so on.

These demographic variables should not be ignored as they can be an important factor in the overall performance of the program over time and for the implementations of its improvements.

The ministerial and inter-ministerial references simply relate to the government and the inter-governmental relationships to work on, what is seen as, common international problems in relation to women.

Thus, the basic premise in this section deals with the healthy implementation of the programs for women’s health. This is in regards to policy and to programs. The purpose is to use the authority of government and “inter-ministerial” cooperation for the mainstreaming of women’s health within and between nations.

(Updated 2018-11-10 based on further research) One can find similar statements in other documents, conventions, declarations and so on, with the subsequent statements of equality or women’s rights:

- [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) in the Preamble, Article 16, and Article 25(2).
- [Convention Against Discrimination in Education](#) (1960) in Article 1.
- [The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (1966) in Article 3, Article 7, and Article 13.
- [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (1966).
- [Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (1979).
- [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (1984).
- [The Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women](#) and the [optional protocol](#) (1993).
- [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) (1995), [Five-year review of progress](#) (2000), 10-year review in 2005, the [15-year review](#) in 2010, and the [20-year review](#) in 2015.
- [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325](#) (2000), and the UN Security Council additional resolutions on women, peace and security: [1820](#)(2008), [1888](#) (2009), [1889](#) (2009), [1960](#) (2010), [2106](#) (2013), [2122](#) (2013), and [2242](#) (2015).
- [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children](#) (2000).
- [The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa](#) or the “Maputo Protocol” (2003).

- Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence or the [Istanbul Convention](#) (2011) Article 38 and Article 39.
- [UN Women's strategic plan, 2018–2021](#)
- [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.](#)
- 2015 [agenda](#) with 17 new [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) (169 targets for the end to poverty, combatting inequalities, and so on, by 2030). The SDGs were preceded by the [Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs) from 2000 to 2015.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. C. Women and Health – Paragraph 111(a)

How can good policy make a lot of difference in the lives of women around the world?

November 21, 2018

Strategic objective C.5.

Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health

Actions to be taken

111. By Governments, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, international financial institutions, bilateral donors and the private sector, as appropriate:

- *Formulate policies favourable to investment in women's health and, where appropriate, increase allocations for such investment;*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

Here the Beijing Declaration continues with the background perspective of the equality of the sexes or the genders, more broadly, as an important aspect of the work of the international community.

The formulations or brainstorming of policies can come from a few locations including the top-down methodology as well as the bottom-up. Take, for example, the grassroots method that comes from the popular activism of the communities within a society.

This is non-trivial. As some of the most important changes forced on the governments with racist or sexist policies, including the lack of the right to vote for women and the right to vote for minorities within several semi-democracies, by the mass activism of the conscious objector citizens to the current systems in place, these are powerful catalytic forces in the world.

Even, as noted astutely by the wonderful Rebecca Traister, the simple power of women's anger or righteous indignation as the basis for the important social movements in the United States of America alone.

The responsible use of power can also be an important source of moral guidance and work within the nation, as those representatives of the better conscience of the nation can work to improve the material conditions of the women and the families of the nation.

It may not be a big trumpet affair, but simply the quiet workings of people of conscience working for the betterment of the society in which they inhabit.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. C. Women and Health – Paragraph 111(b)

How can the incorporation of women into the power centres of the society help with the equality of the sexes envisioned by Harriet and John Mill?

November 27, 2018

Strategic objective C.5.

Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health

Actions to be taken

111. By Governments, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, international financial institutions, bilateral donors and the private sector, as appropriate:

b. Provide appropriate material, financial and logistical assistance to youth non-governmental organizations in order to strengthen them to address youth concerns in the area of health, including sexual and reproductive health;

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The inclusion of women within the decision-making and power-centres of influence within societies remains novel in the history of the world, especially within the additional reflective piece of information with the current global civilization, this global village, being the most vast and all-encompassing information-based civilization ever seen in the history of the human species.

This permission, and the moral rightness, of women within the “material, financial and logistical” decision-making frameworks of the international system remain as important as ever. It becomes something of import for the health and wellness of individual women.

It also becomes something relevant to the flourishing of the economies of nations. Some of the most impactful times in one’s life is in the earliest moments, which are childhood and adolescence. The sexual and general health and wellness of young women is the focus here.

The ability to garner proper information and knowledge about reproductive and sexual health can mean a life as a teen and young adult parent and one in which the young woman is able to garner some post-secondary education prior to the choosing to become a mother or not.

The strengthen of the young NGOs is part and parcel of this effort.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. C. Women and Health – Paragraph 111(c)

How can the development of mechanisms in the international system with women's health on the dossier help advance the empowerment of women?

November 29, 2018

Strategic objective C.5.

Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health

Actions to be taken

111. By Governments, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, international financial institutions, bilateral donors and the private sector, as appropriate:

c. Give higher priority to women's health and develop mechanisms for coordinating and implementing the health objectives of the Platform for Action and relevant international agreements to ensure progress.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The sense of justice within the women's rights sentiments in the Golden Rule, in the equality aspects, found in John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill link to utilitarian foundations of a rightness-wrongness axis linked to the greatest good for the greatest number, where this becomes particularly salient with the inclusion of the other half of the species as worth moral consideration – somewhat of a novelty in world history; hence, the Mills get quoted quite a bit.

In regards to paragraph 111 section (c) of the Beijing Declaration, there remains the fundamental notion of the equality of women within the framework of increasing rights for women. The universalization or the democratization of rights as the extension of the Golden Rule to women, to regard women as persons, and, therefore, their health and wellness of equal relevance and need for consideration with the men in societies.

In fact, with the general disparities in the consideration of the health of the men and the women in society, the maintenance of thought about men's wellbeing and then the raising of women's can feel like greater parity for many women and then decline for many men. It becomes a subjective or relative evaluation of provisions.

But the emphasis here is the higher priority for women's health, probably for a series of reasons. One of them is the increase in the consideration for greater parity. Another is the unique circumstances more women than men face. For example, the gestation of the next generation in contrast to men. The health objectives set forth in the Platform for Action retain import now.

However, these do not remain the main sets of reflections about the overall health and wellness concerns of women, as science and medicine advances and the conversations about women's equality with men advances then further ethical advances come into awareness with the widened domain of ethical discourse, of moral consideration.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence against women – Paragraph 112

How is violence against women a significant obstacle to equality, development, and peace?

November 30, 2018

112. Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The long-standing failure to protect and promote those rights and freedoms in the case of violence against women is a matter of concern to all States and should be addressed. Knowledge about its causes and consequences, as well as its incidence and measures to combat it, have been greatly expanded since the Nairobi Conference. In all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture. The low social and economic status of women can be both a cause and a consequence of violence against women.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

One of the more touchy and important social problems to tackle in the modern period, in the MeToo moment, is the global social illness of violence against women, We are a violence primate species. No doubt about it.

However, this is not our only mode of operation. We can work in ways best fit for the moves of the ethical dial towards development, equality, and peace. There does seem to be some backlash to these efforts.

Invariably, these, probably, link to religious notions of the subordination of women, to sexist notions of men own or being in control of women, to political notions of women as unhinged and too emotional for public life, or deserving of the abuse received by men in their lives.

This is part of the normalcy or normalization of violence against women from attacks at suitability in public and political, and civic, life to sexual and physical abuse in the home. The main recognized forms of violence within the international community are psychological violence (or abuse), sexual violence, and physical violence.

Within these, we find the basic forms of violence against women and the fundamental forms in which women can be kept back in their success in life. The main ones, of course, being the derivative effects that can, or may, persist throughout life.

For those familiar with some of the calls or conversations in the Human Rights Social Interest here at the Good Men Project, we have the discussions on regions, nations, impacts, prevalences, solutions, and types, with the main types as “physical, sexual and psychological abuse” that do not have much regard for the socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, or geography of the woman.

Some sectors or demographics of women are at greater risk. However, this is not a reason for despair. For sure, this remains an important emotional valence, an area for concern. But the concern can be moved past despair; in that, women have a far better time than at many prior

times in history with the provision, at least in principle, of fundamental human rights, in addition to the fact that the conversation, as done through GMP elsewhere, is working to improve the status assumptions of women in conversations.

Some areas of the conversation will need more in-depth coverage and greater moral emphasis than others; however, the general acknowledgement and discussion, and dialogue, about the rights of women as person is new and increasing, which portends the demise of particular aspects of unhealthy international or global culture: consider this an age of changing some of the parts, houses, paints, and infrastructure of the Global Village.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence against women – Paragraph 113(a)

How is violence against women impacting families around the world?

November 30, 2018

113. The term “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Accordingly, violence against women encompasses but is not limited to the following:

a. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;

Beijing Declaration (1995)

Violence against women can be seen as a global health challenge – as indicated by Thaddeus Howze in a recent Human Rights Social Interest Group, as this impacts the short- and long-term health and wellness of women, children, families, and communities.

These incidences, very common, are not isolated, can happen to any woman, and reflect gender-based violence. The main forms considered by the international community are physical, psychological, and sexual.

If familiar with some of the research, there are many more forms of violence against women. The main foci for human rights calls have been on physical violence against women. Now, these are moving towards psychological violence around the world and then, likely, transitioning in 2019 into sexual violence against women.

But there are more forms of violence against women including stalking and financial abuse, e.g., withholding funds or money from a woman in order to control her. All these are components to the general phenomena of violence against women. One of the main factors is economic dependence.

The inability to live free from men in the degrees of freedom of choice in society. Within the constraints of a system set for women to have fewer choices, we can see the need for women to be more economically free for a) the right to self-determination and b) the chance to improve the economic well-being of the nation.

But violence against women, financial or otherwise, can hinder the moral and social development of a nation, alongside its economic advancement as well. This becomes, at a minimum, a tripartite duty for the advancement of women based on moral rightness, economic soundness, and wellbeing improvements.

Whether inside of the family unit or outside of the family, there is the fundamental requirement of justice to provide for the women in the society for the improved living conditions of the society.

Fewer women with trauma, while still the main recipients of the burden of the unpaid labor market including childcare and housecare – let alone emotional labor of the families and friends, can better take on the disproportionate burdens of societal responsibilities placed on them.

This comes, as George Carlin noted, ‘without pay, and without a pension.’ This is true. It is part of the issue of women simply taking on the work many men see as, potentially, beneath them or simply not paying enough and, thus, women take them on.

The forms of violence against women from within the homes can be particularly damaging to them and can, in fact, lead to severe forms of damage, or even death, on any imaginable factor of her life. This is the important of dealing with violence against women, whether defined by patriarchal values or fundamentalist theology.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence against women – Paragraph 113(b)

How can violence against women impact communities?

December 1, 2018

113. The term “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Accordingly, violence against women encompasses but is not limited to the following:

b. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The coercion, intimidation, and violence that women face in their lives remain an important aspect of the abuse of women around the world in several ways, but these “several ways,” in fact, fit into a select set of categorizations.

The main ones listed in the international community are physical, psychological, and sexual violence against women. These forms come alongside a select set of other ones.

Some have not even been recognized throughout history, but now, we can see the increasing relevance of the reduction in the violence against women for the flourishing of communities.

Indeed, if we even posit a glancing examination of the ways in which women’s lives are impacted by gender-based violence, we can simultaneously see the immediate and long-term impacts on the health and wellness of women.

In addition to this, the forms of violence within the family or the home extends into the general community, into the public domains of the society. Recalling, of course, that, at the same time, these are forms of violence experienced around the world by women.

The explicit purpose is known in some circumstances and not in others, but the eventualities in the lives of women, certainly, is foreseeable, as the empirical would appear to be both the modern international and national statistics on the matter in addition to the historical record.

This can be enshrined in some of the deep traditions practiced over centuries and millennia including the religious. The questions of rape, sexual abuse, and so on, retain a particular import in the current Burkean-MeToo moment.

As she noted in a recently released TEDTalk, the MeToo is not a moment but a movement; similar with the solutions to these large-scale social ills, we have the increases in the conversations on the problem but, unfortunately, at times, lack the assertive and solutions-oriented perspective on it.

Following this, the communal and professional space harassment of women may not be completely reduced to anything. However, certainly, we can decrease the levels at which women experience inappropriate commentary or physical contact, or attempts at coerced interaction on the job, for instance.

The changes in the workplaces with specific policies and guidelines on appropriate and inappropriate professional conduct with company-specific codes of conduct can be an important part in this.

In addition, not only working conditions but the coerced into particular ‘labor’ markets of some women, we can see the ways in which women are continually taken into prostitution or sex work through coercion, often led by men who exploit their ‘labor.’

Women, in these and other circumstances, remain vulnerable to a wide variety of community-level, violence but also exploitation, as another form of violence against them.

But there are also the ways in which the gendered lens referenced throughout this document can provide the basis for a reframing of not only the problem as violence against women, in particular but also the solutions that may be proposed for this multiple problem.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence against women – Paragraph 113(c)

How are States implicated in violence against women?

December 7, 2018

113. The term “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Accordingly, violence against women encompasses but is not limited to the following:

c. Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The term “violence against women” comes with a few assumptions, often misrepresented or misunderstood: more often than not, the miscomprehending comes from the faulty representations.

The basis for violence against women remains the statistical higher probability of women throughout the world to experience trauma and violence by men to women and by women to women with the majority by men to women, where this creates an obvious tentative conclusion for an emphasis of international emphasis of the social resources of the international community: work to reduce violence against women and then this, in turn, will create a foundation upon which to work in a robust manner for the reduction in violence against women.

Here, the stipulation focuses on the activities of the State and its role in the perpetration, or perpetuation rather, and condoning of the general phenomenon of violence against women, including physical, psychological, and sexual violence against women as the first-blush general categories.

Carrying forth from this, we can see the further forms of violence against women in both “public and private life” in which they may subject to forms of state terror. This can be seen in the case of Decree 770 in Romania, where women were, indeed, commanded in a secular fashion to birth 4 children each.

In this, the state intervention into the lives of the world became an authoritarian and secular fundamentalism imposing itself on the bodies and reproductive lives of women, with, for example, the checking up once per month to see if the citizens, the female citizens, were doing their Decree 770 duty to the State.

These forms of violence against women form a basic juncture in the disproportionately negative treatment of women compared to men. We can see this, often, in economic inequalities, where the men harbor more financial independence while the women retain financial dependence, in part or completely, with the men in their lives.

It is, in this sense, the actions of the family, the community, and, as per this stipulation, the State can be forces for violence and repression against women around the world and throughout most of human history.

The current context of more identification, cataloging, analysis, and recommendation and implementation of solutions to the issue of violence against women remains an important not only moment, as Tarana Burke would state, but also a movement to be carried forth boldly and without compromise, as this is a clear evil with some easy solutions but many hard and long-term solutions ahead of us.

The basic premise of a more peaceful, just, and prosperous State comes from the recognition of the equality of women as well as the need to tackle problems disproportionately more thrust onto them needlessly compared to the men without too much regard for differences of regions in the world.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action 1(i)-(iii)

How can proper monitoring and assessment of neglect investigations help with the health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities in Canada?

December 9, 2018

Legacy

Child welfare

1. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care by:

- i. Monitoring and assessing neglect investigations.*
- ii. Providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside.*
- iii. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools.*

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission \(TRC\) Calls to Action \(2015\)](#)

The basic premise within this new series is the rights of the Indigenous communities throughout the world, starting within the Canadian context or Turtle Island more generally (“North America”), and then working on the implications of the responsibilities of the international community to the recognition of and upholding of the rights of the world’s Indigenous peoples.

The first document in the series will be the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with a focus on the actionables or the “Calls to Action.” Within the context of Canadian history, there is a fraught history, to say the least, of racism, warring, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and discontent, hatred, fear, and ignorance in the relations between Occidentals or Euro-Canadians and the Indigenous peoples, of which there are many.

Canada remains a complex society comprised of few people in comparison to the international or global population norms. Now, the context of Canadian society starts with colonialism and xenophobia connected to racism. “Race” is not a scientific category; rather, “species” is a scientific category. However, people believe race.

Ethnicity remains a heritage and sociocultural category. Thus, “ethnicity” and “species” become appropriate or proper in the description of the realities of the world, not “race”; hence, any argument becomes a pseudoscientific or pseudo-ethnographic discussion if based on “race.”

In this sense, “race” becomes true as a construct in the sense that people widely believe in it. It has widespread socioeconomic and cultural, and individual, impacts because of the truth of people believing in it. However, it’s not true because people believe in it. People can believe things widely and still harbor false beliefs, which implies widespread false beliefs about the world. While at the same time, false beliefs can create horrors throughout the histories of nations with impacts on specific populations following right into the present.

To clean the global conversation would require a transition from race discussions into ethnic and species discussions, the impacts of the ideas of race believed as true is seen throughout the racist history of Canadian society, from John A. MacDonald in explicit quotes – “savages” – and policies to slaves in New France – the first colony – to the last Residential school closing in 1996 over a century of operation with an estimated 150,000 Indigenous youth impacted, to the 60s (and other) scoops, and so on, into the derivatives with the current lower school performance, lower lifespans and worse healthspans, and higher suicide rates in Attawapiskat First Nation, and impacts of genocide of cultures and languages and the ongoing denial, implicitly, of the equal status of the socio-cultural narratives of the Indigenous in this country, especially insofar as suffering is part of life for many, including the Murdered and Missing Indigenous women stories.

This series will attempt, in its own minute way, work to present the asks or, more explicitly and assertive, “Calls to Action” of the Indigenous community within Canada of “North America” or Turtle Island. As noted by the prominent and prolific Cree author, Lee Maracle, the aim is all Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action being met – and in full, not 1 or 50 or 70: all of them.

The first call looks at the national to the local levels of analysis for working on the reduction of Aboriginal children inside of care. The first stipulation looks at the core aspect of cataloging and monitoring the neglect investigations. If children are neglected, their life prospects in the long term and health in the short-term can be deeply impacted by this. Our species has an unusually long rearing period.

The second stipulation looks into the adequate resources – nothing extraordinary or even simply above-average – for the Aboriginal communities within the nation in addition to the child-welfare organizations with the explicit purpose to keep the families intact for the health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal youth.

There should be, especially in the damped or darkened light of Canadian colonial history and violence and bigoted interaction with the Indigenous populations, taken within the context of a cultural sensitivity. Nothing sycophantic or pandering, but simple respect would be a decent start, probably, and a vast improvement from the past. It is a statement, the stipulation, about working with Aboriginal peoples and individuals where they feel comfortable rather than what seems most convenient to the Canadian government.

The last stipulation for today, and for getting this series off the ground, is the ensuring that social workers and others who are going about conducting the child-welfare investigations have been given, and have been ensured to have taken in, the proper education and training relevant to these populations of young people.

This is important for sensitively working within the context of the history and impacts of the residential schools in this country. However, and even more important, it fits within an overall new approach of sensitivity, compassion, working on their terms, and making sure that past does not happen again and the prior injustices are, inasmuch as this can be done, rectified. In short, it is looking at the Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples as fellow travelers in life, as human beings.

(Updated: December 7, 2018)

- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007)
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015)
- C169 – Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) (1989)

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women – Paragraph 114

How is violence against women a fundamental violation of the rights of women, especially in the extreme cases of armed conflict?

December 14, 2018

114. Other acts of violence against women include violation of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict, in particular murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

In paragraph 114 of the Beijing Declaration, we come to the inclusion of the violence against women in the phenomenon of armed conflict. This is a serious problem around the world. One of the big problems is the way in which the murder and rape have been forces of women's oppression for eons.

It goes back a long way, even being incorporated into purported divine holy texts with women seen as property, as purposed for the propagation of children – hopefully sons, and so on. The coercive and slave-based sexual history of much of the species reflects the oppression of women.

It is not that every individual woman is, by the necessity of being a woman, oppressed but, rather, the nature of the relations and structures within the society produce forms of inequality at the detriment of women.

Indeed, these can be the cases in which the women, in an armed conflict context, become tools of the conquerors to further humiliate and take over the defeated populations. The murder of women and children, as more often civilians, is one tragedy.

Others include the rape as a weapon of war. Rape as a means by which to subdue and control the subjugated population. Violence against women remains an important and vile aspect of human nature and human interpersonal relations. It is done; thus, it is a human capacity.

The systematic rape of women is something tackled in some of the work written on by us here, but also within the larger global conversation started in North America by Tarana Burke but had throughout world history too.

One of the contexts of this is the ways in which the conversation is had, then misrepresented or misunderstood, and, thus, obfuscated. But, in general, the proper message gets out and the public can begin to coordinate, share common experiences, and work to change the world for the better.

But, as most know, the consequences of rape can be pregnancy, which can be an enforced form of pregnancy. These are some of the real-life circumstances and contexts for the women of the world. It pervades the contexts or environments of war.

Women simply take this as a brunt, as civilians mind you, within the context of armed aggression between two groups or state powers. The “murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy” retain a sensitivity within the public conservation while, at the same time, having the

data to back up the import and prevalence undergirding the level of salience of the subject matter in any honest conversation about the sexual and other violence against women.

The questions for us moving forward related to the degree to which we continue to turn a blind eye to the derivative, or even sometimes direct, consequences and even intentions of war, violence, armed conflict and aggression around the world and the impacts on the lives of women.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women – Paragraph 115

How are reproductive health and violence against women linked to one another?

December 14, 2018

115. Acts of violence against women also include forced sterilization and forced abortion, coercive/forced use of contraceptives, female infanticide and prenatal sex selection.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The violent acts perpetrated on women remain an important source of the problems set forth in the world. These produce a form of trauma and long-term suffering and degeneracy within societies without remedial programs to try and correct the course that the bad actions have put forward into the future.

Violence against women retains its particular inherent problematic status with the ways in which women remain subject to physical, psychological, and sexual forms of violence. In particular, the forms that can be seen around reproductive health systems.

There has been a long and ignoble history in the world with the forced sterilization of women. There have also been the forced abortions of women. All in the service of the men, the family, the community, the religion, or the state, and often multiple of these referents at the same time.

The idea of women as fundamentally the property of the men in their lives remains one of the defining characteristics of the world in which we inhabit, where we can, if reading carefully or even not, the signifiers of the world around us or the religious texts in our midst the notion of women as lesser than or, in fact, property.

The modern contraceptives are part and parcel of the family planning movements of the world. But we can also see the pushback from several sectors and organizations throughout the world, too.

The coercive or forced use of contraceptives fails to see women as fully autonomous human beings worth equal consideration and rights, including the right to autonomy over their own body.

In addition, if we look at several cultures around the world, we can note the general reflection of the misogynistic impulse rather pervasive in the air – so to speak: simply reflect, observe, and analyze.

Cultures around the world and right into the present day harbor misogynistic aspects or facets to their cultures through the preference for sons to carry on the family honor and name and, thus, enact sex-selective infanticide.

This also connects to prenatal sex selection, where this amounts to a serious form of reduced status of women and girls as women and girls; they are not as useful to the overarching functionary roles assumed for them within the society and, therefore, get weeded out, in an

environmental forced choice, by parents and society in the form of female infanticide and prenatal sex selection.

This happens by the millions right into the current period, which means the idea of a post-sexist world is not true in the starker possible terms at the earliest stages of the life of a female. Most of the falsehoods will continue their march, but the truth will, more or less, remain and the rest will fall by the wayside in the end; the question for the current crop of individuals within this country and around the world is to query whether they want to be part of the move towards more equality or back towards the swamp of prejudice, bigotry towards and ownership of women whether through the force of the state or the whip of fundamentalist religion now.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action 1(iv)-(v)

How are proper training of social workers and cultural sensitivity important for Indigenous youth wellbeing?

December 15, 2018

Legacy

Child welfare

1. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care by:

iv. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing.
v. Requiring that all child-welfare decision makers consider the impact of the residential school experience on children and their caregivers.

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission \(TRC\) Calls to Action \(2015\)](#)

The welfare of the young remains an important aspect of the rights of children. But this becomes a point of special emphasis segments of the population that experience, trauma, and loss as a result explicit governmental and Christian policies enacted and implemented for explicit imposition on those populations.

Of course, the central sector of the population spoken of here is the Indigenous Canadian population. The Christian church, in general, has played an enormous and general role in the process of colonization and deliberate – and failed – attempts at extermination and genocide of the peoples and cultures of North America.

Now, the central thesis in these two further stipulations is the making sure that there is sufficient education of the social workers in order to be better equipped to work within the cross-cultural context.

This includes looking into some of the most sensitive situations or contexts for the social workers and the Indigenous communities within a historical context. The orientation here is not only acknowledgment but also the environment in which there can be healing.

Without the proper healing of the communities and the families, and the young, the intergenerational trauma from the impacts of colonization can continue and will advance and, potentially, become worse.

Another stipulation, (v), speaks to the ways in which the child-welfare decision makers should be taking into account the individual and collective experiences of the Indigenous or Aboriginal within Canada given the residential school systems.

These, only closing in 1996 and impacting tens of thousands of Indigenous people, should be acknowledged, taken into account, and used as part of the knowledge base about the Aboriginal communities within this country.

There is a deep wound in this country; this was inflicted mostly by the European settlers in the process of colonization. The basis for healing is acknowledgment and recognition of this fact followed by incorporation of this into efforts to mutually work on the healing of individuals, families, and communities within the Aboriginal context of North America.

The questions to bear in mind are the historical markers as the first point of contact, followed by the impact – negative – on the individuals who went through the traumatic experiences, and then the ways in which their trauma may leave them less capable as caregivers of the next generation and, therefore, leading the intergenerational trauma and negative outcomes for the young.

It was an imposed system based on tremendous amounts of dehumanizing activities, but it can also be a means by which to look at as something never to be done again and towards healing, and so on.

But the work needs to be done at several levels and throughout the nation.

(Updated: December 7, 2018)

- [The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP, 2007\)](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action \(2015\)](#)
- [C169 – Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 \(No. 169\) \(1989\)](#)

Paragraph 116 of the Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women

How are the slices of women impacted in different disproportionately negative ways in violence?

December 16, 2018

116. Some groups of women, such as women belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee women, women migrants, including women migrant workers, women in poverty living in rural or remote communities, destitute women, women in institutions or in detention, female children, women with disabilities, elderly women, displaced women, repatriated women, women living in poverty and women in situations of armed conflict, foreign occupation, wars of aggression, civil wars, terrorism, including hostage-taking, are also particularly vulnerable to violence.

[*Beijing Declaration* \(1995\)](#)

The central focus of the Beijing Declaration remains the rights and well-being of women. Women tend to be the disproportionately negatively impacted around the world and, thus, become the foci of so much international efforts and movements.

The violence against women simply extends this concern and emphasis on them as well. Here, we see the catalogue of the major sectors of women in most contexts in which I could imagine off the top, and, in fact, even more.

The situation for the women in most environments of the women pertain to violence inflicted on them or a friend, as the international data coming from the best sources – for example, the United Nations – postulates about 1/3 women being subject to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

Typically, though there may be some derivations from report to report, the definition of an intimate partner in these contexts is someone who is the husband or male sexual partner of the women. In other words, there is little in the way of wiggle-room for this particular definition.

Furthermore, the notion of partnership, including pair-bonded heterosexual marriage implied by the term husband, does not, in contradistinction to the arguments from several North American conservative commentators provide some magical barrier from abuse; in fact, it may be contributive or facilitative, as the men tend to harbour more of the financial and other forms of power and influence, which then become wielded over the individual women within these situations.

However, and even further, the notion may extend to other forms of couplings as well, where this can simply reject the notion of traditional courted mates and progressive derivations of such as a protection against abuse but, rather, the sufficient levels of control and power dynamics influence this more.

In that, a, not the, feminist lens can help in understanding some of the dynamics here. The interactions of the minority status of women around the world living in a variety of contexts

provide a lens into the disproportionately negative lives and experiences of women compared to the men.

Indeed, if we take the basic premise of the plight of women as simply worse, and if we look at the facts, so a biased framing, or, indeed, if we take the opposite with a full-breadth examination of the global trends and then formulate an opinion, it seems relatively obvious of the trends one would find around the world, where women disproportionately negatively bear the brunt of the violence in the world – especially with civilians and not combatants.

There has been an increase in the number of civilians murders by armed forces around the world, which implies the continued increased vulnerability of civilian casualties in war being women (and, in fact, children too). What we do from here is up to us, but the message seems relatively clear, the notion of women as not subject to more violence throughout history and right into the present harbors false ideas and, potentially, those conveniently propped up for convenience of the powerful.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women – Paragraph 117

How are acts or threats of violence leaving women around the world living lives of fear?

December 16, 2018

117. Acts or threats of violence, whether occurring within the home or in the community, or perpetrated or condoned by the State, instil fear and insecurity in women's lives and are obstacles to the achievement of equality and for development and peace. The fear of violence, including harassment, is a permanent constraint on the mobility of women and limits their access to resources and basic activities. High social, health and economic costs to the individual and society are associated with violence against women. Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. In many cases, violence against women and girls occurs in the family or within the home, where violence is often tolerated. The neglect, physical and sexual abuse, and rape of girl children and women by family members and other members of the household, as well as incidences of spousal and non-spousal abuse, often go unreported and are thus difficult to detect. Even when such violence is reported, there is often a failure to protect victims or punish perpetrators.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The 117th paragraph of the Beijing Declaration deals with a number of things. Some of these appear to include home, community, and notions of the state. The various forms of precarity that women feel is simply a long nightmare for too many.

The act of violence can have immediate impacts on women. It can have an impact on their lives, their trajectories. As we begining to see the pervasive abuse of women within even comedy circles, late-night television, Hollywood in general, and through the traditional religious institutions with sexual abuse by the Christian hierarchs or female genital mutilation by some of the international Muslim community.

These form one of the bases for women's perceived and actual precarious safety in life. But then, of course, there is also the threats of violence from the community, the families, and the government. In formal academic terminology, the ones dominated by men who then set laws and policies to the detriment of women would amount to patriarchies. Systems dominated by men with men setting the agendas. Similar things happened with the structural adjustment reforms with women not being in its considerations directly and then women being the disproportionately negative recipients.

This has little to do with the idealized world of abstraction but with the real world in which we live and women bear the brunt of negative aspects. The removal of these barriers to women's participation in social and political, and economic life.

The general global culture of women fearing for the livelihood and wellbeing is pervasive. We can consider the ways in which there is a constraint on the free mobility of women. This can, in turn, become a barrier to women's "access to resources and basic activities."

In addition, not only with different clothes or feminine hygiene products, we can see the issues with higher health and other economic costs for women, who already tend to be given lower wages.

At the same time, the individual and societal costs of this can ripple for a significant period of time, even intergenerationally. One of those is the violence against women being more probable when the woman or women are placed in an inferior or "subordinate" status compared to the men in the society around them.

As well, there is simply an ignoring of these problems because may not have the safety of ability to freely speak up about injustices against them, individually or as a demographic within societies.

Take the instance mentioned, the women who are victims; they may not be able to get support and the abusers or perpetrators of the violence against women crime may simply not get a trial or a significant punishment – a "slap on the wrist."

These are the issues facing us. But the long tide of history simply sits in our favor compared to the opposite, where further freedom and equality is clarion call of society; but not handed from on high, it comes from long, persistent struggles and fights against injustices around the world with violence against one being a particularly large social health problem.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women – Paragraph 118

How are unequal power relations an important factor in the deprivation of the rights of women?

December 17, 2018

119. Developing a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to the challenging task of promoting families, communities and States that are free of violence against women is necessary and achievable. Equality, partnership between women and men and respect for human dignity must permeate all stages of the socialization process. Educational systems should promote self-respect, mutual respect, and cooperation between women and men.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

In the Beijing Declaration, the general view is of the human rights violations and implementations, or lack thereof, with an emphasis on the human rights of women, as these tend to be the most violated around the world.

In fact, if we look into the differentials of the power relations between men and women, there is a general trend for men to behave as if women are lesser than them.

That is to say, any form of intrinsic misogyny bound to the idea of women somehow requiring the permission of men to do some basic activities in life, whether to freely move, to acquire an education, or to work and be gainfully employed.

But this is the general trend. One of the largest social ills still plaguing most societies, and to different degrees, is the violation of the rights of women.

As noted in the extensive paragraph, we can note the historical perspective within a gendered lens. The ways in which gender, in history, has played a major factor in the violation of the rights of women, or the abuse of women as persons – or, perhaps, the view of women as non-persons.

Men have domineered and discriminated against women as a general rule. There seems to be a modern set of movements, mostly in the advanced industrial economies, to attempt to whitewash and denude the truth of this.

But the plain fact is women were property, if that, throughout much of history and this was enshrined in the world's 'great' religions. Women were intended to be secondary or adjunct to the purposes and the lives of men. This is the history of women's struggle to free themselves from the oppressive grips of the powerful.

It takes a strong propaganda system to work to misinform the public and ignore these trends throughout the history of the world. Of course, this is an even more poignant message for women of color in much of the world too, including the colonial, or even especially in the colonial, powers.

There are cultural patterns around the world still present amount to "certain traditional or customary practices" that oppress women in a variety of ways.

These can be linked to various forms of lowering women's status explicitly or implicitly within the society, including in the "family, the workplace, the community and society."

But then there is also the view of modern societies with the legal provisions but the lack of political will to push these laws. It is a particularly low, abhorrent, and barbaric form of an act to violate another human being to the point of stealing their humanity or dehumanizing them.

This, right into the present, prevents women's full participation in society and their complete empowerment. Similar to those who deny the facts of evolution the facts of anthropogenic climate change, the facts continental drift and plate tectonics, and so on, the denial of the facts of violence against women as a disproportionately negative life experience for a significant minority of women remains within the same category.

There are a variety of social pressures that can make the impacts of violence against women even worse with, for example, the inability to comfortably come forward and report the experiences of women.

We can find this bursting onto the scene with some movements including the #MeToo movement. The force, power, and import of the movement reflects the failure of the social and legal measures to properly provide recourse for women victims, and to then, by implication, permit the criminals to run on their rather grotesque ways.

No aid, no protection, few legal recourses, shame for having been sexually assaulted or abused, a lack of willingness on the part of the leadership to reform laws to defend victims, and the poor responsiveness of the law enforcement to the legitimate grievances of the women within the society, this all compounded with the lack of education the subject.

There are individuals and movements who probably know better spreading malicious and false information to the public against the widespread international data, which shows women as the disproportionately negative recipients of violence against them.

It is a perpetual search for the ways in which women can garner some recourse for the violence against them and then change the socio-cultural discourse; one which, in essence, amounts to a humanistic, human rights oriented, and a feminist discourse on the nature of the relations between the sexes, where the seldom has been clear-cut indications of the long-term equality of women in society at all or even most levels.

Then we can come to the media representations of rape or sexual assault of women; there is a deep responsibility of the popular media to work harder in their depictions of violence against women and the on-screen reactions of violence against women. All of these impact the ways in which violence against women is received in society.

Take this one step further, we know the intergenerational impacts of this on women. But even further than that, the child and the young are watching this, and the violence against women impacts those who tend to the disproportionate burden-carriers of the care of the women, which is women.

Thus, we remain left with the general view of violence against women as a problem at several levels of analysis with immediate and long-term impacts and, therefore, the need for immediate

and long-term plans for remediation and eventual elimination, as per the efforts of the United Nations, in part, and other world actors.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women – Paragraph 119

How can a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to the rights of women help with the maintenance of the human rights of women?

December 17, 2018

119. Developing a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to the challenging task of promoting families, communities and States that are free of violence against women is necessary and achievable. Equality, partnership between women and men and respect for human dignity must permeate all stages of the socialization process. Educational systems should promote self-respect, mutual respect, and cooperation between women and men.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

In the work to reduce the levels of violence against women, some of the important factors to keep in mind are 1) the problem is multifaceted and 2) there continues to be work to reduce the level of violence against women on a variety of levels.

If we look into the ways in which there are the multi-causal pathways and thoroughly positively correlated effects throughout the statistics on violence against women, we can see the need to work on promoting families and communities without violence against women, but we also may want to reflect on the ways in which a state where women are “free of violence” is a hard slog.

It is going to take a significant amount of time, but it should not take forever and, technically, could be, in theory, one generation away. Our families, communities, and various states are important actors in the prevention and eventual elimination of violence against women.

The questions become about in what ways and how much. But there are also issues to do with the ways equality can play an important role in this.

In that, as has been noted, women tend to be disproportionately lacking in finances and, thus, economic independence. Most of the structures enforced in societies and reinforced in familial and communal, and even state manufactured, values present a patriarchal family structure.

One in which men are unquestioned and the violence they potentially mete out to women in their lives is something that they simply must take. But there is also the angle of the ways in which various systems and anchors of influence within the society prevent women from being able to freely speak out against the violence inflicted on them, or simply the fear of it.

The notions or the ideals within the global community, or those participating in it, reflect the ideas of respect for human dignity. The argument here is for a ‘permeation’ at “all stages of the socialization process” for human dignity and respect, typically, given mainly to men, especially those with more powerful and influential, and extending those to women as well.

The educational system can be an important force in the increased equality and the mindset concomitant with further “self-respect, mutual respect, an cooperation between women and men” necessary for the future desired by most inherent in a more equal and just societal system.

But, of course, this will not come without difficulties or individuals who may, actively and vociferously, argue against equality of the sexes based on entrenched forms of privileges and influence, or simply misunderstandings about what these changes imply; however, apart from those ideologues, the basic claims of gender equality are desired by much of the international community and can be seen enshrined within the Sustainable Development Goals.

Paragraph 120: Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women

How are lack of gender dis-aggregated data harming the development of programs for violence against women?

December 19, 2018

120. The absence of adequate gender-disaggregated data and statistics on the incidence of violence makes the elaboration of programmes and monitoring of changes difficult. Lack of or inadequate documentation and research on domestic violence, sexual harassment and violence against women and girls in private and in public, including the workplace, impede efforts to design specific intervention strategies. Experience in a number of countries shows that women and men can be mobilized to overcome violence in all its forms and that effective public measures can be taken to address both the causes and the consequences of violence. Men's groups mobilizing against gender violence are necessary allies for change.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The ability to parse information and delineate what is happening to different sectors of a society, in societies or even in the global community, can limit the programs, initiatives, and movements intended to change the social and economic inequalities of the world.

We can find this in the violence against women statistics, in part. The problem arises through the ways in which there is a continual onslaught against the public through imposed ignorance, via the shutdown of data gathering mechanisms that compile information on behalf of the public or the general good.

For example, without dis-aggregated data – info not cut up into groups, the violence against women statistics can be, in essence, black boxes. Those that do not have clear-cut answers as to the levels of violence against women, the forms of violence against women, the severity per forms of violence against women, and the ones women are more often subject to, and the comparison of the aforementioned with the men in societies.

This brings the notion or proposal, really, of the gender-disaggregated data as an important hallmark of what we might consider more equal societies. Those that take care and concern for the wellbeing of women seriously.

With the proper data, the elaboration and monitoring can be done more easily or with fewer consequences. Now, we can have more documentation, where solid data comes from the United Nations, the World Health Organization, rights groups, and national statistics. More documentation on violence against women in order to develop national and international action plans.

Without the data on domestic violence, sexual harassment, and violence against women and girls, our social and cultural dialogue, legal responsiveness, and national and international plans of action can be bereft of their full flowering of effect.

Of course, there are explicit efforts to prevent the work for more equality. This is known; this is done covertly, or overtly. But the important work of going about reducing and eventually eliminating violence against women remains part of the powerful waves of history marking the progression from terrible conditions for women to more and more equal status for women and girls.

Good data, robust analysis, and then the development and implementation of national and international plans of action in line with these efforts is important for the reduction and eventual elimination against women, the social movements, including MeToo and associated collective social actions, can work to build coalitions between communities and nations for the health and wellness of women, families, and societies.

Men's groups can help with the mobilization as well, as noted, but, likely, only in coalition with many other collectives.

Paragraph 121 of the Beijing Platform for Action

How are women more vulnerable to violence in conflict and non-conflict contexts?

December 19, 2018

121. Women may be vulnerable to violence perpetrated by persons in positions of authority in both conflict and non-conflict situations. Training of all officials in humanitarian and human rights law and the punishment of perpetrators of violent acts against women would help to ensure that such violence does not take place at the hands of public officials in whom women should be able to place trust, including police and prison officials and security forces.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

Paragraph 121 of the Beijing Declaration deals even further with violence against women in conflict and non-conflict contexts. When we look into the variety of situations in which there is violence forced on women, it can be in both of the aforementioned contexts.

Within a humanitarian frame, one disturbing trend is the increase of the civilian casualties from war, as a proportion of victims. In fact, the majority of the civilian casualties in war are women and children.

In either case, whether in a civil environment or a war context, women will be more likely to be subject, as non-combatants, to the impacts of war. The emphasis here, even as far back as 1995, is to work for proper training of the humanitarian and other officials in both “humanitarian and human rights law.”

The knowledge of this can provide a modicum of backdrop into the rights and potential rights violations involved around violence against women. It can also provide some information as to what the appropriate level and kind of punishment are both considered requisite and proportional to the crime.

The idea is to ensure, inasmuch as is possible in each specific locale, the lack of violence by public officials against women, especially those in whom “women should be able to place trust.” This means the law enforcement or prison officials.

To the degree that this happens, we are moving to one systematic reduction in the degree to which there is lessened violence against women.

Gissou Nia on Human Rights and Leadership

What are the things to keep in mind as an aspiring woman in leadership? How are girls restricted in education around the world?

December 20, 2018

Ms. Gissou Nia is the Board Chair of the [Iran Human Rights Documentation Center](#) and the Strategy Director of [Purpose](#). Here we talk about human rights and leadership.

When I started the conversation, we focused on the human rights work and positions of leadership of Gissou. In particular, the potential takeaways for women with want to pursue human rights work based on her experience.

Nia spoke to human rights interests probably being based on personal experiences. Where if some things happened in a different way for her, she may have acquired different interests to channel her talents.

“Being keenly aware of that, and seeing my peers who some came from similar conditions or culture, things could have gone differently for me. That was a driving force motivating me to pursue that work,” Nia stated.

The personal connection is more important than the pay grade of the work, where the “monetary incentive” simply is not the main reason to enter into the work. It is about making an impact in the lives of others. Of those people in those impact-sector positions, Nia noted the legal qualifications commonly found in the backgrounds of the individuals in them.

She remarked on the variations in the qualifications, though, while also reiterating the J.D. credential as a prominent trend. This became a motivation to enter law school and to acquire the appropriate skills to create a “serious body of work.”

In terms of the advice to others, Nia stated, “I would say to focus on the things that personally move them and to make sure they have a serious body of work or research to show that they have expertise in an area. I think it is tempting, in the current environment, that has cropped up over the past 5 years to be in this place of personal branding and looking to being very active in terms of sharing things on social media or having an opinion but without necessarily doing the really deep work that would credibly inform that opinion or would come from a place of substance.”

Nia thinks there needs to be more of the substantive presentation of opinions and information rather than the uninformed and the superficial. We began to speak about some of the gender-selected educational statuses around the globe with, typically, more investment in the boys than in the girls.

“If there is a family with 5 children and only a few of the children can go to school because there are only the monetary resources for 2 or 3 of those children to go to school,” Nia explained, “in many countries, the boys would be seen as the ones to go to school because they are going to be seen as breadwinners and the people that the family should be most invest in as they will carry the family name.”

The issue, then, is working to overcome the inherent bias of family and culture for boys and against girls. Where this is regarded as an important part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals now, for the empowerment of women and girls, education is crucial for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls.

Nia said, “Of course, education changes everything. We see a direct connection between lower rates of child marriage, lower rates of child and teen pregnancy, and higher education rates for women and girls. There is the statistical evidence to show that it is important.”

In terms of the anecdote for Nia’s life, she saw the difference in quality schooling on her life, personal interests, and, indeed, options for her life. I remarked on the other sociocultural barriers for women and women of color, and women in developing countries.

Nia noted the ways in which, one way or another, girls and women can miss out on education. These gaps in education could come about via the death of a parent and then taking on the tasks and responsibilities of the parent for the other siblings, as the eldest daughter, for example.

“You often see women, girls, or adolescent girls are shouldering the parenting responsibilities. This is something that can happen in situations of conflict where there has been a natural disaster or in challenging circumstances involving health and the loss of a parent,” Nia explained, “Other things are the factors that I mentioned such as early marriage. Once a girl is married off, it is unlikely that she will be continuing her education. If she falls pregnant, it is unlikely that she will be continuing her education.”

Nia noted something rather astonishing. Even in the United States, teen pregnancy can be a huge issue. It’s a global problem. But it can impact even some of the richest nations in the world. Then there are factors, Nia described, in the restrictions of girls to have primary education. Something like 15 million girls will never enter a classroom compared to 10 million boys.

That is a gross disparity. She made a distinct point: no one should miss schooling. However, the disparity is the real issue. Nia said some of the issues may be menstruation and then cultural taboos around it. Girls not being able to interact with others during their periods, and so on.

Nia concluded, “She would also not be able to go to school during those days. There is a lot of awareness built around that. There are a lot of programs specifically directed at improving access for girls, but that is something very front of mind and was informing what I was saying at the beginning. I am lucky in a global sense to have those opportunities.”

Waleed Al-Husseini on 2019 for the Council of Ex-Muslims of France

What does 2019 potentially hold for French ex-Muslims?

December 20, 2018

Waleed Al-Husseini founded the Council of Ex-Muslims of France. He escaped from the Palestinian Authority to Jordan and then to France, after torture and imprisonment in Palestine. He is an ex-Muslim and an atheist.

I started the conversation for this session by asking about the prospects for increased secularization in France, especially as he founded the Council of Ex-Muslims of France.

It is important to keep some of these activities in mind as secularism is something not only protects the citizens from religious encroachment but also protects some citizens more who tend to be vulnerable within the context of religious threats, including death threats.

Al-Husseini stated, “Our secularism is dangerous in 2019. We are losing. They were talking about reforming the law of 1905 at this time. I don’t agree with doing this now. Because they are doing this bless Muslims and Islamists, and let more Islamic values into society. To be more clear, I’m with reforming it to go forward not backward, like what they will do now. I want to keep all religions and religious values out of public life. That’s why our fight now should not let this happen. We should stand up against it and show the dangers of this.”

Then I asked about the robustness of the ex-Muslim network in France. Al-Husseini noted the strength of it. That they continue to stand for their secular and areligious values within France.

He wants to point to the dangers of Islamism or political Islam. It has been a bane in the work of the ex-Muslim community, especially as there are open death threats against them. In addition, it can prevent furtherance of secular values within Europe as a whole.

Al-Husseini stated, “... for ex-Muslims we still follow some cases in Arabic countries who face ‘justice’ for blasphemy. In France, we still meet to support each other and to not feel alone in this belief and kind of discussion about the situations in Islamic countries.”

Then I asked about the channels for ex-Muslims to be able to challenge religious fundamentalisms and then find some asylum within nations around the world. He noted that there aren’t really channel and the work of the Council of Ex-Muslims of France can be simply to contact various human rights organizations in order to provide ex-Muslims with their rights.

“We just give the testimony to be acceptable of asylum,” Al-Husseini noted, “That’s the maximum that we can do: the testimony for the time being. To fight fundamentalists, it will require more, especially working with other organizations and publishing articles in the name of all of us to face the dangers of Islamism.”

Now, the Council of Ex-Muslims of France and others reach out to the media to change the thinking of more people, in order to understand the threat with greater clarity. I asked about some of the prominent anti-ex-Muslim figureheads in France and things being done about them.

“The most anti-ex-Muslim groups in France are these Islamist organizations who just attack us. It is an injustice all the time. They try to make us stop talking. There a lot of these types of organizations. Also, we don’t forget the Far Left who attack us in the name of racism: imagine that,” Al-Husseini stated.

But he also pointed to the serious danger of, literally, ordinary Muslims attacking them because they’re ex-Muslims. He noted the complex nature of the situation there.

Then I asked what the government is doing, the work to protect a vulnerable minority within a minority, or ex-Muslims. Al-Husseini stated that the situation is complicated and, in fact, is limited, especially with the recent events around yellow jackets and other, as the government simply has a lot on its hands now (the Government of France).

He concluded, “The government has a lot of things on their hands, but they can arrest the individuals who call for killing us and killing others like us. However, you can see how things are complicated even with terrorists’ attacks.”

Beijing Platform for Action: Paragraph 122

How can effective suppression of the trafficking of women improve their lives and livelihoods?

December 21, 2018

122. The effective suppression of trafficking in women and girls for the sex trade is a matter of pressing international concern. Implementation of the 1949 [Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others](#),/20 as well as other relevant instruments, needs to be reviewed and strengthened. The use of women in international prostitution and trafficking networks has become a major focus of international organized crime. The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, who has explored these acts as an additional cause of the violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, is invited to address, within her mandate and as a matter of urgency, the issue of international trafficking for the purposes of the sex trade, as well as the issues of forced prostitution, rape, sexual abuse and sex tourism. Women and girls who are victims of this international trade are at an increased risk of further violence, as well as unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection, including infection with HIV/AIDS.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The sexual trafficking of women and girls can be a serious issue needing dealing with a conscious set of identifications, analysis of the data, and implementation of counter-action plans.

Throughout the world, the continual criminal activity around sex trafficking has been disproportionately negative for women compared to other groups. There is a reference to a 1949 international rights document.

But this may not seem necessary, as we can consider simply the largest market of the pornographication of the imagination. It's mostly men. This reflects a long-term historical trend of the sexualization and objectification of women.

The question before us: is it appropriate in civilized and modern society at large, as a norm? We can ask women; we can report the real experiences of women. The public can have a vote on this if they so choose. Then this sensibility can be extended into international human rights work to protect women from sexual violence via sexual trafficking.

The effective suppression mentioned can seem vague, but the statement does not necessarily have to be vague. The tackling of the networks that entrap young women into destitute lives caught in sex trafficking, permitting them to be vulnerable to all forms of violence typical of violence against women and bound to some of the standard contexts with financial entrapment.

Women without financial independence can be caught in the loop of sexual trafficking far more easily. This is an incredibly important factor in most other violence against women contexts with even intimate partners, i.e., husbands or male sexual partners.

Not only violations of the rights of women, but sexual violence committed against women can also come with STIs and STDs, potentially. As per some of the concerns from the previous

documents, HIV/AIDS can leave women stuck with sexual diseases that will likely kill them, assist in early death, or leave them with lower quality of life compared if they did not have them – apart from the psychological trauma of those who have experienced sexual trafficking.

Similar with 1995, there should be continued diligence and urgency about the rights of women and the violation of the rights of women in these contexts, as women may simply be more probable to be subject to sexual diseases and unwanted pregnancies with what amounts to conditions of rape.

Beijing Platform for Action, Paragraph 123 on Violence Against Women

How can addressing violence against women via active and visible policy help with its reduction and eventual elimination?

December 21, 2018

123. In addressing violence against women, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken an analysis may be made of their effects on women and men, respectively.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The Beijing Declaration continues to provide insights into the phenomenon of violence against women and, in particular, the itemization of ways in which to catalog and deal with it, as provided by the international community.

Governments and other relevant actors become the emphasis or the scale of the suggested solutions here. If we look into the ways in which the, by analogy, structural adjustment programs did not include women in the considerations of the international community, and the ways this led to more horrors in making these social and economic transitions for women compared to men.

We can then also reflect on the negligence of much policy in the incorporation of a gendered lens. That is to say, there should be a focus on the ways that women tend to get a worse straw or stick in the global lottery of life, in time, in space, and in culture.

Women around the world tend to have a harder time and more barriers; in this sense, men tend to swim in water while women seem to swim in the muck of molasses to travel through this ordeal called life.

The mainstreaming of a gendered perspective can be an important part of the inclusion of women into the global conversation of rights, in particular, their own, and the ways in which violent acts tend to impact them more, including even in contexts of civilians caught in the crossfires of military actions and events.

With policies and programs set out for the benefit of the international community, one problem can be found in the forms of them oriented within the concerns more often afflicting women.

In this specific context, we're speaking about the majority of violence in multiple spheres impacting women more, more brutally, and more consistently around the world as a cross-cultural phenomena, probably ranging from 1 in 5 to 2 in 5 women, dependent on region, experiencing some form of violence against them in their lifetime, e.g., sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner.

An analysis and set of policy recommendation set forth with the women of the world as the core concern would set the gendered lens within policy and programs as more viable, concrete, and, hopefully, less bound by dogmas of non-gendered lenses of prior policies and programs.

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Paragraph 124(a)-(c) on Violence Against Women Through the Beijing Platform for Action

How can the condemning of violence against women, in contradistinction to cynics, improve the lot of women?

January 6, 2019

Strategic objective D.1.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

Actions to be taken

124. By Governments:

- *Condemn violence against women and refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination as set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women;*
- *Refrain from engaging in violence against women and exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons;*
- *Enact and/or reinforce penal, civil, labour and administrative sanctions in domestic legislation to punish and redress the wrongs done to women and girls who are subjected to any form of violence, whether in the home, the workplace, the community or society;*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The ways in which violence against women becomes enshrined probably emerges from both social sanction, higher aggression in the males of our species, and the sociological interpretation of entitlement of men to engage in overt acts of violence against women based on some slight to the man's core masculine identity.

Any condemnation of this entitlement, as per the calls of the Beijing Declaration, can be important in a first reaction, first-response preventative, to the overwhelming violence against women around the world. But also, we can examine the ways in which women remain are kept down through the excuses of tradition and religion within societies.

Indeed, we can see the religious injunctions in the language and the forms of misrepresentation of women throughout societies. It can be for the noblest or ignoblest of reasons, but it results in the same forms of explicit, and often tacit as well, discrimination against women.

The reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women become important movements connected to these early stipulations of paragraph 124. If we continue this into section (b), it follows from the condemnation of acts of violence against women with the refraining from engagement in it.

This amounts to more of an individual and state dual-level moral stipulation about the need to use due caution in cases of violence against women for the benefit of the wellness and health of

the women. If we look at the instances of the false accusations, such as the American case of *Rolling Stone*, we can see the need to bear in mind some estimates state 2-10% of the claims of rape are false, with the FBI finding of 8%.

That is to say, in the cases of some of the most severe forms of violence against women, most claims are true – over 9 out of 10, according to the FBI. The national legislation should reflect this in addition to the severity of the situations involving the violence against women. This includes “due diligence” in investigations for proper justice and prevention, so this does not happen as much.

From the levels of “penal, civil, labour and administrative sanctions,” violence against women as a global social health problem; mostly, men imposing on women. The purpose of the invocation of all these levels of societies is to prevent, treat, and create a just reaction to and preventative framework for instances – very common – of violence against women.

Punishment for wrongs and comprehensive frameworks for prevention into the future. These remain important aspects of the work to reduce and eventually eliminate violence against women, whether “in the home, the workplace, the community or the society.”

Paragraph 124(d)-(f) of the Beijing Platform for Action

How can proper review, analyse, and recommendation work to eliminate violence against women?

January 6, 2019

Strategic objective D.1.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

Actions to be taken

124. By Governments:

d. Adopt and/or implement and periodically review and analyse legislation to ensure its effectiveness in eliminating violence against women, emphasizing the prevention of violence and the prosecution of offenders; take measures to ensure the protection of women subjected to violence, access to just and effective remedies, including compensation and indemnification and healing of victims, and rehabilitation of perpetrators;

e. Work actively to ratify and/or implement international human rights norms and instruments as they relate to violence against women, including those contained in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#),²¹ the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#),¹³ the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#),¹³ and the [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#);²²

*f. Implement the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#), taking into account general recommendation 19, adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its eleventh session;*²³

Beijing Declaration (1995)

Where the rights of women are violated, then, in many instances, we can predict proportional violence against the autonomy and bodily safety of women within the sub-population in question. Without a doubt, akin to the findings of evolution by natural selection and of the anthropogenic global warming ongoing since the Industrial Revolution, violence against women remains a perennial social and public health problem more often inflicted on women by men.

These are the need to catalog and categorize the things done to women, as important as finding out the metrics of harm done to men on harsher worksites in order to prevent and lower the levels of injury and death. There is a distinct need to work on analyzing said data, reviewing it, and then using this information to improve the situation for so many men and women around the world.

As women tend more to be the victims of violence against women, there, certainly, is the need to bring about a better understanding of the rights of women and the ways in which violence against them violates their rights as human beings. A proper review and analysis process can be a genuine means by which to work on the reduction of rather vile acts against women.

But if we look further into this, not only as to the data collection and analysis of the offender rates and victim types, the appropriate remedies can be catalogued and oriented within the framework of understanding or comprehending the world, which is the important or most salient here; even with the piddling or rather, likely, marginal provision of resources – outside of the grand rhetoric – towards solving this problem, or set of them, the solutions will be akin to a Swiss Army Knife approach, in which the raped woman, the battered woman, the financially coerced woman, and so on, each are given a specific means out of an abusive situation.

To the men with concerns about the males of the species, this can also apply to them when these do happen to them, as the solutions, quite probably, have an overlap and, by implication, an overlap within the context of both problems and solutions. We can take examples of far more men dying and being injured in their physical labor; as women enter more of the lower-wage, harsher jobs, the more the statistics will decrease as a male-dominated phenomenon, as well as the increase in respect for fundamental rights and labour laws will provide a context in which men's and women's livelihoods will be more respected, whether in the sweatshops of China or the construction sites of America.

Any work to ratify, sign, and implement the rights enshrined in the listed documents, and many others, will become an important aspect of the basic ideational stances of the international community and the Hippocratic notion of “do no harm.” Respect for the rights and wellness, and health, of those, typically, among the least among us. This comes to the violence against women statistics with 1/3 women, which is a substantial minority, experiencing some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes; this implies a substantial majority of women do not and a substantial majority of men do not inflict it, as an important caveat.

The calls for ratification and recognition of these substantial and important international rights, and women's rights, in particular, documents is an incredible part of the beginning waves for equality. Without them, the world of rights for all but the richest would be rather dismal, akin to the times of only the Divine Right of Kings being in place. From these, there can a direct line of data collection, analysis, production of recommendations, and so on, oriented within the international rights frameworks signed, ratified, and implemented.

Paragraph 124(i)-(k) of the Beijing Platform for Action

What remain key to the enactment and enforcement of legislation to protect women from violence against them, in all forms?

January 10, 2019

Strategic objective D.1.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

Actions to be taken

124. By Governments:

- i. Enact and enforce legislation against the perpetrators of practices and acts of violence against women, such as female genital mutilation, female infanticide, prenatal sex selection and dowry-related violence, and give vigorous support to the efforts of non-governmental and community organizations to eliminate such practices;*
- j. Formulate and implement, at all appropriate levels, plans of action to eliminate violence against women;*
- k. Adopt all appropriate measures, especially in the field of education, to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, and to eliminate prejudices, customary practices and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes and on stereotyped roles for men and women;*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The Beijing Declaration deals quite frankly and directly, though in academic and rights garb, with the serious global social and legal issue of violence against women in addition to the fallouts around it.

For examples listed above, we can take into account the basic facts of tens of millions of women undergoing female genital mutilation. The nature of cultural institutions dictating the preference for sons over daughters and, thus, the need to kill a female child over a male child because of the chance to carry on the family name more, within the context of the culture, through the sons rather than the daughters.

This extends right into the “prenatal sex selection,” which simply builds into this general line of argument against or analysis of the sex preference for boys and, thus, bias against girls. The formulation of laws and enforcement of them against these violations against the autonomy and the bodily integrity of women must be put in place, firmly.

With setting in place the plans and then enacting them “at all levels,” including legal, administrative, political, educational, and so on, the work to reduce violence against women in its systemic form can begin to take some shape.

Akin to the need to teach the sciences, to fund scientific enterprises at a national level, to alleviate and mitigate the anthropogenic climate crisis, to instill universal human values within

normal human empathic and bonding sentiments, it needs to be done all at once; these approaches require pervasive administrative efforts and intensive funding linked to long-term implementation to become effective.

All these “appropriate measures” connected to the relations between the sexes can only become implemented with sufficient political will, sociocultural approval, and financial backing for the known-to-work and more experimental programs and initiatives currently on offer to solve this global problem.

It is and never has been about superiority or inferiority of men or women but about the equal treatment of them in order to reduce the stereotypes each experience throughout their lives and, in this particular section, the reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women Paragraph 124(l)-(n)

How can stronger institutional mechanisms improve the rights of women regarding violence against them?

January 15, 2019

Strategic objective D.1.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

Actions to be taken

124. By Governments:

- l. Create or strengthen institutional mechanisms so that women and girls can report acts of violence against them in a safe and confidential environment, free from the fear of penalties or retaliation, and file charges;*
- m. Ensure that women with disabilities have access to information and services in the field of violence against women;*
- n. Create, improve or develop as appropriate, and fund the training programmes for judicial, legal, medical, social, educational and police and immigrant personnel, in order to avoid the abuse of power leading to violence against women and sensitize such personnel to the nature of gender-based acts and threats of violence so that fair treatment of female victims can be assured;*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The Beijing Declaration deals with a substantial amount of material. But it also manages the presentation with specific sections. This particular set of paragraphs looks into the aspects of violence against women.

In these cases, the emphasis in 124(l) is either the strengthening of the gaps for women in terms of the institutional mechanisms available to them over the ability of women and girls to report violence against them to the appropriate authorities.

Within this context, we can see the general perspective of the need for a “safe and confidential environment” devoid of coercion or standard coercive techniques related to the fear of potential retribution for coming out about the abuse of the woman.

Then with this respect for the accuser, there can be a proper process, if found to be a legitimate charge, for the filing of charges against the individual who committed the act of violence against women. All parties deserve respect these conditions and, thus, require respect for due process while also taking into account the prior data; that is to say, if we take the rape statistics within the United States, after review of several cases, and in one set of research by the Home Office of the United Kingdom, only 8% of rape allegations turn out false or, more accurately, unfounded.

This makes the probability scales much different in terms of the overall framework of the accused and accuser. It does not set about a guilty soul, but, insofar as the data and not some

whimsical vengeance narrative tells us, it seems rather clear and almost stark as to the nature of violence against women with, in this case, only 8% of rape cases as unfounded.

This next line focuses on women with disabilities, where the nature of a life of a person is more difficult than most other peoples; however, this fact of disability does not reduce the value and the seriousness of a rape allegation.

In fact, as we can see in one of the grotesque stories coming out of the news, we can see the ways in which a woman without consent but disabled – i.e., an unconscious woman – was impregnated while in a coma and then gave birth, also in a coma. Obviously, the moral consideration here is independent of disability; the ethical non-quandary comes from the violence against a woman in a vulnerable state.

Information and access to conscious women who also have disabilities is important and does not reduce in any way the severity – or should not – of the situation; nonetheless, we can see the general tenor of the sentence: dry, factual, but supportive. Information or data and services, whether initiatives or programs, for women with disabilities to know about violence against women.

One of, on an individual basis certainly, the lowest crimes possible. The last section of this particular set of stipulations works within the framework training programmes at all levels of the society without respect to a particular focus. Literally, the focus becomes “judicial, legal, medical, social, educational and police and immigrant personnel” within societies and organizations.

Those pieces of training, as we have seen in other contexts, are an explicit effort to reduce and eventually eliminate the level of violence against women. The nature of hierarchical structures does imply, by their nature, power imbalances; power imbalances, without the appropriate checks and balances, that can be abused, whether by Christians against Indigenous populations, whites against minorities, or men against women, where the long history of much of the world reflects these truths coming through narratives or stories.

They do not need to be the future. There can be a healthier path. But it will require concerted efforts in line with some of the stipulations above-mentioned. It is providing a basis for awareness of all parties as to what is and is not acceptable, and then knowing how to deal with it in a strict procedural and respectful manner, and then having the mechanisms in place to do it.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women Paragraph 124(o)-(q)

Why are laws an important aspect of the reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women?

January 26, 2019

Strategic objective D.1.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

Actions to be taken

124. By Governments:

- o. Adopt laws, where necessary, and reinforce existing laws that punish police, security forces or any other agents of the State who engage in acts of violence against women in the course of the performance of their duties; review existing legislation and take effective measures against the perpetrators of such violence;*
- p. Allocate adequate resources within the government budget and mobilize community resources for activities related to the elimination of violence against women, including resources for the implementation of plans of action at all appropriate levels;*
- q. Include in reports submitted in accordance with the provisions of relevant United Nations human rights instruments, information pertaining to violence against women and measures taken to implement the [Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women](#);*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

Inasmuch as there are rights, then there are rights violations, as the idealized notion of every human being as fundamentally deserving of the same rights and freedoms will become violated to some extent, in different ways and to various degrees; this leads, in some small ways, to profound derivations, from purely rationalistic concerns, about the nature of the treatment of other human beings with an idealized set of abstract ethical nails-in-wood, human rights, in the real world: different nails will be hammered softly for some, hard for others, and still not at all for even another set of people.

Rights for women are new. Women, for much of the historical record, can, insofar as we can tell and broadly speaking, be considered property – of men, of the family, of the state, of He on High, or even they on the mountain – and, thus, be seen in principle and in fact as lesser than the men around them.

We find ourselves in a peculiar position with the terrible rights situations for women, and girls. Violence against women violating their human rights in child marriage, female genital mutilation, intimate partner violence, humanitarian crises, human trafficking, economic inequalities, and others, not to mention preceding in time and surrounding in context conditions for them.

We find acts of violence without the force of law to protect them. But as per the stipulations above, if there can be an enforcement of laws for both civilians and law enforcement alike, then any forces or state enforcers can use their legitimate authority in illegitimate ways, where the general tenor is an expectation of the police using the force of the law and the possible need for physical force as a means by which to accrue justice over time.

In the performance of civilian life, as we all know by now, extensively, women and girls face extreme bias. But we should also look into the ways in which the law enforcement themselves can engage in acts of violence, where the violence against women, and girls, is peculiarly and grotesquely inflicted by those whom women, and girls, are expected to trust in these matters; and, as a result, they may not trust the enforcers of the law as much in the future, further leading to a hidden level of violence against women – potentially explaining part of the lack of proper reportage.

Women talk; women teach their daughters mostly, in most cultures; and this can become a part of common wisdom in the culture based on the sharing of information and experiences of women with and girls with one another and across generations about what to coldly, and rationally, to expect in the world or their locale given experiences with men, with the law, and with the enforcers of the law, i.e., with the culture at large.

The governmental budget line items should incorporate these finances as well; the monies for the resources capable of helping the community mobilize in these instances, where there can be further activities for the reduction of the current status and eventual elimination of violence against women. This means “all appropriate levels,” which sounds as if most conceivable ones, and then need to include this funding into the plans of actions.

That which sets about pragmatic steps for progress for the aforementioned reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women. Then there are a variety of reports, to catalog the rates and types of violence against women, in the United Nations with the Declaration mentioned as another important document. But this all requires time, commitment, sacrifice, education – personal and otherwise, and work to advance the basic human rights of the individuals involved in these, at times, atrocities or simply abuses: women and girls.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women Paragraph 124(r)-(s)

How can special representatives for women help with the reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women?

January 26, 2019

Strategic objective D.1.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

Actions to be taken

124. By Governments:

- r. Cooperate with and assist the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women in the performance of her mandate and furnish all information requested; cooperate also with other competent mechanisms, such as the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on torture and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on summary, extrajudicial and arbitrary executions, in relation to violence against women;*
- s. Recommend that the Commission on Human Rights renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women when her term ends in 1997 and, if warranted, to update and strengthen it.*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The basic program in the work fighting or combatting violence against women, and girls, comes in the acknowledgment of the human rights of women, and girls, where this, at a minimum, sets a stage of a base consideration of women as human beings deserving of the same freedoms and rights as men.

This basic consensus ethic is a basis for modern morality. Within this universalistic rather than objectivistic ethic, we find a reasonable basis for the continuance of the work for the reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women. Of course, looking at the specific stipulations here, we can note the ways in which there are specialized individuals, commissions, and so on, for the protection of women from violence.

In particular, we can note the rather serious content with the extrajudicial and the arbitrary executions as well; those related to violence against women. Then the rest simply remarks on some routine procedural and station notes.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women Paragraph 125(a)-(d)

What is the importance of shelters and relief support for girls and women subject to violence?

February 1, 2019

Strategic objective D.1.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

Actions to be taken

125. By Governments, including local governments, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, the public and private sectors, particularly enterprises, and the mass media, as appropriate:

- *Provide well-funded shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence, as well as medical, psychological and other counseling services and free or low-cost legal aid, where it is needed, as well as appropriate assistance to enable them to find a means of subsistence;*
- *Establish linguistically and culturally accessible services for migrant women and girls, including women migrant workers, who are victims of gender-based violence;*
- *Recognize the vulnerability to violence and other forms of abuse of women migrants, including women migrant workers, whose legal status in the host country depends on employers who may exploit their situation;*
- *Support initiatives of women's organizations and non-governmental organizations all over the world to raise awareness on the issue of violence against women and to contribute to its elimination;*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

Important to note about these specifications within the documents here, we can note the ways in which the ideals connect to highly practical measures for the improvement of the wellbeing of those who have been abused in some manner or other.

Let's take even the specific nature of the recommendation for shelters or relief support for girls and women, it is not about anything too high falutin'. It can be the basic provision of a safe space and haven for women, and potentially girls, who have undergone some form of violence against them.

From this basis, there can be the work on the source of the problem, which, in the language of religious traditionalism, is vice and, in the language of secular progressivism, is toxic; that is to say, the men and women of virtue implies a male vice set and set of female vices too, but also links to the dichotomy of healthy masculinity and toxic masculinity.

Not in every facet or aspect, but, on their face, though coming from different perspectives on the overall orientation of the nature of the world and the sexes and genders, they, in essence, aim for some of the same core values of virtue and health, and work against vices and toxics.

Given the orientation of the audience here in The Good Men Project, obviously, we will come from the center-left set of the aisle more often than not, where this will produce a form of language use to get a message across with the toxic masculinity as a central one.

The toxic masculinity, in one aspect, is the abuse of legitimate power or the development and assumption of illegitimate power over another human being. Something like this, as these are casual commentaries. Looking into the toxic masculinity, we can note the ways in which the higher innate aggressive tendencies in males leads to more violent instances, as one factor.

Another is the sense of entitlement of the men and then outcroppings of this in behavior and in the unfortunate, frequent, criminal, and common instances of women being attacked by men. These, and other, low cost or even free assistance can help mitigate the post-occurrence damages, including “medical, psychological and other counseling services and free or low-cost legal aid.”

Each can be important for the improved livelihoods of women who have gone through horrible circumstances. But if we look at migrant women and girls, and works, they can be victims of gender-based violence with layered problems including language and culture barriers.

If the services or supports for these victims are not available, this makes them similarly vulnerable to those who have a native tongue and cultural heritage of the mainstream society, which is one issue; however, or on the other hand, if these services are available but not in a language or with a cultural sensitivity of the migrants or the migrant workers, then this leaves them outside of the realm of full treatment options – of those, typically, available to the women who have the language, say English, and culture, say British Anglo-Saxon that an Arabic-speaking Kurdish woman may not.

These are the difficulties confronting us as a global community for the health and wellbeing of women. These are relatively cheap interventions for the health and wellness of abused women, but these are also nuanced means by which to help them. It is cheap. But it requires thoughtfulness and consideration of the individual circumstances of the woman.

There should be a common backdrop, as per the stipulation, of recognition of disproportionate violence faced by women migrants and women migrant workers compared to other working and migrant populations. There are situations in which their employers will simply abuse their rights and privileges as employers over and against their employees: these migrant women and women migrant workers.

This leads to the last part for this one with the emphasis on the women’s organizations and the non-governmental organizations, the NGOs, with the focus on raising awareness about the violence against women and its associated reduction and eventual elimination.

None of this is some arcane and esoteric knowledge, as if exegetes find out Timothy Leary is an admirer and someone carrying on the work of Aleister Crowley. It is simply a base discussion

about the rights of women migrant workers and women migrants who are disproportionately likely to be affected negatively by several circumstances of violence against women.

It is simply working on the fundamental basis of the reduction of suffering of those who are amongst the most vulnerable to suffer and then working to attenuate that pain and despair. Not much more sophisticated moral analysis required there.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women

Paragraph 125(e)-(g)

What are important aspects of funding community-based education for dealing with violence against women?

February 2, 2019

Strategic objective D.1.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

Actions to be taken

125. By Governments, including local governments, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, the public and private sectors, particularly enterprises, and the mass media, as appropriate:

e. Organize, support and fund community-based education and training campaigns to raise awareness about violence against women as a violation of women's enjoyment of their human rights and mobilize local communities to use appropriate gender-sensitive traditional and innovative methods of conflict resolution;

f. Recognize, support and promote the fundamental role of intermediate institutions, such as primary health-care centres, family-planning centres, existing school health services, mother and baby protection services, centres for migrant families and so forth in the field of information and education related to abuse;

g. Organize and fund information campaigns and educational and training programmes in order to sensitize girls and boys and women and men to the personal and social detrimental effects of violence in the family, community and society; teach them how to communicate without violence and promote training for victims and potential victims so that they can protect themselves and others against such violence;

[Beijing Declaration \(1995\)](#)

The Beijing Declaration in these sections is focused on organization, recognition, support, funding, and promotion in general, as actionable modes for the stipulations. In terms of the opening salvo, we can see the general framework of working for the community programs and initiatives aimed at the increase in awareness.

One of the myths abounding in many cultures may be marriage as a magical barrier to the acts of sexual and other violence against women. But there can also be the ways in which simple denial of the rates of violence against women, especially when data has been collected from nation to nation and region to region.

A collected set of data that provides the famous statistics about 35%, or 1 in 3, women undergoing some form of “physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.” That’s high.

It is right in front of our faces with a firm empirical basis in “worldwide” data. Then we also have the issues following from the recognition. It is one thing for relevant sectors of the general public to know about the facts.

But it is another order entirely to work on the development of a grassroots coalition of people willing to even risk civil disobedience in order to create the change wanted in the current moment and into the next generations.

A world in which women can enjoy their “human rights and mobilize local communities.” There are, certainly, differences in the standard modes of conflict resolution. Some cultural sensitivity and knowledge will be needed in order to do it. But some novel means by which it can be done have been mentioned in other publications, including #RefugeeToo to help refugees or #Basma, and others, to help women in difficult circumstances.

It is more than simply a pragmatic issue. These are ethical and moral issues of a high order. On top of this, we find the need to “recognize, support and promote” the relevant intermediate institutions that can attenuate the negative effects of violence against women.

There is no doubt to the informed on the severe levels of violence against women more often perpetrated by men. But also, there is little doubt as to the negative impacts on the lives and livelihoods of women, and girls, who speak with one another as a group more probable to be violated in some way, to have violence cracking their human rights on the stone of injustice.

All the aforementioned secondary institutions – “primary health-care centres, family-planning centres, existing school health services, mother and baby protection services, centres for migrant families” – are important to have in place following or even coinciding with the higher acknowledgement and recognition of the problem.

But without the broader public knowledge, any strongman ideologue could emerge and strip these social programs overnight of their funding, because the public has been kept distracted or unaware and then the defunding can go on without a hitch or a stall, or a protest or a march.

But the active citizenry remain the prime force in the changes of societies. Those same citizens become the important members of a global community intended for the reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women. Those are represented in this and other documents in the stipulations orienting themselves towards the ultimate goal of a justice on a social level disproportionately negatively impacting women.

This can be derided as social justice activism by SJWs in some sense. But then this leaves a retort query, what form of mind mocks and ridicules and works to deter those working to improve the social justice implied in the reduction of violence against women – and others?

All these secondary programmes and initiatives are important infrastructure, but, as noted, the central need is the development of information campaigns, workshops, and other measures to begin to develop a deeper understanding of the context in which violence against women happens and, hopefully, to learn in community about its severity around the world. This may lead to conclusions about the realities in one’s own home country, not necessarily the most comfortable conclusions, either.

This education and training and be helpful in self-empowerment of those who have been violated or those who may be, in terms of providing a context speaking out for themselves on their own rights and then, also, improve their ability to fend off possible incursions into their rights, as happens around the world and, likely, right in the backyard of your own community.

CEDAW Article 25 and Article 26

How are ratifications and revisions important to the maintenance of a modernized equal rights document?

February 3, 2019

Article 25

1. *The present Convention shall be open for signature by all States.*
2. *The Secretary-General of the United Nations is designated as the depositary of the present Convention.*
3. *The present Convention is subject to ratification. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.*
4. *The present Convention shall be open to accession by all States. Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.*

Article 26

1. *A request for the revision of the present Convention may be made at any time by any State Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.*
2. *The General Assembly of the United Nations shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such a request.*

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)

Articles 25 and 26 of the CEDAW are more procedural notes than anything, but, nonetheless, important to its overall contents. This convention needs to have a few things equality for all and access for every Member State. It needed to have the ability for all Member States able to sign onto it.

To deny signatory status to it, it is a rejection of its contents, in part or whole, with the implication of an entire rejection of the document as a result, as a whole based on the in part or in whole rejection in content.

Looking at a similar document with a huge scope and breadth is the UN *Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* that began with 18 months of deliberation and then on July 13, 2018 the considerations and negotiations became more concrete with a “fully endorsed” version on December 19, 2018. It was a rapid affair.

In the voting procedures, there was an overwhelming consensus with 152 votes for, 5 against – including the United States and Israel, 12 abstains, and 24 no votes; in other words, if a Member State of the United Nations voted, then the Member State of the United Nations voted overwhelmingly in favor of the UN migration compact.

Similarly, it speaks to those who did and did not sign the CEDAW as well. The rest of the stipulations in these articles simply look into the processes of ratification and accession for the Member States involved in these signings.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women
 Paragraph 125(h)-(j)

How can proper dissemination of information and the provision of counseling and rehabilitation help fight violence against women?

February 7, 2019

Strategic objective D.1.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

Actions to be taken

125. By Governments, including local governments, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, the public and private sectors, particularly enterprises, and the mass media, as appropriate:

h. Disseminate information on the assistance available to women and families who are victims of violence;

i. Provide, fund and encourage counselling and rehabilitation programmes for the perpetrators of violence and promote research to further efforts concerning such counselling and rehabilitation so as to prevent the recurrence of such violence;

j. Raise awareness of the responsibility of the media in promoting non-stereotyped images of women and men, as well as in eliminating patterns of media presentation that generate violence, and encourage those responsible for media content to establish professional guidelines and codes of conduct; also raise awareness of the important role of the media in informing and educating people about the causes and effects of violence against women and in stimulating public debate on the topic.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The rights to be free, in life, from violence is simply a right to one's own health and happiness. In the cases in which these rights are violated for women, in particular, we simply label this violence against women, which remain non-trivial and something most women will not experience but, unfortunately, a large minority of women will, in fact, have to fear in their lives.

As the World Health Organization and the United Nations tells us, the general image is about 1/3 of women will go through some sexual or physical violence in their lifetimes. It may not be the most precise data, but, certainly, it provides a basis for concern about the ways in which women lead, not necessarily scary but, more cautious lives than men.

It is simply the nature of the world. If women can have proper understanding and be informed about – not the violence inflicted themselves or other women, which they generally already known – the services available for them.

Then women can be able to feel more supported by the systems around them that, traditionally speaking, have only informed the men and enfranchised the men. Bearing in mind, of course, as

noted by Rebecca Traister in some contexts, the enfranchisement is simply being extended to women now, which is the reason for this seen as revolutionary; that is to say, but in this specific context, women are, now, becoming enfranchised through protections to their livelihoods to fully participate safely and healthily within society compared to before.

To be perfectly clear, this is not about dismissing men's suffering of violence from men or from women, or to downplay women's violence against women, but it, certainly, is about the ways in which the international community is united in efforts to support women in disproportionate negative effects and levels of violence against women more often inflicted by men, often physical and sexual and amongst the most brutal and degrading forms of violence.

Other things that are recommended here are the provision and funding of counseling, and to encourage men to get it, in addition to the rehabilitation programs for the perpetrators, in a compassionate manner even, of the violence against women. That is, against the stereotypes of the progressive movements and international rights movements, not anti-male, but among the higher forms of compassion amongst those males or men who are bound by vices or showing toxic forms of masculinity – as opposed to the healthier forms of traditional masculinity.

No one, or so few as to matter little, is arguing against the behavioral output of bad masculine traits seen throughout history; traditionalists and progressives should be coming together rather than permit true extremists and ideologues fill the void to encourage divisiveness rather than unity and cooperative solidarity and efforts. It can be done. It has been done before, and can be done now.

The counseling and rehabilitation is important in this effort not to tame men or masculinity, or derogue traditional virtues of men and masculinity; it is to protect the futures that those men have left and, more importantly, the potential future violence to be inflicted on women, where this shows a compassionate and emotionally responsive culture rather than a barbaric one.

The media is, of course, an important agent in the collective efforts for education and, in part, better-informed behaviors. Our minor daily dramas play out on the television screens and in the movie theatres. Those media portrayals that may increase the possibility of violence should be worked against in an affirmative matter. In addition, those can easily be done by using our dollars wisely and also encouraging the better angels of the artists' natures.

Not the FCC, but codes of conduct and guidelines may help in these efforts at improving the general tenor of attitudes and personae portrayed within even the most protracted and emotionally cardboardy dramas; as with, for an example, the powerful image of the son without an involved father on *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* with a young Will Smith. These can impact portions of the consciousness of a generation, perhaps more if powerful and universally conveyed enough.

Paragraph 126(a)-(b): Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women

Why programs and procedures a necessary component of the reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women?

February 8, 2019

Strategic objective D.1.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

Actions to be taken

126. By Governments, employers, trade unions, community and youth organizations and non-governmental organizations, as appropriate:

- *Develop programmes and procedures to eliminate sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women in all educational institutions, workplaces and elsewhere;*
- *Develop programmes and procedures to educate and raise awareness of acts of violence against women that constitute a crime and a violation of the human rights of women;*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The Beijing Declaration here deals with governments, employers, and so on. Those entities representative of, often, the more working-class folk. Those citizens at the, typically, bottom of the income distribution and prestige in society scales. Formal procedures and programs meant for dealing with sexual harassment may not be foolproof in, and of, themselves.

However, there may be the co-creation of a culture over time of no tolerance for these behaviors, if these are combatted from a variety of other fronts. In general, the development of standardized policies can set in place a system in which women can feel safer within the workplace as a global stipulation.

This comes in “all educational institutions, workplaces and elsewhere.” Within this context, we can see the general means by which there can be the development of a more just and fair world, at least through the workplace and in educational institutions.

Then, of course, in the second stipulation – although, I think the ordering ought to have been reversed for clarity, we can see the statements to educating and raising the awareness about violence against women as a crime and, in fact, as a violation against the fundamental human rights of women – full stop.

All of these measures are to the good.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women: Paragraph 129(a)-(b)

Why are good research and data collection & analysis important for dealing with domestic violence into the future?

February 10, 2019

Strategic objective D.2.

Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures

Actions to be taken

129. By Governments, regional organizations, the United Nations, other international organizations, research institutions, women's and youth organizations and non-governmental organizations, as appropriate:

- *Promote research, collect data and compile statistics, especially concerning domestic violence relating to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women, and encourage research into the causes, nature, seriousness and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of measures implemented to prevent and redress violence against women;*
- *Disseminate findings of research and studies widely;*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The Beijing Declaration, as with most documents, will enter into some of the drier aspects of the dealings with reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women. This, in no way, is to deny some of the unique difficulties facing men or boys, or young men in the current moment who, in difficult economic and educational and cultural circumstances, find themselves adrift to various degrees.

What emerges from these are a variety of epithets and such, these intended to identify sectors of the, typically, young male population who have struggled within their particular societies. As an aside, one small bit of research can find terms including hikikomori meaning “pulling inward, being confined” or “acute social withdrawal” – related to parasite singles and freeters and Fushūgaku, Sōshoku(-kei) danshi meaning “Herbivore men or grass-eater men,” diaosi meaning “dick hair,” bamboccioni meaning “big babies,” Man-Child/Child-Man meaning “...Childish Man,” Peter Pan Syndrome means “someone who does not want to grow up,” NEETs meaning Not in Education, Employment, or Training,” and MGTOW meaning “Men Going Their Own Way.”

There is a wide smattering of them. They can be comedic. In some, or even many, cases, they may even be descriptive. But is this orientation compassionate or constructive? In the end analysis, it may not be. In fact, it may regress the conversation and worsen the situations for

these particular males. Once past the ridicule stage, the next questions, potentially, for the general public is constructive criticism and work to reintegrate these males back into society.

On the more numerous and often more severe cases facing women, we can observe the stipulations in the Beijing Declaration here about the national and international levels to be brought into the fold of consideration for the work towards dealing with violence against women.

One is the base level of recognition and acknowledgement by the wider public. Women may know, suspect, or speak to one another occasionally about their experiences in difficult circumstances, in which, no doubt, there will be trauma produced.

But, at the same time, there may need to be more data collected and analyzed for those who are unwilling to acknowledge the reality a significant minority of women will face in their lifetimes. This is the reason for the first stipulation here. Its purpose is a proposal of the proper widespread collection and compilation of data on domestic violence in order to have better knowledge of it. Its effects. Its prevalence, and so on.

With this, the more efficacious measures against this can be worked towards. I would argue. We have the data now. We know many of the causes, as highlighted by UN Women, by the World Health Organization, by national statistical databases and so on.

The next steps are simply moving forward with the proper and full, without pulling punches, dissemination of the research and the studies into these matters of violence against women. Upon this rock, we can carve a new story, a new tale, without reference to the ephemeral and working on the actualization of a newer ethical bounded to the world and within the constraints of the evidence before us.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women: Paragraph 126(c)-(d)

How can counseling, healing, and support programmes help deal with the effects of violence against women?

February 10, 2019

Strategic objective D.1.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

Actions to be taken

126. By Governments, employers, trade unions, community and youth organizations and non-governmental organizations, as appropriate:

- c. Develop counselling, healing and support programmes for girls, adolescents and young women who have been or are involved in abusive relationships, particularly those who live in homes or institutions where abuse occurs;*
- d. Take special measures to eliminate violence against women, particularly those in vulnerable situations, such as young women, refugee, displaced and internally displaced women, women with disabilities and women migrant workers, including enforcing any existing legislation and developing, as appropriate, new legislation for women migrant workers in both sending and receiving countries.*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The proper levels of administration and advocacy work, in many or even each of these cases, comes from the preliminary statements prior to the stipulations, in which, as an example, in this case, the governments, employers, trade unions, and others, are emphasized as the scales of the advocacy.

In terms of the stipulation specifications here, the counseling, healing and support programs for girls, adolescent girls, and young women are important for the after-the-violence that women experience. There may be some preparatory educational materials to be aware of the prevalence and various safety measures, and then, also, providing some knowledge about the resources available to them.

But this is so on the surface, so marginal in many ways, where this does not deal with the root evil; the root evil of men's violence against women. It is not that all men are bad; that men are simply to be shot down and demonized, or dismissed as abusers in training. This would be to completely misunderstand much of the purpose of The Good Men Project and of this casual commentary on human rights documents relevant to the human rights of women.

Proper articulation of our values comes in the form of realizing the statistics standing before us. Then it is working within the context of the obvious consequences to the lives of women in these contexts.

It is the abuse that follows from a variety of correlates coming together in common instances, of which women will experience, as a significant minority of their lives, at least once in their life. Of course, this leads to further questions about how many will re-occur, will have second, third, fourth, and so on, instances of violence against them.

But it is also realizing the ways in which the, even in the environment of violence against women, remedial changes can be done to clean up some of the damage caused by abusive men. It is about encouraging healthy masculinity or virtuous men, in which there are systematic encouragement and gradual elimination of violence against women in this domain.

Then for the violence against women that impacts some women, the proactive response will be to provide some relevant help, mentioned above, for repairing the psyches and the bodies following from the abuse. It is not complicated. But it is about being compassionately responsive.

Some populations of women, of course, will be more vulnerable to levels of violence and kinds of violence. It is the same with the region. We are the same species. So, the same brains, thus minds, and then the social systems and power dynamics become important factors in describing the variations in the levels of violence against women by region, by culture, and by subgroup of women: “young women, refugee, displaced and internally displaced women, women with disabilities and women migrant workers.”

The recommendation is the enforcement of extant legislation or the creation of new legislation in order to deal with the various forms of violence against women that simply come the way of women more than men.

This leads to some of the similar and obvious conclusions from before, about the need for an assertive and active compassionate response to the violence against women around the world and then working together, men and women, for the reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women.

Paragraph 127-128 of the Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women

What are some high-level actions that can be taken for taking integrated measures in order to prevent and eliminate violence against women?

February 11, 2019

Strategic objective D.1.

Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women

Actions to be taken

127. By the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

Provide the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women with all necessary assistance, in particular the staff and resources required to perform all mandated functions, especially in carrying out and following up on missions undertaken either separately or jointly with other special rapporteurs and working groups, and adequate assistance for periodic consultations with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and all treaty bodies.

128. By Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations:

Encourage the dissemination and implementation of the UNHCR [Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women](#) and the UNHCR [Guidelines on the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence against Refugees](#).

Beijing Declaration (1995)

Paragraphs 127 and 128 of the Beijing Declaration deal with some of the more rote aspects of the United Nations, boring bureaucratic aspects of the UN. But if we're looking at some of the stipulations here, we can see the obvious important in the work to provide "integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women" from the levels of the Secretary-General of the UN – the highest office in the UN – in addition to the national and international levels of helping deal with the issue of violence against women.

All of this is, yes, bureaucratic while, at the same time, an important note as to the ways in which the highest offices and authorities can be important enforcers of the rights of women. The Secretary-General is bound, herein, to support the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women.

The support is not even partial. As a close reading indicates, it is "all necessary assistance." The question before us, then, is for the work to improve the status of women in the domain of violence against women: how may we increase the pressure on these levers of power, and on the individuals in power and influence, to enact the measures needed for the reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women?

The carrying through on the stipulations within multiple documents available and produced until 1995 and since 1995 into 2019. These are easy questions. It is simply elementary. The documents were produced internationally, signed on to or ratified, and, thus, should be enacted throughout the world with the force of any other rights or legal document. But it takes pressure, and so work: continuous effort and persistent work.

Paragraph 129(c)-(d) of the Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women

How can media help with the reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women?

February 11, 2019

Strategic objective D.2.

Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures

Actions to be taken

129. By Governments, regional organizations, the United Nations, other international organizations, research institutions, women's and youth organizations and non-governmental organizations, as appropriate:

- c. Support and initiate research on the impact of violence, such as rape, on women and girl children, and make the resulting information and statistics available to the public;*
- d. Encourage the media to examine the impact of gender role stereotypes, including those perpetuated by commercial advertisements which foster gender-based violence and inequalities, and how they are transmitted during the life cycle, and take measures to eliminate these negative images with a view to promoting a violence-free society.*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

This section follows from the former about the necessity of research and analysis to provide informed recommendations on dealing with violence against women. In particular, and here, the emphasis is the support and initiation of said research into violence against women.

Insofar as the international documents provide some form of indication as to the direction and widespread acceptance of the ethical principles, and the data on the prevalence and severity of the issues facing women, and girls for that matter, around the world, the next steps are to work towards the provision of this information and statistical set of information to the public.

These are necessary for any mass mobilization for political and social change. It is the same with combatting the excesses of various facets of societies. In this, the media, and in general the mass media, can be important assistance if informed and controlled, and guided, by the general public – not only in the will but in actuality.

The combatting of, for example, the various gender stereotypes that abound about women is one issue. But then, there is, also, the issue to do with the ways in which a variety of commercial agencies and industries are buying into these and – we – the public continue to bolster it unduly and burden future generations with these stereotypes, as prior generations did to us.

Those advertisements and marketing campaigns with the tacit endorsement of gender-based violence and inequality stereotypes. These give an implicit culture force to these. The import is

to work to eliminate the negative images that come into the minds and eyes of the next generations, in order to create the desired “violence-free society” that so many of us desire.

But it won’t come from holy text; it won’t come from the heavens; the gods will not deliver us from ourselves; mighty Lady Justice will not reign in glory over us, to give us the glorified just and ideal society; our solutions to our problems will come from us if they come from anyone, as the evils of the past infect and perpetuate through, and because of, us. We can do better; however, first, we have to expect better of ourselves.

Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women: Paragraph 130(a)

Why is the ratification and enforcement of international rights documents important for help those in some of the most difficult violence circumstances?

February 14, 2019

Strategic objective D.3.

Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking
Actions to be taken

130. By Governments of countries of origin, transit and destination, regional and international organizations, as appropriate:

- *Consider the ratification and enforcement of international conventions on trafficking in persons and on slavery;*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The specific stipulations here deal with some of the more gruesome cases of violence against women with trafficking and prostitution. The questions about choice are not the consideration here, as these women will often have none – and this may be a significant majority of the cases. Thus, the questions, often only in libertarian social outlooks amongst 18-to-35-year-old men, simply skip over the considerations of legalized work or not.

Here, we have the serious issue of a massive crime against women and girls as individuals *en masse*, and, thus, as a grouping or sub-demographic in the world. The [Canadian Women's Foundation](#) notes that forced prostitution and the sexual exploitation of girls and women is a problem around the world and in Canadian society as well.

The trafficking is illegal, a human rights violation, and described as an “extreme form of violence against women.” When we try to skim over this issue when we’re thinking of pornography, a pornified society, or legal sex work, it is, conveniently, leaving aside the serious issue to do with the human rights violations around this.

The particular stipulation here, in the Beijing Declaration, is as relevant now as in 1995 when it was first formulated. Here, we can look into the ways that girls and women, as, basically, slaves, are – literally – bought and sold and then trafficked in Canada and around the world.

The international community is clear on this subject matter. It, apparently, only becomes an issue when mostly young males in Western societies who seem to ignore the obvious ethical implications of the situation here.

To be absolutely clear, this is labeled an extreme form of violence against women and, therefore, should rank high on the priority list of consideration; whereas, we have a select demographic focusing on the opposite case of legal prostitution, which does seem to indicate an inversion of the consideration of what is salient as an ethical consideration and what is not. The myopia of

consideration is not fooling anyone; it is happening around the world in cases of rights violations and abuses of girls and women, then the question is about legality?

There is trafficking and forced prostitution inside of Canadian society and across borders. Girls and women who are bought and sold, where the marginalized sectors of the society, e.g., Aboriginal, racialized, immigrant, and abuse survivors, are the far more likely to be the ones to be trafficked than others.

With the development of communications technologies, as has been noted recently via *in memoriams* of the humanist and homosexual Alan Turing, the internet has provided a wide range of benefits to much of the planet's population with accessibility to the entirety of human knowledge for potential use in educational curricula or the possible utility in the improvement of communal life somehow.

In addition to this, we can see minuses via the various facets of the fourth edge of technological warfare with the cybersecurity concerns and such, but also this has been a negative with the anonymity too.

That is to say, it is providing a basis for the trafficking efforts that are the basis of evil acts and black market industries to flourish, thrive, and continue to further their machinations, of the, in essence, dehumanization of girls and women.

In fact, the traffickers, in Canada, can gain about 280,000CAD per annum for each girl or woman that trafficked or forced into prostitution. If under the age of 18, then there is a higher return on investment for the traffickers. This is the language that may well be used within the community of traffickers: clinical, calculating, and dehumanizing, where girls and women are not individuals with rights and privileges, responsibilities and obligations, hopes and dreams, and community and familial bonds and connections. They are tools of the trade and items to be traded on the black market of trafficking, make no mistake about it.

Based on reports and consultations with 250 organizations and 150 survivors of sex trafficking, the Canadian Women's Foundation found that "many girls in Canada are first trafficked into forced prostitution when they are 13-years-old."

Sex trafficking has been properly termed "modern day slavery" by many and, in fact, this is a precise and powerful image about the ways in which sex trafficking can produce a variety of rights violations, bodily abuses, and long-term damage and, potentially, lost lives akin to slavery during the height of the industry of cotton. In fact, the statement or phrase may not go far enough; it is not simply an image. It is a visceral reality for thousands and thousands of girls and women around the world; it should be felt.

Some questions may arise about the statistics of the modern day slavery of sex trafficking and forced prostitution. 78% of Canadians, based on a National Angus Reid public opinion poll, agree that girls under the age of 16 are not in prostitution by choice; 67% of Canadians consider girls in Canada under the age of 16 are being recruited or trafficked into prostitution against their will; another 70% see women brought to Canada from other countries as forced into prostitution against their will.

The national consciousness is there. It is the incipient consciousness; one that simply needs a little push for some mass activism on this huge rights violation happening in our doorstep, or to other nationalities brought into our own corridors. This is a case for pause and reflection.

If we look into the various international conventions, which, as you may surmise, is a lot of them. The basic emphasis is the need not only to have them as symbols of international consensus or consideration of what is the problem – its parameters – but also what to do about it. It is, once more, an ethically elementary position; the world got together, talked it over, wrote down the ideas, signed some documents with the concepts and solutions on them, and then... simply need to instantiate and implement the proposed solutions for the reduction and eventual elimination of (extreme) violence against women.

That's it. This stipulation is built within this framework. The international community got together and agreed; now, act on it.

Paragraph 130(b)-(c) of the Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women

Why is the addressing of root factors important in the reduction and eventual elimination of violence against women?

February 14, 2019

Strategic objective D.3.

Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking
Actions to be taken

130. By Governments of countries of origin, transit and destination, regional and international organizations, as appropriate:

- b. Take appropriate measures to address the root factors, including external factors, that encourage trafficking in women and girls for prostitution and other forms of commercialized sex, forced marriages and forced labour in order to eliminate trafficking in women, including by strengthening existing legislation with a view to providing better protection of the rights of women and girls and to punishing the perpetrators, through both criminal and civil measures;*
- c. Step up cooperation and concerted action by all relevant law enforcement authorities and institutions with a view to dismantling national, regional and international networks in trafficking;*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

The Beijing Declaration in this particular section deals with the significant rights violation of the trafficking of women and the assistance of victims of violence due to either prostitution or trafficking. As stipulated, it is about dealing with the governments where this is originating.

But it is also dealing with the issues of transit and the destinations, as in girls and women being trafficked from other countries into, for example, Canada for the extreme violence against women to be perpetrated.

Then there is the case of the larger-than-national organizations that can help deal with this problem. Ethics in any situation involving the relations between conscious beings remains a consistent fact of the world. As a subdiscipline in philosophy, it is an unavoidable context: when dealing with others, one or another ethic is operative. An inescapable quandary; either an act is good, bad, or neutral within the referent frame of the ethical system or operating moral framework at play in any given moment between conscious entities.

What ethics do you choose? Is it to optimize pain? Is it simply to self-define an ethical matrix and then ignore all others? Is it work towards some idealized platform of specific injunctions for thou shalts and thou shalt nots? Is it sourced from the heavenly realms bursting forth through the choirs of angelic voices singing life into the cosmos? Or is it simply coming from the mucky evolved cognitions of conscious, to varying degrees, beings? What about nihilism, or no ethical grounding or acting? That, too, is an ethic; it's an ethic of inaction or a-consideration of others,

or of oneself at times. Ethical and value questions remain instantiated in a universe with consciousnesses; universes arise. Some may have consciousnesses. Of those that do, those consciousnesses, inevitably, will be dealing with one another, whether artificial and constructed, natural and evolved, or otherwise. Cosmology and physics are inevitable; ethics, in a universe with conscious entities, is inevitable. One derives another.

The issue of trafficking is no less pertinent or important on this issue. The dealing with the root of problems is much easier if they are dealt with through identification and parsing of the “root factors.” This simply makes a problem ease to work through.

Next, there are external factors that innervate the considerations here. Those that “encourage trafficking in women and girls for prostitution and other forms of commercialized sex, forced marriages and forced labor in order to eliminate trafficking in women.”

The fundamental ethical considerations here are the ways in which simply ignoring the rights and freedoms of women and girls can lead to disastrous consequences, due to our collective unwillingness to have a mass and directed response to this “extreme” form of violence against women, and girls, and violation of the fundamental rights and freedoms of women, and girls.

Some of the means by which to deal with the problem can be working with the frameworks already available to us. Those can help provide some protections of the rights of women and girls. In addition, the standard legislation in place, at least in those places that have it, can be a solid basis for the punishment of perpetrators of the extreme violence against women, whether by acts, by trafficking, and so on.

The criminal courts and civil society can be a good means to do it. The final stipulation deals with the law enforcement agencies and other forces working together to be able to deal a blow against the networks at the national, regional, and international levels to effectively combat sex trafficking of girls and women.

Because, at the end of the day, the one side is individual women being violated in a number of aforementioned ways; the other side of the collective networks needed for the criminals to commit their atrocious behaviors and crimes against women and girls.

Ask Catherine 1—Culture Sensitivity and the Unseen

Why is sensitivity to the differences between and within cultures in the work with unseen populations in Canada?

February 18, 2019

Catherine Broomfield is the Executive Director of iHuman Youth Society. She loves the challenge and excitement of the job, especially with the diversity of the workplace and the people with non-profits. She has worked, in fact, in both the public and the private sectors. Here we open with iHuman Youth Society, cultural sensitivity, and the unseen populations of Canada.

The interview opened on the work through iHuman Youth Society by Broomfield. She remarked on the Executive Director position with the standard leadership and administrative tasks that come with the station.

She also commented on the budget monitoring and forecasting, the grant writing, and the strategic planning as well. It amounts to the standard set of tasks for an executive director. But not so normal, her role requires another set of specific tasks, too.

“Atypically, but normal for a smaller organization, I also do front-line work with the youth such as responding to crises and critical incidents within our building or connecting with them about opportunities they want to pursue and seeing how iHuman can support those ideas. I’ve also been known to clean toilets, shovel snow. Basically whatever might need doing to support the agency I’m at the ready,” Broomfield stated.

When I asked about the need to build cultural sensitivity into the work with a diverse group of young people who need help, she noted that this was, indeed, an important question while also making a distinction between cultural sensitivity and cultural safety.

Where the former is sometimes used and the latter is intended or necessary, cultural sensitivity being the awareness of the interaction with others in a cultural context. The cultural safety being something of a recognition of a positionality in relation to others and then working to create a space for safe and healthy communication.

“Inherently then, you can appreciate that trauma awareness is embedded in practice that is cultural safe. I believe the term evolved from nursing practice in New Zealand and has been recognized for its value especially as it relates to working with Indigenous peoples and others who have experienced systemic trauma,” Broomfield explained, “Therefore, cultural safety, is a key element of the relational approach iHuman takes when we work with marginalized and traumatized young people. Our youth practice, then, involves creating safe and trusting interactions that build into relationships where the young person can describe the barriers they face, express what they need, and how they’d like that support provided.”

Those approaches with a young person help them feel valued and witnessed, where the ultimate goal is an improvement in the young person feeling a sense of belonging, identity, self-worth, and sense of purpose.

Broomfield continued to describe the subpopulations of those who are, in essence, the commonly unseen members of the general population, by definition as they do not fit within the normalized structure of the society.

Broomfield stated, “For people who experience erasure, I would suggest this is a profoundly fundamental question about equity, justice and privilege. For myself, I believe this discrimination stems from human societies tend to privilege one class of people above others. It’s a way to distribute abundance and resources to those deemed worthy of these means and control and withhold the same from those identified as the ‘nots’. Why this is the case is truly beyond my understanding.”

She concluded stating that iHuman Youth Society is built around the building of relationships with young people that they value. It is honoring what is built there and helping include those who have been feeling excluded, through the provision of a sense of community.

Ask Catherine 2 — Meeting Youth Where They're At

Why is working within the constraints of the internal resources of the troubled Indigenous youth important?

February 18, 2019

Catherine Broomfield is the Executive Director of iHuman Youth Society. She loves the challenge and excitement of the job, especially with the diversity of the workplace and the people with non-profits. She has worked, in fact, in both the public and the private sectors. Here we talk about Indigenous troubled youth.

Indigenous youth tend to experience more difficulties in Canadian society than others. One orientation may be to meet those most troubled Indigenous youth where they're at, as this, probably, can apply to other populations as well.

“This principle of ‘meeting youth where they’re at’ or as we like to refer to as ‘keeping it real’ is fundamental to iHuman’s youth work practice and the overall operation of the agency. Working from this perspective means that our approach is based on relationship,” Broomfield explained, “Being able to appreciate the place a youth is coming from requires creating a space that is safe and non judgmental. When we attune to what a young person needs there is no ego or expectation of the staff person involved — it isn’t about what we might think an appropriate response, action or solution might be, rather what does that young person think needs to be done now.”

The orientation of meeting youth where they’re at simply reflects the needs of troubled young, not pushing too hard and using due diligence to work with them while honoring their background.

Broomfield described some of the methodological orientation. One is asking what happened with the young people in order to garner acceptance of the youth. It is finding out who the young person is and where they’re at, in other words.

“That getting help is sometimes less about the person in need of help and more about the motivation of the person offering it. To act with the ‘keeping it real’ principle, iHuman staff are consistently asking themselves: am I helping because I want to be ‘the hero’; is my help enabling that person; or am I supporting that person to honor their own internal need,” Broomfield described.

It is an approach to help a vulnerable youth population. The use of sensitivity and understanding of the unique contexts of the Indigenous communities within our collective communities.

Broomfield continued, “This approach is a communal approach to helping which is reflective of Indigenous ways of community. Therefore, because we have put the young person in the driver’s seat, the effectiveness of the programs is ultimately in their control.”

She noted how these solutions those built from the ground, i.e., by and for the youth populations who are undergoing their own difficulties. Broomfield proposes this as the source of the success of the efforts.

The interview moved into the prototypical trends of some young people. While, at the same time, I bore in mind the unique experiences of each child or young person.

“At the core of the issues iHuman youth experience is the erasure of identity. I’ve mentioned this previously — that the finding of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the genocide of Indigenous culture by the Government of Canada and/or its agents — can trace the systemic issues of trauma that manifest in the present day reality of young people,” Broomfield stated.

The issues are addiction, homelessness, isolation, mental health, and violence. In unison or alone, these, as factors in the life script or history of a young, impact the lifelong trajectory, often for the worse. These can, in turn, exclude people from society.

Broomfield noted that the stories can be both painful and raw. Some of the common narratives are the lack of self-knowledge leading to a void in making a path in life. These are the cases Broomfield honorably deals with and framework that she builds young people’s sense of self once more.

Broomfield concluded, “I was recently at a workshop where the following quote was posted on the wall. I do not know the author, his story or what he might do, however, it was attributed to William Pirar: *‘We are what we know. We are... also what we do not know. If what we know about ourselves — our history, our culture, our national identity — is deformed by absences, denials and incompleteness, then our identity is fragmented. Such a self lacks access both to itself and to the world.’*”

Ask Sally 1—Drawing the Lines for Progressivism in 2019

Why are appropriate lines needing to be drawn for what is and is not progressivism within the current sociopolitical environment?

February 22, 2019

Sally Buxbaum Hunt is a Sexual Education, Sex-Positive, Separation of Church and State Activist and Organizer, and a Progressive. Here we talk about demarcating the lines between progressive and non-progressive for 2019.

When we opened the conversation, the main purpose was to focus on progressives and the definition of modern progressivism. Hunt stated how, to her, this meant advocating for the most overly burdened, marginalized, and struggling citizens.

Some of whom would including the poor, the minority populations, the middle class, and the working class. The point is to be willing to advocate for policy change better suited to those populations of the country.

Hunt stated, “I think this is the difference between progressives and moderate Democrats who would not necessarily identify as progressives. I think we have to be both. I think we have to be a progressive and liberal democrat. But the progressive part is the most important part.”

The advocacy for the changes in the society at those needed levels characterizes the fundamental basis of modern progressivism to Hunt. Because the current status quo benefits the rich while also haring the poor, the working class, and the middle class, and simply overburdening them even more.

When I asked about some specific policy changes now, Hunt remarked, certainly, on the increase in taxes on the rich. Other items that came to mind were Medicare for all and universal healthcare.

She notes that the United States as a very wealthy country could afford it.

It means that we are advocating for changes in policy that will benefit people who need changes, who are hurt and suffering because of the status quo. The status quo favors the richest people in the nation.

It causes more suffering in the working class, the middle class, and the poor; it makes them poorer and even more burdened.

“It would not be too difficult. It would be like every other developed nation in the world. It has to happen. People are sicker and more in debt, poorer than they have to be, which burdens employers as well,” Hunt said, “It is the employers having to cover healthcare for their employees. It makes the employees feel as if they have to be employed and not be able to leave a job that they do not like. They feel as if they cannot become self-employed and entrepreneurs because they’ll lose their healthcare.”

Hunt re-emphasized the need to raise the taxes on the rich in addition to the legalization of marijuana and the cessation of the “War on Drugs.” All these are “destroying lives” while

universal healthcare and universal mental healthcare could help the nation a great deal. In addition, these could include rehabilitation programs as well.

Hunt concluded, “It needs to include drug rehabilitation programs. If we were to end this war on drugs and legalize drugs, instead of treating it as criminal activities, we would, actually, treat people and help them to get past their addictions and mental health issues leading to the drug use in the first place. The education inequality, education should be federally funded and equally. It should not depend on property taxes.”

Ask Terrah 1— Retail and Customer Service

What is the backbone of good consumer relations?

February 22, 2019

Terrah Short earned a Bachelor's in Philosophy (Analytic) with a Minor in Disaster Risk Reduction from Western Washington University in March 2017. She is a product of a working single father and the Puget Sound area of Western Washington in the United States of America. Here we talk about retail.

The interview started on a large number of North Americans who work in the retail business, where a wide smattering of brands will attract poor and rich customers alike.

The first question was oriented around the basic function of the retail industry to provide a fundamental backdrop for the conversation. Short described the basic function, in her terms, one of the middlemen who keep a steady flow of the demand and the supply of the store.

The roles can include a manager, an assistant manager, or simply cashiering, stocking, and cleaning the store. Shorts background has been as a cashier and an assistant to the customers. It is about customer relations, customer service, and having consumers leave with positive affect at the end of the transaction.

Then, of course, there are negative aspects of the work. Short relayed how she experienced, while on shift, being yelled and cursed at, even having items thrown at her. These did not happen all the time. But they do happen and this can be an upsetting aspect of the life experience for her.

She noted how some customers feel the right to grab or touch her. Those individuals tend to be older and white men.

When I asked about the positives, Short opined, "Working my first job, which was in retail, an older woman came into my work and myself and another coworker helped her find the things she needed. We were an office supply store, and she was so grateful for our demonstrated commitment to helping her, when she had many questions about the products, she made her purchase but told us to wait a minute. She went out to her car and brought in two hand-made teddy bears. She said she made them and loved to give them to people who deserved them. We were so warmed by this gesture."

She continued to note that those experiences of providing genuine service to people can be extremely rewarding moments on the job. Those are times in which she feels happy for the happiness of the customers, as this is a moment of genuine recognition of service to the community.

On the whole, the customers end to treat others with civility and respect. Then, sometimes, consumers may simply be having a bad experience or a bad day. That is where experienced retail staff come into situations and work to mitigate them.

Short, on code of conduct and ethics, explained, "Basically, be courteous, follow company policy, try to provide genuine service, and make it a positive experience to the best of our

abilities. One thing I have noticed as a trend is giving more authority to retail workers to stand up to the abuse we can sometimes have from customers, especially women and minorities.”

As the retail is done, I asked about some of the minimum tasks and responsibilities of the new employees. She described how there is a general being thrown in with a minimal amount of hands-on training.

She continued, “An orientation that packs a lot of information in a short amount of time, cheesy corporate videos we have to watch, and maybe a couple hours of training and shadowing, depending on the time of year and how busy we are. At times new folks are just bodies when there’s going to be a busy time and availability is minimal. But most often, rookies/newbies are given the responsibilities listed in the job description right off the bat. This leads to a sink or swim environment, in my opinion.”

To close the interview, Short spoke to the transition from basic skills building to more advanced ones. Part of this is becoming more efficient and productive in the work. Another is simply maintaining a positive and consistent response or feedback from the customers. These can be noticed by managers who then, may, promote the individual with the, at the present, lower rank.

“A lot of the time, you can be excellent at your current position but your availability isn’t right for moving up. There is upward mobility in many retail jobs, but often it means little pay or benefits increases for quite a significant amount more work. It really depends on the corporation or business, as well. However, I find that retail workers build an incredible amount of skills that can bleed over to other types of jobs or future schooling opportunities,” Short concluded.

A New Nigerian Humanist Event with Dr. Leo Igwe

Why are humanists coming together important?

March 2, 2019

Leo Igwe is the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement and former Western and Southern African representative of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. He is among the most prominent African non-religious people from the African continent. When he speaks, many people listen in a serious way.

He holds a Ph.D. from the Bayreuth International School of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth in Germany, having earned a graduate degree in Philosophy from the University of Calabar in Nigeria. Here we talk about a new humanist event that took place.

Looking at the landscape of belief and nonbelief, in terms of the traditional religions on offer around the world, we come to the perspective of the nonbelief or the secular regarding the standard religious answers provided in a number of contexts.

One of those is the general way in which the nonreligious or the secular carve themselves into groups. Some may see themselves as representatives of Richard Dawkins and memes, while making what seem like externalized phrenological investigations: meme maps of the self.

Others look simply for the separation of church and state, mosque and government, or otherwise. There is a general notion of ways of life as well, including humanists and ethical culture people, or in worldviews, including skeptics and Brights.

Nigerians have been gathered through the founder of the humanist movement in Nigeria Dr. Leo Igwe. He has been an incredibly important figure in this.

He, prior to the event in an interview, stated, “This event is important in several respects. First, it is the first of its kind because, at this event, humanists, atheists, agnostics, and freethinkers in Nigeria are meeting to discuss an unusual topic: Leaving Religion. Humanists are convening to share their stories and experiences. Too often, people who are persecuted for leaving a religion or for renouncing religious beliefs suffer physical attacks and psychological abuses.”

Noting, of course, the, obvious, reasons for some leaving formal religion found in, for example, those who have been abused by a religious family or community, or the communal and familial practitioners of the religion.

Even being critical in public, whole societies may react negatively to the more prominent cases with threats, harassment, and intimidation. This, in Nigeria, is particularly bad, because many, many people simply lack the access to a space built for and by the non-religious, the non-believers.

“Thus, many non-believers live in fear. They suffer silently. Those who doubt or disbelieve religious claims think that they are alone and that their persecution is normal because those who persecute non-believers do so with impunity,” Igwe explained, “This convention provides a rare and historic platform to break the silence and give the doubters and disbelievers a space to share their stories and register their concerns.”

This event, set for January 12 in Abuja, sets an important tone as to those Nigerians who may doubt and even reject the fundamentalist religious certainties of much of the society, even wanting a more secular Nigerian state.

Igwe said, “In addition, the dominant impression is that the religious public treated others kindly and compassionately including non-believers. In fact, there is seldom the case. This event draws attention to religious cruelties, to the various ways that the religious maltreat those who exit religion.”

But coming from all this, it is intended to build on the previous meetings of rationalists and humanists in their fight against “witchcraft related abuses, Osu caste system, religious extremism, and related human rights abuses etc.”

These programs and initiatives exist within Nigeria, but these can create havoc in the lives of those who organize them or attend them. It, simply as a matter of course, is much more difficult for Nigerians to find their way within the society than others.

“The program will highlight the stories and experiences of those who have abandoned religion and those who are trying to do so. There will be testimonies from those who left the Christian, Islamic and traditional religion,” Igwe, commenting on highlights, said, “They will recount their struggles with their families, friends and the community at large. At this event, those who have exited religion will explain the reasons and justifications for their actions. They will also get to meet other apostates in a friendly and welcoming environment.”

The central purpose, according to Igwe, for the creation and attendance of this event in Nigeria for the non-religious is to help them know that there are others just like them and that the non-religious demographic has a history. There is a backdrop for them; there is a place for them; this is a situation in which they can feel understood.

The rights, lives, and ideas of the nonbelievers matter in this context, especially for those who have been left out of society and, thus, feel alone in a number of ways – even rejected in a number of others.

“A community is a necessity for humanists because one potent mechanism that religious believers use to undermine humanism is ostracization. They sanction those who exit religion or those who live as non-religious persons. Religious believers cut off family and community ties. They treat non-believers as social outcasts. Building a community is critical in beating back the tide of persecution and abuse that humanists suffer in Nigeria,” Igwe explained.

The capital of Nigeria – Abuja – as mentioned was the place for it. This is an especially important event for the nonbelievers because, in this context, they can finally find some community with those who simply see “clashes between Islamic jihadists, herdsmen and Christians.”

Igwe lamented, “People who leave religion or who question religious beliefs live in constant fear of their lives, their jobs, businesses, and family relationships. This is because sanctioning, sometimes violently those who renounce religions or those who criticize religious claims have been part of the religious tradition. Religion is so visible in Africa mainly because the religious

do everything overtly and covertly to suppress, oppress, undermine, exclude and make invisible irreligious and non-religious persons and perspectives.”

I thanked him for his time. Then he concluded on the pleasure of being interviewed for reportage on this event.

Ask Charlotte 3— Training Grassroots Activists in Palestine

How does social media training empower grassroots activists in Palestine?

March 2, 2019

Charlotte Littlewood is the Founding Director of [Become The Voice CIC](#). A grass roots youth centred community interest company that she has built in response to the need to tackle hate, extremism and radicalisation within communities and online.

When I asked Charlotte about the social media training for the grassroots activists in Palestine, she talked about the full program set out for them. They may have the motivation. But the Palestinian youth may not have the appropriate training with everything.

Alongside the social media training, Littlewood worked on the creation of various levels of awareness. For example, this included women's groups looking at domestic violence, abortion rights, early marriage, in addition to the well-known stigma surrounding divorce.

“They could put forward their reflections and positive message on social media. Some had large social media followings. They all had Instagram, Facebook accounts, Twitter was new to them. We started with basic training around Twitter,” Littlewood explained, “Because they weren’t using that as much. Then skills like making sure the hashtag you’re using is the most popular hashtag of its type. The use of hashtags on Instagram and not on Facebook (because there is no point). @ing at people who have followers, so you can have more exposure and people in the conversation.”

Littlewood went into more of the specifics of the training for the social media in terms of the ways in which to optimally utilize the boldness of colors, the captions in the Instagram posts, and then, also, the faces are used. Presumably, this would include active and intelligent, and so discretionary, use of emojis and so on.

However, with the current culture in Hebron, Littlewood remarked on how some activists did not want to show their faces, while, at the same time, others did.

“Then there are certain times in the day for Facebook and Instagram posts. Instagram is pretty much active all day. Facebook has peak times. We try to make sure everything is optimized. We then had everyone join a group, so they would like and share with each other to be a platform for one another,” Littlewood stated.

The activist will choose a topic. They will focus on it. Then this will be the basis for garnering more awareness. The work in the groups who were training ended on how to know if you’re a victim and if someone is a victim.

“The things around posts, how and what to post and the tone of the posts and making sure to use hashtags and include organizations with large followings; Twitter was taught, how to set it up. They were very competent on Facebook. They are using social media a lot already,” Littlewood concluded, “But there are some cultural issues around images and images of people, interpretations of Islam that women should not be doing social media themselves. There are mixed approaches to social media posts with girls around that.”

Please see the project report: <https://becomethevoice.org/news-insights/>

Ask Dr. Robertson 1—Counselling and Therapy

What are these two fields? How do these terms differ from one another?

March 3, 2019

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson is a Registered Doctoral Psychologist with expertise in Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Human Resource Development. He earned qualifications in Social Work too.

His research interests include memes as applied to self-knowledge, the evolution of religion and spirituality, the Aboriginal self's structure, residential school syndrome, prior learning recognition and assessment, and the treatment of attention deficit disorder and suicide ideation.

In addition, he works in anxiety and trauma, addictions, and psycho-educational assessment, and relationship, family, and group counseling. Here we talk about the psychotherapy, and standard terms and definitions.

I started the conversation with an obvious acknowledgment of a large number of postsecondary qualifications acquired by Dr. Robertson. But this quickly shifted into the central content to begin to the educational series., which is setting the definitional tone and tenor with psychotherapy and counseling. What are they? How are they defined in a modern sense?

Robertson stated, “Psychotherapy is concerned with the process of change at the level of the individual. If the discomfort a client feels is due to external events, that individual must still choose to respond to those events in some way. An element of free will is thus built into the core practice of the discipline. There is much evidence to indicate that we are not born with free will and that it is never entirely unencumbered.”

He – Robertson – argued for the teaching of clients how to self-actualize based on a specified mental model. A model in which there is an explanation with defined premises as to which it is to be a human being.

This would incorporate a social and volitional self with objective beliefs having a form of internal self-consistency. Robertson makes the case that this is an idealized notion of self: with “uniqueness, constancy, and volitionality as a product of changes in culture. In this, the modern sense of self is cross-cultural, which links to the work in psychotherapy and counseling.

“The terms ‘counseling’ and ‘psychotherapy’ are often used interchangeably; however the former can be applied to anyone who gives advice or ‘counsel.’ ‘Psychotherapy’ is a narrower term that refers to applied psychology,” Robertson explained, “although it has also been appropriated by social workers and others who do not necessarily receive training specific to psychology. This term, at least within the field of psychology, does not generally refer to advice-giving but to self-change, that is, change to the self of the individual.”

Robertson views the Adlerians, or the school of thought emerging from Alfred Adler, as having the cleanest or clearest definition between the work of psychotherapy and counseling. Neither involves the giving of advice.

“Therapy is what is done when a change to the structure of the self is required. Counseling assumes an intact self but that circumstances, such environmental or societal constraints, require the development of problem-solving and perception checking skills. In both modes of intervention, counseling and psychotherapy, Adlerians would refrain from giving advise but would invite the client to select a plan from a variety of co-constructed possibilities,” Robertson described.

He also went into the definition of “theory.” Robertson described how psychology “misappropriated” the word from the harder sciences and then used them in the softer sciences. This transitioned into the work of Thomas Kuhn, who wrote a famous text entitled *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The labels of the wide smattering of psychotherapy schools as simply different theories may be a misreading of Thomas Kuhn and, in fact, “retarded psychology’s evolution into a true science,” Robertson explained.

Robertson concluded, “As Korhonen brilliantly argued in her dissertation research, these schools, along with the counseling of Inuit elders, and the practice of multicultural psychotherapy share the same basic assumptions as to the structure of the self, and these assumptions include the importance of individual choice, the understanding of client difference, and the importance of context. These assumptions constitute a unified theory of what it means to be human.”

Ask Dr. Robertson 2 – Psychotherapy

What is this specific school of thought? How does this work in practical terms?

March 3, 2019

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson is a Registered Doctoral Psychologist with expertise in Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Human Resource Development. He earned qualifications in Social Work too.

His research interests include memes as applied to self-knowledge, the evolution of religion and spirituality, the Aboriginal self's structure, residential school syndrome, prior learning recognition and assessment, and the treatment of attention deficit disorder and suicide ideation.

In addition, he works in anxiety and trauma, addictions, and psycho-educational assessment, and relationship, family, and group counseling. Here we talk about the psychotherapy.

In some previous interviews for the Athabasca University student magazine, *The Voice Magazine*, Robertson and I discussed some of the background and work of Robertson in addition to some material on psychotherapy and then some of the prominent figures within it.

We continued to discuss the definition of psychotherapy, especially what the therapeutic process involves for the individual student too. To Robertson, as a certified and qualified, and highly intelligent, practitioner, described psychotherapy as a process – no mention as to the specific speed – of effectuating change in the individual who voluntarily enters into a relationship with the patient or client (and vice versa), this implies a lot, and requires significant unpacking.

“The change is psychological in that it is intended to impact positively on the client’s cognitive and emotional functioning. The therapist acts as a facilitator of such change in keeping with the client’s goals. There is a consensus across the schools of psychotherapy that the therapeutic process is not advice giving,” Robertson stated, “To give advice is to presume that the advice-giver knows the client better than the client does. To give advice is disempowering because, if the advice works, it leaves the client dependent on the advice-giver the next time there is a problem.”

The central purpose of the psychotherapeutic methodology is for the development of the individual, as a client or patient, who is seen as a person of worth and volition. There are differences between schools of thought in psychotherapy.

Some incorporate advise giving. Others do not, and, instead, focus on the issue of solving problems. Thus, we come to the general field of the practice known as psychotherapy and then the individuated schools of thought within psychotherapy. Still more, some will mix and match the terminology of psychotherapy and counseling together, which was covered, in brief, in the first of this series.

Two of the main thinkers known to the public are Freud and Jung. Both, according to Robertson, brought attention to the phylogenetic factors within the work of studying the human psyche, in the broadest terms possible. Bearing in mind, of course, the two of them did not have the

advanced technological means for comprehension of the physical structure of the organ producing the mind at the time.

It seems akin to the ancient Greeks with the Milesian school, and others, where we can see tremendous amounts of metaphysics without much physics; this created a number of issues in theorization about the bottom rung of the world in terms of magnitude and constituents. They talked about the *Apeiron* or the infinite, water, and air. But they did not have the physics to get at the fundamental notion of a basic structure and set of constituents of the universe.

It may have been cognitive limits. It may have been philosophical conceptual limits. At the same time, certainly, it was a limit in the ways of knowing the world through their tools. These individuals and societies had a limitation in their ability to know the world around them, in a natural sense. But they had lots of fancy thoughts about it: sophisticated, intuitive, and, wrong, metaphysics.

Robertson continued on Freud and Jung, “By suggesting that archetypes are encoded, instinctive, preconfigured patterns of action, Jung was, in effect, taking a deterministic stance. Similarly, in Freud’s tripartite division the poor ego is left frantically balancing the instinctual drives of the id with the dictatorial culturally determined superego. Although I am not a determinist, I count the recognition of genetic and environmental constraints as an important contribution. I think Freud’s greatest contribution is that he popularized the idea that psychology is a science.”

Robertson considered another important contribution of Freud the bringing out of the closet – so to speak – the limitations on the sexuality of the Victorian era. He thinks Freud got the notion of penis envy wrong. Alfred Adler described how women can be envious of men in the early 20th century, not because of penis envy but, because of a great deal of social inequality.

“Jung’s conceptualization of archetypes from which we create meaning has application to cultural and self studies, but he dabbled in mysticism and his notion that there exists a collective unconscious has bolstered the beliefs of some religionists. This can have dangerous consequences,” Robertson cautioned.

According to Robertson, Jung claimed the so-called Aryan race was somehow was rooted in the land; whereas, the Jewish peoples were a rootless people – nomadic almost, or even in actuality. This belief contributed to the awful rise of Nazism that led to all sorts of horrors and catastrophes. Jung looked at the ideas of Freud and Adler as okay for the Jewish peoples, but claimed his psychology was more suitable for the German “Volk.”

The conversation went into figures of similar notoriety but, unfortunately, without more public recognition within the general consciousness. Robertson’s opinion is that Adler never received, even to the present day, sufficient recognition for contributions to the intellectual life of the psychologists in the history of psychology and right into the present.

Robertson also mentioned Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers in terms of leading the charge of Humanist Psychotherapy. Duly note, Robertson is the Vice-President of Humanist Canada. This may be biased, but, certainly, not an unjustified or uninformed opinion.

Intriguingly, he described how, in fact, Adler was given insufficient recognition by these two giants – Maslow and Rogers – of Humanistic Psychotherapy, especially with Adler as a precursor to their ideas and theories. The concepts of self-actualization and client-centered therapy, in particular.

Adler concluded, on self-actualization, that this is – in the words of Adler – a “striving for perfection.” Indeed, he provided a basis an anticipatory psychological basis, or psychotherapeutic foundation – of sorts, for the client centered therapy with the declaration of “the patient or client was expert in his or her self with psychotherapy defined as a collaboration between experts,” Robertson stated.

Adler set foot within behaviorism, too. He had, apparently, “homework assignments” intended for the reinforcement and reshaping of the behavior of clients or patients. However, Robertson speculated that, perhaps, the behaviorists of the time may have been irked, maybe, with the notion of mankind having consciousness and freedom of the will of some form. Any form – compatibilist, incompatibilist, and so on – freedom of the will becomes a problem for the fundamental substructure of the theories of behaviorists.

In this manner, Robertson proposed, rather naturally, the anticipation, once more of another field, of Cognitive-Behaviorism. Albert Ellis, who founded Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (these are all the biggest theories and methodologies, even in the current period), credited Adler with an influence on the development of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy. His basic aim was the recognition or suggestion of clients as they went about revision of their worldviews. Meaning-making is a modern view of human beings. We evolved to make meaning in the world. This is a view of some or many modern psychotherapists.

Robertson concluded, “Today we have a plethora of schools of psychological practice with the founders of each emphasizing some feature or technique that makes their school distinctive. I argued in https://www.hawkeyeassociates.ca/images/pdf/academic/Free_Will.pdf that these schools are united by a theory of human potentiality and that the project of psychotherapy is to teach people to reach the potential implied by that theory. I think Adler tapped into this vision of what it means to be human over a century ago and he addressed it holistically.”

Ask Gayleen 2—Publishing Progressive Voices

Why are the construction of progressive voices in South Africa important now?

March 4, 2019

Gayleen Cornelius is a South African human rights activist from Willowmore; a tiny town in the Eastern Cape province. She grew up a coloured (the most ethnically diverse group in the world with Dutch, Khoisan, Griqua, Zulu, Xhosa Indian, and East Asian ancestry). Despite being a large Demographic from Cape Town to Durban along the coast, the group is usually left out of the racial politics that plague the nation. She has spoken out against identity politics, racism, workplace harassment, religious bigotry and different forms of abuse. She is also passionate about emotional health and identifies as an empath/ humanist. Here we talk about Cornelius Press and progressive voices.

I should preface this with the proclamation that Cornelius is, in fact, my boss, as she is the main person running the, at present, down *Cornelius Press*. That progressive, not common, publication and voice within South Africa and, in turn, southern Africa.

Her work, along with Takudzwa Mazwienduna, is rare. *Cornelius Press* went through some difficulties with the publications because of the transition of the website.

Cornelius stated, “The *Cornelius Press* website was hosted by a huge German tech company in South Africa. We had more than one website hosted by the company but they restricted ads for some content which was considered not favorable for advertisers. This had a serious implication on the website’s potential for revenue and as a result, we ended up indebted to the company with *Cornelius Press* being suspended.”

Following this, obvious, concern, I looked into the next steps for the publication given the current rebooting issues. Cornelius stated that they are on the lookout for more “wallet-friendly” services at the moment.

I asked about some progressive voices within South Africa. She mentioned the important fact that South Africa is, probably, among the most progressive countries in Africa. This is important and indicative of the non-accidental development of progressive publications such as *Cornelius Press* there compared to other places in Africa.

“The government alone has been implementing progressive policies since 1994 with same-sex marriage being legalized years before most first world countries caught up. There hasn’t been much cause for activism on a broader scale except for the problem of racism,” Cornelius explained, “Most activists in South Africa today fight against racism and income inequality, our two biggest problems that the end of apartheid didn’t take with it.”

The farther left movements including the Economic Freedom Fighters and the alt-right activists are in the mainstream of the civil discourse and so the civil society within South Africa. There is a huge “rage” of identity-based politics there, too.

Cornelius, on the identity politics, concluded, “... the progress we South Africans take for granted is lost. There is a need for progressive activists to make it in the mainstream and protect whatever liberties are under threat.”

Ask Tara 3—Changing Gender Dynamics in the Workplace

How can a change in the rules of jobs help for healthier dynamics there?

March 4, 2019

Tara Abhasakun is a colleague. We have written together before. I reached out because of the good journalism by her. I wanted to get some expert opinion on women's rights, journalism, and so on. I proposed a series. She accepted. Abhasakun studied history at The College of Wooster. Much of her coursework was in Middle East history.

After graduating Tara started blogging about the rights of women, LGBT, and minorities in MENA. She is currently a freelance writer. She is of Thai, Iranian, and European descent. She has lived in Bangkok and San Francisco. Here we talk about updating gender dynamics in the workplace.

When I opened on the conversation on the newer open channels of talking about sexual misconduct, in not only work and but almost all situations – personal and professional, I wanted to get Abhasakun's opinion on the ways in which this, specifically, would impact the workplace dynamics of the genders.

Abhasakun stated, “I think that in the beginning, things may be a bit rocky because many people are afraid about false accusations and the idea that anything they do will be read as misconduct. I think that in light of the #MeToo movement, we are seeing some of the frustrations over this issue fizzle out.”

Abhasakun views much of the expressed frustration is, basically, from men who are real misogynists. Those men who feel as if every interaction with women can be seen as harassment or potentially branded as such.

“I don’t have all the answers. But I think the beauty of the #MeToo movement is that we are HAVING these conversations. This is only the beginning, and I think the reason we see this type of tension, awkwardness, and frustration is BECAUSE we are finally addressing issues that, for a long time, have been swept under the rug,” Abhasakun opined, “We are seeing the birth pangs of the movement, now that men and women are thinking about these issues. We are starting to answer questions such as, ‘How much touching is appropriate in X situation?’”

Abhasakun finds these frustrating and, indeed, hard. Because this is simply, not merely, the beginning stages of these forms of discussions. She estimates another generation before clearer answers begin to come forward on these questions.

“But I think that as we continue trying to answer these questions, things will settle down, and hopefully one day we can have a world free of all sexual violence and misconduct, though that day is probably far off in the future... I believe that we need to be careful in prescribing one exact “remedy” for sexual misconduct,” Abhasakun concluded.

Ask Dr. Robertson 3—Social and Psychological Sciences Gone Wrong

How can the studies of the mind and human social systems turn out bad?

March 6, 2019

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson is a Registered Doctoral Psychologist with expertise in Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Human Resource Development. He earned qualifications in Social Work too.

His research interests include memes as applied to self-knowledge, the evolution of religion and spirituality, the Aboriginal self's structure, residential school syndrome, prior learning recognition and assessment, and the treatment of attention deficit disorder and suicide ideation.

In addition, he works in anxiety and trauma, addictions, and psycho-educational assessment, and relationship, family, and group counseling. Here we talk about different notions of empirical and ethical wrongness (and rightness) in science in general and then in psychological and social sciences in particular.

The interview started on the issue of when the sciences, in general, go wrong. Robertson's answer was simply "all the time," in terms of a preliminary answer. Remarking, of course, that proper care in observation, attention to detail, and precision are part and parcel of the scientific process, where, even with imperfections in observation, the proper perspective is that science is tentative, provisional, and perpetually incomplete.

"Therefore, scientists will always acknowledge that their knowledge claims are provisional, dependent on further evidence. This is why, in modern science, replication and peer review are so important in identifying any biases that may have affected interpretations placed on research," Robertson explained, "You may have been referring to Thomas Kuhn with respect to the second part of your question on hidden premises. Kuhn said that for a discipline to become a science it had to be united by a paradigm which he defined as a body of intertwined theoretical and methodological belief."

Way back in the 1970s, there was a declaration that psychology exists as something like a proto-science, an inchoate science, or, perhaps, in some ways, pre-scientific in the modern sense. The reason for this is the incompleteness of the world explained by the scientific processes adhered to, within psychology. It does not have the unifying framework of plate tectonics and continental drift linked to gradualism within geological sciences, evolution by natural selection in biological sciences, the germ theory of disease in medical sciences, Quantum Mechanics and General & Special Relativity of modern physics with – at least – standard Big Bang cosmogony, the Table of Elements of Mendeleev for chemistry, the information theoretic and communication theoretic foundation in the modern world of mass communications and information technologies – including Moore's Law for decades, and so on.

Psychology remains an epistemologically and, therefore, almost entirely, ontologically disjunct endeavor. Some will state freedom of the will, consciousness, and qualia – or the traits of experience (e.g., some may of have heard the oft-said and always-now boring phrase, "The redness of red," akin to the phrase "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence" of the

late astrophysicist Dr. Carl Sagan and variations found in Simone LaPlace, David Hume, and Marcello Truzzi) – as base level problems in psychology without clear solutions. Part of the lack of clarity is the lack of a unified theory, or paradigm rather, in psychology.

Robertson stated, “A quarter of a century later Pat Duffy Hutcheon examined three possible paradigmic formulations in psychology — the psychoanalysis of Freud, the developmentalism of Piaget, and the classical behaviorism of Skinner — and she found all had failed to establish themselves as the dominant paradigm in psychology for various reasons. I believe that since then a fourth paradigm has implicitly taken root in the field and that is the subject of the final chapter in a book I am writing about the evolution of the self. That paradigm is based on our self-definition as a species that includes our selves as discreet, relatively stable, volitional, reflective and rational beings.”

The title of the upcoming book was not given within the context of the interview. However, we can look forward to updates on it. But if we look into the furtherance of the conversation between Robertson and I, the former paradigm of psychotherapy – probably within some remnants floating around in their community – was the cognitivist paradigm. This paradigm was, simply put, a reaction to behaviorism’s limitations in a lack of a coherent explanation of the internal operations of the mind for a simple reason: behaviorists just rejected serious attempts at explications of the inside mechanics of the human mind from early life to late life and death.

“At this time results within the field of psychotherapy are overwhelmingly interpreted from this cognitivist paradigm. Consistently obtained scientific results that cannot be understood within this paradigm would force a scientific revolution replacing this paradigm with another more inclusive one,” Robertson explained, “I suppose you could say the research and interpretations of findings are ‘poisoned’ by the assumptions built into the more primitive paradigm. The classical example of this would be the pre-Copernican notion that Earth was the center of the universe. Using this paradigm, the planets exhibited complicated orbits around Earth, sometime speeding up or slowing down, performing strange loops and so on until the paradigm shifted placing our sun in the center of the solar system.”

In some interesting writing on freedom of the will, Robertson made an argument for an emergent psychological paradigm within the studies of the mind with volition and rational choice as fundamental in the species-wide self-definition. Some, in response, see this as a construct of individualism while, also, poisoning individuals against what some deem collectivism. He does not share this critique, but views this as, at root, an academic debate for the time.

Robertson considers the public not seeing the slow, incomplete progress of science and, in particular, its own correcting methodology built into itself. Science does not create knowledge or assert wisdom as in the case of various ideologies and religions, but, instead, harbors a tentativeness without an assumption of absolute knowledge.

“An example of this would be the attack on the theory of evolution by people who want to believe Earth is only 6,000 years old. A second example would be people who believe environmental scientists are part of a great conspiracy to fake evidence related to global warming. A third example would be people who wish to think that evidence debunking notions

that our minds are a “blank slate” when we are born are part of a patriarchal backlash,” Robertson stated.

He recalled an interview with the late Dr. Carl Sagan, of *Cosmos* fame, and the Dalai Lama, of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. In it, the Dalai Lama stated that if there was an impossibility of reincarnation, then the belief in reincarnation within Buddhism would need to alter to the more accurate scientific view at that time. Robertson considered this an important aspect of remaining tentative in conclusions so as not to be servants of belief systems, whatever the source.

Within the contexts of the Canadian story, the narrative of Canada, we come to the issues of dark patches – long ones – in the historical record with the Residential School system or the residential schools and the associated problems of enforcement of one religious culture with the sanction of the government, and then the abuse, the intergenerational impacts of the abuse, the imposition of a bureaucratic developmental model rather than a community development model, and the needs of the community being ignored for long periods of time – right into the present.

Robertson, in reflection on work as the Director of Health and Social Development for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations in the 1980s, stated, “...many chiefs repeated the refrain that they had been ‘studied to death.’ They were, of course, not claiming that they had been physically harmed. They were claiming that there had been numerous studies and they had not seen any positive results. In some cases, studies were conducted but the results were not communicated back to the communities in question. I believe that knowledge should be ‘open access’ and shared between all stakeholders.”

Robertson then made a distinction and transitioned into a conversation on the ways in which the psychological knowledge acquired has been utilized in the past and in the current period with the emergent fourth paradigm. For example, while the Director of Health and Social Development, a band education authority hired a psychometrician for a reserve in northern Saskatchewan. The psychometrician was Albertan and from Edmonton in particular.

This Edmontonian psychometrician tested the intelligence of the elementary pupils on the reserve, where 60% of those students were labeled mentally handicapped or were found to be mentally handicapped based on the results of the psychometric testing. Robertson noted the cultural bias in intelligence testing. In fact, Robertson knows the northern Saskatchewan community from the testing.

“...I can tell you that the psychometrician must not have followed test protocol with respect to testing children whose second language is English and who come from cultural traditions do not favor speeded, timed tests. At first, the band education committee was happy with these results as they received considerable extra funding for special needs children,” Robertson explained, “But this was, in my opinion, a false economy with a negative impact. You see, educational programming for mentally handicapped is quite different from what was needed.”

Robertson in further reflection on former professional capacities as the Director of Life Skills for the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. He described how he educated students from a variety of remote communities in the forms of habits and skills required for academic success.

The program added one year to the university education of the students, but the initiative with the adaptations was incredibly successful.” Robertson found an important part of the educational process where the education in cross-cultural skills necessary for academic success, especially in the context of modern industrialized society and the global economy.

The conversation moved to a closing section on the alleviation of the impacts of RSS or residential school syndrome. Robertson separated the task of scientists to study the natural world and then the work for the greater good. In this sense, science is good for knowledge about the world. The question about a greater good is another question, which can mean those in power – the “power-brokers” – can abuse their influence and control and, in fact, limit research into things, including climate change – as happened in Canada under the leadership of former Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper.

“Decisions by authorities on what constitutes the greater good are often ideologically based. That being said, research into ways to alleviate human suffering interests me, and as you have alluded, residential school syndrome has been one of my interests. As a kid who stayed with the families of friends on reserve in the 60s, I knew something about the dark history of Indian residential schools,” Robertson stated, “So, I was surprised when chiefs in Saskatchewan commissioned me, along with my colleague Perry Redman, to do research into keeping one of these schools open after they had been closed elsewhere in the country.”

The world is complex and rarely black and white. In this gray example, Robertson was hired as a youth suicide prevention expert, as a school psychologist, in a different Indian Residential School. Under Amerindian administration, the school remained open. Robertson continued to explain how he was “commissioned” by Indian Child and Family Services in Lac La Ronge in order to have a better look at the students in “one of the last remaining residential schools in the country.”

Robertson stated, “Then, at the turn of the millennium, I accepted a contract with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to provide psychological support to various projects aimed at alleviating the effects of residential schools in northern Saskatchewan. I have published articles on residential school syndrome and the related concept of historic trauma.”

RSS has been identified as one form of PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder affecting some minority of individuals who have attended the residential schools in Canada. The symptomatology includes “extreme rage, lack of emotional connection with one [who] has children, and aggressive alcohol and drug abuse in addition to those symptoms that are normally associated with PTSD.”

In the work of Robertson, which has its own noble underpinning, in my opinion, includes a combination of CBT or Cognitive Behaviour Therapy – probably one of the most common and widely used forms of therapy – alongside Narrative Therapy. The purpose is to use a form of traditional Aboriginal storytelling as one way in which to construct meaning. One view in the psychological community is that human beings are meaning-making beings. Narrative Therapy follows in this tradition.

Robertson emphasized the import of individualization of the treatment for the clients, as in an individual assessment and treatment per client or patient. He described how some have had benefits from the practices and learning experiences about Turtle Island or “North American” Aboriginal traditions and spirituality and, in turn, ways of looking at the world. In [an article](#) by Robertson, he noted how some elders feel attempted introduction of Aboriginal Spirituality, by the band health administration, is somewhat or simply oppressive.

“A concern I have is the tendency of some to essentialize and universalize experience. One woman approached me worried that she might be ‘in denial.’ She had good memories of her residential school experience and was leading a happy and productive life, but the negative media reports about these schools had led her to question her remembered experiences,” Robertson concluded, “Not all residential schools were the same and not all students at such schools suffered or witnessed abuse. Even worse, in my opinion, is the concept of historic trauma, where a whole race of people is said to suffer from a psychological condition irrespective of when, where and under what conditions colonization occurred. In my mind, undo psychologising is destructive of peoples’ mental health.”

Ask Gayleen 1—South African Progressivism

What is this political and social philosophy within the context of South Africa?

March 8, 2019

Gayleen Cornelius is a South African human rights activist from Willowmore; a tiny town in the Eastern Cape province. She grew up a colored (the most ethnically diverse group in the world with Dutch, Khoisan, Griqua, Zulu, Xhosa Indian, and East Asian ancestry). Despite being a large Demographic from Cape Town to Durban along the coast, the group is usually left out of the racial politics that plague the nation. She has spoken out against identity politics, racism, workplace harassment, religious bigotry and different forms of abuse. She is also passionate about emotional health and identifies as an empath/ humanist. Here we talk about South African progressivism.

Starting on the points about forming the first progressive publication in South Africa, of which I was privileged to take part, Cornelius spoke about the story of the construction and growth of *Cornelius Press*.

Cornelius stated, “We live in a very Afrikaner (Dutch) area known as the Garden Route. Local newspapers and media outlets aim to preserve the culture and never brings up progressive concerns unlike bigger cities like Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg or Durban that have progressed out of apartheid norms. News publications in these major cities are not dedicated to progressive issues either because they do not find the need to; their diverse communities are already liberal.”

The purpose of the publication was to counter some of the racism in South Africa. In particular, since the apartheid regimes, Garden Route has not progressed, as it remains white dominated with a hiddenness inside of wine and hop farms and forests. Those forests overlooking some of the Southern parts of the Indian Ocean.

Cornelius’s partner, Takudzwa Mazwienduna, chose to develop the publication for the complete set of progressive African concerns in order to balance the not necessarily progressive media seen by some South Africans.

“Social trivia (with a lot of reports on speculations about witchcraft allegations), political propaganda and tourism journals summarizes everything there is to know about Southern African media. We tried our best to juggle our livelihoods with this new initiative, but our barriers by far outweighed anything we could handle at that time,” Cornelius stated, “South Africa is undoubtedly the most progressive country in Africa. It was the first to recognize LGBTQ rights on the continent, did away with most repressive laws (especially from Apartheid), pushed for secularism in public schools and recently legalized cannabis for recreational purposes. A lot of people will attest to the fact that South Africa is a lot more liberal than most first world countries.”

These are important statements from individuals living in a somewhat demonized area of the world, except for the legacy of the late Nelson Mandela and others. Cornelius spoke on a variety

of rather terrible atrocities including the purportedly ‘corrective’ rape of lesbians. In fact, this is common, not rare.

Cornelius said, “A lot of the demographics that make up the population still uphold inhumane cultural norms like how domestic violence is considered normal in African communities, arranged marriages in Indian groups and racism in white communities. These unhealthy social vices that people overlook slackens our progressive legislation.”

She went on to describe the workplace too. It is a bad place for undocumented African immigrants. Those who lack rights and can be abused, then the abuse or violence against them is not reported in any way. She explained parts of this as the reason for the extreme crime rate and violent strikes within the country. There are progressive policies. However, there needs to be follow-up.

“Inhumane cultural norms, racism and a low regard for worker’s rights are the three main impediments holding the country back in terms of progressivism. There is need for cultural reform. Cultural practices that infringe on human rights should be ruled out. There is need for race relations to improve too. There has been cases of white farmers who kill their black and coloured workers for sport, black workers who retaliate; repaying violence with violence,” Cornelius concluded, “When the news comes out from the white owned publications, it is just the black workers who are pointed out as murderers. The media and politicians should give a non racialist view when dealing with problems affecting South Africa to encourage all the citizens to work together with a common goal. Worker’s rights should also be addressed discouraging the culture of exploiting workers.”

Ask Dr. Robertson 4—Just You and Me, One-on-One Counselling

How does this aspect of psychology work in intimate settings between a professional and a client/patient?

March 9, 2019

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson is a Registered Doctoral Psychologist with expertise in Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Human Resource Development. He earned qualifications in Social Work too.

His research interests include memes as applied to self-knowledge, the evolution of religion and spirituality, the Aboriginal self's structure, residential school syndrome, prior learning recognition and assessment, and the treatment of attention deficit disorder and suicide ideation.

In addition, he works in anxiety and trauma, addictions, and psycho-educational assessment, and relationship, family, and group counseling. Here we talk about the clientele.

Some of the first steps, even non-verbal ones, for the client to counselor relationship is the construction of trust and rapport. Robertson stated that half of the variance in therapeutic outcomes relates to the rapport in the client-counselor relationship.

Some psychologists, generally speaking, have concluded on the ways in which the school or the methodology of the counselor may, in fact, be unimportant, or, at least, not that important in the larger scheme. Indeed, data from studies show rapport as an important factor in the positive outcomes of the patient regardless of the school of thought in counseling psychology.

Robertson stated, “Probably the easiest way to build rapport is to identify commonalities between therapist and client. This could include gender, race, ethnicity, religion, social status, and so on. Once the client has revealed the problem or issue that has brought him or her to therapy, the therapist may share that he has faced a similar issue, and this too has the effect of establishing rapport, but there are risks associated with this approach.”

But as with the artistic nature of the endeavor, there are a variety of risks and dangers. Some of those can undermine the therapeutic process in its entirety. If we take a look into the issue of the volitional self, as one can see in the research work of Robertson, this tends to form a post-behaviorist and modernist sensibility of the self. One with the ability to will something; an organism with freedom of the will, volition, or, at a minimum, the appearance of it, and the internalized self-justification of it, whether or not freedom of the will exists.

These unique volitional selves comprising human families, human communities, and human societies. Robertson talked about the possible risk in the over-emphasizing the external common traits, as this can deny some of the more self-empowering aspects or facets of the therapeutic process.

“The clearest example I can think of occurred when I was Director of Mental Health for Northern Saskatchewan. Concerned with the lack of effectiveness of its alcohol and drug addiction program, the province brought its addiction program under the authority of the mental health program. I discovered that addictions workers had been hired,” Robertson opined, “not on

the basis of their competence in psychotherapy, but on the basis of their status as “recovered” alcoholics. These workers had maintained sobriety for years, and they thought they could use their own experience as a template for others. They gave advice based on their own experiences and they thought they were doing therapy. Such an approach denies the individual experiences and cognitions of the client.”

Robertson went into another problem with the finding of common identity with the client in the possibility of a confirmation of a “dysfunctional worldview.” He noted psychotherapy is simply about the transformation from one range of mental states to another. Thus, if a patient continues onward into a dysfunctional range of mental states through the affirmation of the worldview by the counselor or the psychotherapist, and if this is happening because of the rapport built with the client or the patient, then the therapist or the counsellor may be liable and, as importantly, the client or the patient may fail in their desired ends – to become more functional in their range of mental states in the context in which they live, in contrast to their current way of life. We’re talking about a reduction in human suffering. It seems like a serious issue to me, in this light.

Robertson relayed an example stating, “If a man comes to me having been abused by women, and I reveal to him that I also have been abused by women, then we could commiserate and blame while avoiding dealing with the changes the man will need to make to have healthy transsexual relationships. Similarly, Feminist Psychotherapy adds an ideological perspective to the field and that perspective could keep female clients from undergoing beneficial self-change.”

The key word in the quotation, truly, is the phrase “self-change,” in which the client or patient, ultimately, needs to own their decisions, their tools for dealing with life, and, in turn, their tools for dealing with their decisions in life, whether happenstance trauma including abuse by a man or a woman, or life tragedies that come everyone’s way.

Robertson was right to point out: this is not a discounting of the therapist and client commonalities in the construction of rapport. However, it is important, especially in dealing with individuals not functioning at 100% capacity – so to speak, to work with a knowledge of the ponds, the sandboxes, and the rough (if you will pardon a golf metaphor) in order to work within a healthy range of treatments for the benefit of the client and within professional ethics in the field of counselling (and psychotherapy).

“There is another way of building the therapeutic alliance. Adler viewed the client or patient as an expert in himself and therapy as a collaboration between two experts. Another way of picturing this approach is to view the therapist as a kind of consultant. The client identifies the issues he or she wishes to tackle, and I offer alternative therapies the client may use to reach agreed upon goals. We then co-construct a treatment plan,” Robertson explained.

This alternative. This form of treatment can be useful. With the provision of a variety of techniques and sussing out the strengths and, indeed, weaknesses of the client, the counselor/psychotherapist can help with the creation of never-had or better self-monitoring and self-assessment skills of the client or patient.

Another thing for counselors to keep in mind is the issue of timelines. How long will the client need before more intensive help if at all? How much time will this take for the sessions? What is the overall projected timeline based on the explicit goals of the client or the patient?

Robertson said, “In most cases, the client comes to me with an issue or issues on which they wish to work. We don’t necessarily stay with the same issue. In one example, the client came to me with the complaint that she was too sensitive to criticism. Following a couple of sessions, it became apparent that she was the recipient of emotional abuse, so this shifted the strategies we used.”

A new client came to Robertson complaining about an inability to maintain long-term attention. He subsequently noted how she had difficulty focussing because of the depression. This then involved a re-negotiation of the treatment planning. He likes to project possible sessions into the future in order to develop a treatment plan, where Robertson and the client/patient can then see how many of the targeted objectives were achieved (or not). This evaluation could lead to ending the sessions, continuing on course, or trying a new one negotiated together, *und so weiter*.

Now, there is the final issue discussed in this session dealing with the possibility of a traumatic experience victim client or patient and a counselor having the transference of the trauma to themselves, or simply the problem of the reactivity of the counselor. If a counselor had similar negative life experiences, then this can create a problem for them. A man who is a professional, licensed, and respected counseling psychologist within the community of professional counseling psychologists may have witnessed the abuse of one parent by another in their youth and, in turn, hearing the recounting, by a patient or client, of their own traumatic experiences in a similar context can work them up.

“Hopefully the counselor has dealt with his or her related traumas before they attempt to help someone who has had a similar traumatic experience. If the counselor has not successfully dealt with that trauma then he or she should not accept such clients,” Robertson explained, “On the other hand, if the counselor has successfully dealt with a similar event, that counselor may be able to offer unique helpful insights. The person who experiences a trauma is not necessarily forever wounded by it. The issue of transference was first noted by Freud who viewed the client or patient’s attribution of emotions and motivations to the therapist as an opportunity to generate positive insight.”

Robertson narrowed in on the concern, of mine, in terms of the client or patient relationship with the counselor or therapist. In that, they may take on the emotions of the patient or client. There is a certain intimacy that develops in the sessions with the counselor or the therapist. He remarked on Karl Rogers and the stance that unconditional positive regard is important as a therapeutic stance.

Alfred Adler stated that one needs to get inside the skin of the client, to see the world as others see it – as the patient sees it. The possible danger in this instance is the possibility of facets of the worldview and trauma of the patient being taken on by the counselor.

Robertson concluded, “By maintaining this cognitive distance from the client’s emotions and behavior, the therapist is actually modeling those skills the client will need to gain control of

problematic emotionally laden behaviors. Some people equate cognitive distance as a lack of empathy, but this is a misunderstanding of the concept. The therapist practicing cognitive distancing is empathetic enough to understand that the client, to gain control of his or her emotions and behaviors, must be able to sufficiently objectify them to understand them and thereby gain control.”

Ask Kavin 1 — The Demarcation Problem in Food

Why is science in diet important, especially in the public sphere?

March 9, 2019

Kavin Senapathy is a writer covering science, health, medicine, parenting, and the intersection of these topics. Her work appears in Slate, SELF Magazine, Forbes, Skeptical Inquirer, SciMoms, and other outlets. She's a proud "Science Mom" to a 7-year-old and 5-year-old. Here we talk about science and pseudoscience.

The conversation focused on science and pseudoscience in food, and in diet and health and, in turn, the common fads that can continually pop up within recent memory. Of course, to set the stage of the conversation with the wonderful Senapathy is to set the ground, the first stage to set is the difference between science and pseudoscience.

"Pseudoscience can be a powerful weapon in the hands of those who know how to exploit it, primarily because it can sound so credible (and because the demarcation between pseudoscience and science isn't as black and white as some would like to believe). That's especially true for food, and unfortunately, it's not always as clear-cut as separating 'science' from 'pseudoscience,'" Senapathy explained, "Take, for example, the concept of 'clean' eating. It doesn't really mean a whole lot — the FDA only talks about 'clean' with regard to sanitation and food safety, and neither the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics nor the Dietary Guidelines for Americans define 'clean' eating."

Senapathy continued to discuss those who are proponents of the clean food movement. The notion is the avoidance of foods or diets containing synthetic or artificial food additives. However, their fundamental scientific, medical, and dietary claims are base pseudoscience and filled with numerous misrepresentations of the true nature of science, of medicine, and at the interplay between the two with proper health science seen in normal recommendations for diets.

"But that doesn't necessarily mean that people who avoid common clean eating "nonos" (I'm not kidding, major food companies like Panera have "no no lists") are fundamentally misguided. It turns out that these concepts are often more about values than science. Several nebulous food concepts, like "clean" and "GMO", have become proxies for perceived and real ills of the food system," Senapathy stated.

There are common values. There are common circumstances. With similar values and circumstances, communities can come together and form non-science or misinformed and misguided movements. This seems to have happened within the health fad movements. They may talk about corporate control of food, real rises in disease or not, environmentalism, irrational or rational fears about particular chemicals, the health wellness of the young and the general population, and so on.

Senapathy, while remarking she shares some of the values, said, "So, instead of demarcating "science" vs. "pseudoscience," I've come to realize that the most important step we can take is to really define our concerns so that we can truly address them rather than blame dietary

scapegoats. For one example, I wrote about the social consequences of the GMO debate with the other SciMoms [here](#).”

On common fads and myths, Senapathy exclaimed that there are several books on the subject. But that the common ones are that somehow non-GMO is better for the environment or those working in the agricultural industry.

Nonetheless, there may be one area in which there could be substantial progress. That is the area of the microbiome and its health, and then its health’s relation to the health of the entire body and the mind. The research appears to be preliminary. But, in fact, some research seems to indicate a relationship between the microbiome and mental health in a materialistic, biological, non-magical and real correlative sense.

On the nature of campaigns and becoming more involved in activism, Senapathy opined:

The proposed solutions to pseudoscience susceptibility are complex, but one of the biggest missing pieces is that far too many people don’t know the basics of evaluating the credibility of information on the internet, which is where these waves proliferate fastest. I’m also a firm believer that the media’s breakneck pace in the internet age is a problem. An example that comes to mind is the recent, widely-covered study concluding that layers of the body that exist between connective tissue and organs are actually a newly discovered “organ,” called the interstitium, described as “a highway of moving fluid.” Several news outlets breathlessly reported that the discovery of this “organ” could explain how acupuncture works because one of the study authors said so. Turns out that this study doesn’t explain acupuncture at all, and that this specific author has long promoted pseudoscientific ideas about health. I covered the whole thing [for Slate](#) back in April.

Ask Shireen 1—Reformers

How important are reformers within modern Islamic cultural movements?

March 12, 2019

Shireen Qudosi was named one of the top 10 Muslim reformers in North America in 2011. She works to further the progressive movement within Islam. Qudosi earned a B.A. in English and a B.A. in Political Science from University of California, Irvine.

She attended California Western School of Law, but left to build a foundation for her work as a Muslim Reformer. Here we start this educational series off on reformers.

On the work with Qudosi, an important distinction should be made between individuals who leave Islam and others who reform the faith from within it. Her focus has been on the work of reform. In which, she sees this facet of the faith as something happening since its inception into the present day.

Qudosi said, “We see it in the way Islam waxed and waned during Prophet Muhammad’s time, starting out as peaceful and later emerging as a more warring religion when early Muslims were at risk of annihilation. We saw it in the first hundred years after the prophet’s death, as Muslims tried to flesh out the faith, as the faith adapted to local regions and branched into niche interpretations of Islam. And of course, there has been a consistent involvement of scholars (now imams and celebrity community activists) who try to shape Islam based on reasoning or propaganda depending on the character of the individual. For better or worse, Islam is not a static faith. It is better understood if it’s seen as an organism, or an evolving consciousness.”

The new wave of the thought leaders within some of the Islamic communities are the reformers. Women, as a result, have begun to gain more of a voice. Qudosi sees this rise of women as an inevitable aspect of modernity, especially with the prior grooming of some women into silence and even “groomed by voodoo.”

She spoke about the idea of external influences preventing acting as one’s true self. These restrictions can be particularly damaging to girls who become women. This form of “cultural rot” becomes a basis of enjoying an immortality of repressive values for women, in some interpretations of religion.

Qudosi said, “Privately, we are many voices. Publicly, you only see a few handfuls. All of us carry a rich heritage of philosophy and inquiry, and I can’t think of a greater act of faith than to ensure that right is exercised and that legacy is protected for future generations.”

As she founded Muslim Reformers, she wanted to highlight the continuum or reformer beliefs on hand in the modern period. The idea of the injustice and seeking to rectify those injustices in some way. She saw and experienced “small cruelties,” which were during her formative years.

“When I was four-years-old, I used to listen to the story of *A Little Match Girl*, over and over again, pulled into the narrative and empathizing with her before I could even read properly, before I even knew what empathy was, and before I realized that it’s perhaps not so ‘normal’ to feel another’s pain so intimately,” Qudosi stated.

While growing into an adult, she developed some of the capacities of adulthood, as in becoming “more self-aware and confident”; wherein, a sense of purpose can begin to take more root and flourish. Over 15 years, her sense of love for human potential and a way in which humanity can grow with a sense of dignity drives her, and has developed over time.

Qudosi explained, “That’s essentially why I do what I do. Muslim reform for me started with a question, a possibility. Over time I’ve learned so much and I’ve gotten to know so many incredible people and their stories, that it’s not something I can just put down and walk away from at this point. In some way or another, this will always be a touchstone in the work I do. How much I’m able to do will always depend on the resources and funding available.”

The modern media and communications landscape can be important in this progressive work, especially as the technology becomes cheaper over time. In fact, it can provide freedom in speaking one’s mind, being oneself, and without the direct fear of retribution.

“Technology gives us the ability to get our message across, to connect with each other, to keep educating ourselves so we’re more refined in our message. However, technology dependency is crippling and dances on the perimeter of [dehumanization](#),” Qudosi stated, “Media, however, is an entirely other matter. You have to be a sort of gladiator if you want to be successful in media — and that’s not necessarily to anyone’s benefit, including the gladiator.”

Qudosi does not see a value in much of the soundbite-based ‘dialogue’ and ‘conversation’ of the modern media with the canned responses and the cant remain the norm rather than the outlier. Part of the problem is the ideological camp-based polarization of the media.

She sees meaningful dialogue exemplified in a 1977 interview with [Patrick McGoohan](#). She does see, though, positive developments in the media, in terms of meaningful and in-depth dialogues on the issues of the day in all kinds of media. But, probably, not on the larger, mainstream basis in general.

“As a dear friend recently shared, this sort of coming together involves the kindling of a rapport, which he described as ‘creating a connection in and through our communication...People who are in good rapport with each other start to breathe, talk, and move in the same rhythm,’” Qudosi said, “I was recently reading John O’Donohue’s *Beauty*, in which he spoke of timing and patience — two things I confess I’m still a bit wobbly in at times.”

Qudosi quoted “Towards a Reverence of Approach”:

“What you encounter, or recognize or discover depends to a large degree on the quality of your approach. Many of the ancient cultures practiced careful rituals of approach. An encounter of depth and spirit was preceded by careful preparation and often involved a carefully phased journey of approach. Attention, respect and worthiness belonged to the event of nearing and disclosure...Our culture [now] has little respect for privacy; we no longer recognize the sacred zone around each person. We feel like we have a right to blunder unannounced into any area we wish. Because we have lost reverence of approach, we should not be too surprised at the lack of quality and beauty in our experience...We have become more interested in ‘connection’ rather than communion.”

Qudosi sees reverence outside of the realm of the gladiators. We, as human beings, should not fight, but should work for communion through reverence. She wants to write a variety of subject matter, but feels distracted by the disease of the early 21st century of needing an opinion on everything the internet provides to us, incompletely.

She wanted to take on a form of sabbatical, so to speak, in order to collect her thoughts and find her voice once more; her true voice, not the cant provided by the constant chatter of the internet. A voice found in silence, reflection, apart from the everyday world of social media and distraction.

“Because of my work I cannot disconnect completely but I do still shelter myself as much as possible from these things and hope to more so in the years to come. One simply cannot think and create if they’re fed a steady supply of other people’s thoughts,” Qudosi stated.

Qudosi sees the media, in the current period, feeding some of the culture of vanity. With 9/11 happening 18 years ago, there is a push to sensationalize grievance of 9/11, a tragedy, rather than emphasize the progressive work of reformers within the Muslim world.

The only outlets who seem to highlight the reformers come at times of convenience for them. She feels this “sometimes” plays “into the myth of the noble savage.”

With the rise of the empowerment and advancement of women, the next questions reverted to the international rights issues important to women and the ways in which their rights can be violated in a modern context to some degree.

Qudosi was short or to the point. She wants the media to stop caricaturing Muslim women in the world. She sees the liberal media sitting too closely, at times, with figures who simply may not represent the general outlook and perspective of most Muslim women. Qudosi continued to talk about the issues around the rhetoric of figures who do not represent the views of many Muslim women and may reflect regressive political and social outlooks.

“And there is rage, a powerful component of the female psyche — but [rage is a process](#). It is not the solution,” Qudosi stated, “The other thing the media can do is lose the trope of sad Muslim woman. This has been going on before reformer was even a buzz word. Around mid-2000’s, I pieced together a totally rubbish book (if we can even call it a book), with uninformed, uncultivated hodgepodge of ideas about faith, identity and belonging.”

She thinks this should have been thrown directly into the trash, but this was picked up in the UK with a manuscript bid between three publishers. According to Qudosi, the condition was the necessity to write on “being a sad Muslim woman.”

Qudosi refused. She read a similar story around that time and did not want to replicate the narrative there. To her, the narratives can be too-self-indulgent. Also, she noted that she was too young and did not know some of the other facts of life at that time.

On things to look out for now, Qudosi stated, “We’re looking forward to bringing some new names on. Elliot Friedland and I co-founded [Toke for Tolerance](#), a radically honest interfaith festival we hope to launch in 2019. Our vision includes using this space to nurture newer voices, both men and women, in a sacred space that honors the art of approach.”

Now, Qudosi is working on a book entitled [Islam's Origin Story](#).

Ask Dr. Weld 1 -Demography 101

What are the basics of demography?

March 12, 2019

Madeline Weld, B.Sc., M.S., Ph.D., is the President of the Population Institute Canada. She worked for and has retired from Health Canada. She is a Director of Canadian Humanist Publications and an editor of Humanist Perspectives.

Some of the basic premises of the world of demographics and demography as a field of study is the statistical outlook of the field dealing with births, deaths, diseases, marriages, and so on, of the population(s).

Weld's interest is in the areas of the growth of the population and the ways in which continually growth-oriented humanity may or may not be having a negative outcome on the biosphere. The net migration of a country, such as Canada or the United States, will reflect this, where net migration is defined as both immigration and emigration – and also linked to the number of births and the number of deaths to define “population growth” of any country, or population.

Weld, in describing how she became interested in the field, stated, “As far as being concerned about population growth goes, I can say all of my life — at least as soon as I started to consciously think about things. I can't remember too much from my very early years. But when I was two months short of five, my dad, who was in the foreign service, was posted to Brazil (November 1959 — June 1962), and I became acutely aware of the extreme differences in wealth in that country and the sprawling favelas.”

Weld also was recognizing the way in which the separation between the poor and the rich could, at times, be completely arbitrary. Why do some live in rich areas while others live in potential squalor? This is a young inquisitive and ethical mind.

At the time while living in Pakistan, Weld noted the population was only about 60 million, circa 1965-67. Now, the population is about 200 million. When she was younger, the teacher would talk about the “vast” forests and oceans including the resources available to humans in them.

“As far as being officially active in the area of population, that didn't start until 1992, when Population Institute Canada was founded under the name “The Ottawa Family Planning Project” by the late Dr. Whitman Wright (a professional engineer who also founded Planned Parenthood Ottawa). I was the vice-president and then in 1995 became president,” Weld said.

The Ottawa Family Planning Project became the Global Population Concerns Ottawa, and then the Global Population Concerns Ottawa became Population Institute Canada, which is its current incarnation. Weld has been active and petitioning the government to support family planning for a long time, especially in its international assistance programs. Weld also argues for the protection of the biology and agriculture of Canada. The world is neither an infinite resource holder or bottomless trash can.

Weld earned a B.Sc. in Zoology from the University of Guelph, and an M.S. and a Ph.D. in Physiology from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. In her time as an academic-in-

training, her main focus of course work that could somewhat relate to the demographic career was in Ecology. The research into how animal populations can expand and then get knocked down as they rise because of predators, disease, and the like.

“The topic of human population was my own ‘extra-curricular’ interest. Whenever I would read newspaper articles or hear news reports about conflicts in dealing with Ecology. In particular regions or about some environmental problem (erosion, deforestation, depleted water supplies, pollution), I’d note how the population growth aspect of the problem was either completely overlooked or, very occasionally, mentioned in passing as something inevitable,” Weld stated.

Some of the basics of demography within a Canadian context, as laid out by Weld, came with the caveat that the internet, not, makes the life of any independent research much easier. One can find out about the net population growth in Canada, and, in turn, the number of emigrants, immigrants, and the rate of births and deaths. It is a wonderful achievement and testament to the technological age in which we find ourselves.

Weld explained, “It’s noteworthy that Canada’s population increased over 5-fold over the 20th Century. It was almost 5.4 million in the 1901 census, and almost 30.7 million in 2000 (a 5.7-fold increase). The current population is almost 37 million. But our population could have stabilized a long time ago at well under 30 million because our total fertility rate has been near or below 2 children per woman since 1970. We have been driving Canada’s rapid population growth with high levels of immigration.”

One problem is the ability to find some critical analysis of the policies set out by the government with direct, or even indirect for that matter, impacts on the status of the population, in the short-term and the long-term. There is no official policy around population in Canada. However, other policies throughout the governments, federal and otherwise, do impact the eventual population of Canadian society.

“Canada’s immigration policy as of 1990 has increased Canada’s population by about 1% a year, and under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen, our intake is being upped even more. But there is no public discussion about the costs of those policies — the loss of wildlife habitat and greenspace in cities,” Weld stated, “the congestion and ever-increasing amounts of time that people spend stuck in traffic, the stresses on social services (such as health care) and on infrastructure, and on those seeking jobs. Our immigration policy benefits the few (developers, bankers, businesses that benefit from cheap labor, some politicians courting the ethnic vote) but the costs are borne by everyone.”

The “de facto policy” of Canadian society and, in particular, the Canadian federal government functions against the scientific evidence, according to Weld. In that, in 1976, the Science Council of Canada in Report #25 entitled “Population, Technology, and Resources” recommended or suggested, or “advised,” the Canadian government to implement and the Canadian public to support a restriction on the level of immigration, as this would conserve the limited resources of the nation-state in addition to stabilizing the population.

Remembering, of course, this was way back in 1976. For younger cohorts, it is important to develop a sensibility of a timeline of decades and centuries to comprehend the current social and

political, and so policy, landscape of the nation, not simply in Canadian society but elsewhere too.

Weld explained further, “In 1991, the Intelligence Advisory Committee with input from Environment Canada, the Defence Department, and External Affairs, produced a confidential document for the Privy Council, called ‘The environment: marriage between Earth and mankind.’ It states that ‘Controlling population growth is crucial to addressing most environmental problems, including global warming.’ It notes that while Canada’s population is not large in world terms, its concentration in various areas has already put a lot of stress upon regional environments in many ways.”

There was research by Fraser Basin Ecosystem Study done by Michael Healey and others through The University of British Columbia in Vancouver, British Columbia. It was published in 1997. They found that the rapid growth in the urban centre in British Columbia, Canada, would overwhelm – eventually – and degrade the environment, where this was beginning to be seen at the time. Once more, this is more than two decades ago. Prior generations have been warning and working on these issues. However, there has not been sufficient governmental and public pressure and activism on it.

“When the study was released, Michael Healey said, ‘The lower Fraser basin exemplifies all the social, environmental, and economic problems of modern industrial nations. These problems are not going away and it is high time that we faced up to them,’” Weld stated, “Some people have written critically about Canada’s immigration policies. The late Martin Collacott wrote extensively about the need for reform, and economists Herb Grubel and Patrick Grady estimated that recent immigrants cost the government \$30 billion more in services than they pay in taxes each year.”

She – Weld – spoke about *Who gets in*, a book by Daniel Stoffman from 2002, which talked at length about the immigration policy of Canadian society. Same with *Immigration: the Economic Case* by Diane Francis, also from 2002. The basic stipulations within the texts are debunking or dismantling the economic arguments made for the growing of the Canadian populace with Canadian society not necessarily becoming richer with immigration and immigration not changing the fundamental structure of Canadian culture either. In that, immigrants get old too; while, at the same time, the truth of the matter is a growing population is having a negative impact on the environment.

Weld stated, “But the media — and most environmentalists for that matter — do not discuss let alone promote the concept of stabilizing and reducing Canada’s population as an environmental measure. Instead, we do hear about ideas like the Century Initiative, which aims to grow Canada’s population to 100 million by 2100. If this were to come about, it would be to the detriment both of working Canadians and the environment.”

With the continual growth of the human population by more than 80 million people per year and one billion per 12 years now, this is a highly sobering statistics about the rapid growth of human societies and the need to be sober in the evaluation and analysis of the scientific, probably, consensus on immigration and the populations of countries for sustainable living with the

surrounding ecosystems that, in turn, sustain and permit human life in the first place. As we're seeing more and more, the poorer and lesser developed nations of the world tend to having the highest birth rates and the larger negative impacts with the unsustainable growth trajectories of their populations, which can lead to significant issues for the health and wellness, and happiness, and, in fact, wealth on average, of their populations.

"This rapid population growth in poor countries is leading to resource scarcity, unemployment, and conflict, and driving people to risk their lives to immigrate elsewhere, where their welcome is increasingly wearing thin," Weld concluded, "Witness what is happening in Europe. And for anyone who cares about life on Earth, it is sad to see the devastation of wildlife on land and in the oceans, rivers, and lakes. We should ask ourselves whether we really want to turn the Earth into a feedlot for humanity or preserve some of its natural beauty."

Is There a Link between Islam and Terrorism?

The link may be obvious in some ways but not in others, and so may surprise people. The answer is rarely black and white.

March 12, 2019

Professor Mir Faizal is an Adjunct Professor in Physics and Astronomy at the University of Lethbridge. Here we talk about terrorism and Islam.

The conversation started on the idea of global terrorism and the forms of religion in the world. It began, in other words, on the definitions of things. Dr. Faizal or Faizal sees the problem in its complications due, in part, to the proliferation of terms and the plethora of meanings intended by each of the words, often more than one meaning per word.

Faizal stated, “Let us start from the simplest definition of terrorism, a terrorist organization as an organization that deliberately kills civilians to achieve an ideological purpose. To be more precise, let us add that, an origination can be called a terrorist organization only if at least two democratic countries (on two different continents, e.g., North America, Africa, and so on, or in two different recognized regions, e.g., Middle East-North Africa, and so on) recognize it as such.”

The other form of restriction can limit the level of abuse of the word. For example, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the definition of atheism is a criminal offense, i.e., a terrorist offense or terrorism. In this, we can see the emphasis of Faizal.

“This definition of terrorism is also important, as it helps us identify the real practical problem when dealing with real issues rather than, possibly, invented legalisms. This is the terrorism that governments have to be careful about when they are considering a visa application, or when they are checking someone for security reasons,” Faizal noted.

In terms of the relationship of Islam to terrorism, the situation is simple on some facts, but also complicated in some other means of analysis. The positive correlation between Islam and terrorism is true. It is a fact of the world.

“To say all Muslims are terrorists is clearly unreasonable and incorrect, and to say all terrorists are Muslims is also wrong (as there are many non-Muslim terrorists too); on the other hand, to say that Muslims are like any other religious group is also not correct,” Faizal explained, “the number of violent events from Muslims seems to be far more than non-Muslims (if we again neglect the wars between nation states for the moment, as that is beyond the present definition of terrorism).”

When Faizal looked at the number of terrorist attacks in the month of December in 2018, he found about 170 attacks, internationally speaking. From this set of terrorist incidences, there were about 20 of the 170 were done outside of an Islamic ideological framework. In other words, a real correlation, in December of 2018 alone, exists between Islam and terrorism. The questions then arise about the roots or the sources of it.

Faizal posed, “We need to first accept this problem, scientifically analyze its causes, and finally come to a proper, rational solution. It could be interesting to carry out this analysis further and observe the variation of this probability with different sects of Islam. The first observation is that some sects of Islam are more violent than others. In fact, there are sects of Islam, which have almost zero histories of violence.”

These sect differences in the rates of violence are incredibly important in the advancement of peace, dialogue, and the work for the reduction in terrorist incidences in the world. If someone belongs to one branch of Islam, then they may be more likely to commit acts of violence than others. These denominations, as with Catholics and Protestants in Christianity, may live within different geographic and cultural areas, in which the violence rate may not be completely or entirely attributable to religion; and if so, then the issue is which ideological stances are the issue.

Faizal clarifies, “This means the if someone belongs to those sects of Islam, then there is almost a certainty he/she will not commit any act of terrorism. For example, Ahmadi Muslims (both Qadiani and Lahori Ahmadis) or Quranist Muslims (Muslims who follow only Quran) have a zero history of violence. In fact, they have been the targets of violent attacks and have never responded violently. On the other hand, most of the global terrorist moments come from Sunni Islam. Some sects of Shia Islam have been involved with many forms of violence at the state level, but using our definition consistently, we cannot classify it as terrorism.”

Indeed, Faizal was unable to find an act of terror done by Shia Muslims in December of 2018. Think about that, as a simple factual account, the issue of violence and religion becomes complicated and, therefore, should be not taken within a context of simple violence to religion correlation.

As Faizal observed, “The Shias are also focused on Israel and the Middle East, and do not commit violent acts against other countries. On the other hand, it is Sunni Islam, which seems to have a monopoly on global terrorism.”

Then this led to some further analysis of the directions of the violence within the sects or denominations of Sunni Islam based on the preliminary analysis of the data on terrorism and Islam by Faizal. He found only three sects or denominations associated with terrorism or terrorist acts: Salafi, Deobandi, and Barelvi.

“The Barelvi and Deobandi are Sufis, and so, it is incorrect to say all Sufis are non-violent. Barelvis are only obsessed with blasphemy and tend to limit the violence to those, who they think have insulted Muhammad,” Faizal stated, “The person who killed the Salman Taseer (governor in Pakistan) was a Barelvi. The Taliban are Deobandi. However, both Barelvi and Deobandi have almost no influence beyond the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan), and are only concerned with local issues. So, the only group which has international global influence are the Salafis.”

Not the Shia, only the Sunni and simply a minority within the Sunni, the Salafi, appear to commit the majority of the violent terrorist acts in the world, in December of 2018. After the name of the founder of the movement, and within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Salafis can

be called Wahhabis. Some may hyphenate the title into Salafi-Wahhabi. Thus, we come to Salafi-Wahhabi Islam within the Sunni tradition as the narrowed-down definition of Islam within the correlation found between terrorism and Islam.

Faizal reiterates, “It may be noted Salafis are called Wahhabis (named after their founder, who is closely related to the founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). I could not again find any act of terrorism done by Barelvis in December 2018, and around forty terrorist attacks done by Deobandis. However, most of these attacks done by Deobandis were limited to the Indian subcontinent. This leaves more than one hundred international terrorist attacks, which were done by Salafis. However, Salafis make up less than one percent of the total Muslim population, and even in Saudi Arabia, they are a minority, and only form twenty-three percentage population. Furthermore, not all Salafis are violent.”

Faizal described how the official sect or denomination of Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabi bans protests against the government. Those who simply blindly follow the government are called the Madkhalis. That is to say, those who Salafis and government-oriented fundamentalists are Madkhali Salafis. However, others exist who are the non-violent ones, who are non-Madkhali Salafis.

“As they form a small population of the total Muslim population, this correction becomes a more direct one. It may be noted that like the Shias, the violence promoted by Barelvi and Deobandi is circumstantial, and not intrinsic. However, the violence by certain Salafi sects (such as the ISIS) is intrinsic, and not circumstantial. Even with this difference, it may be noted that there are some deep common features between Salafi, Deobandi, and Barelvi. In fact, as the main concern of different governments is that they want to reduce the probability of someone blowing himself/herself up,” Faizal stated.

Faizal central point was that you cannot make this number or probability zero. However, the number can be brought down to a low level. So low in fact, you can simply ignore it. The work that needs to be done is around the source of the problem and the comprehension of some of the derivative effects too.

When we look into the global news, Faizal states, “For example, if a country is in global news about remakes on blasphemy they need to be careful of Salafis and Barelvi, and if a country is involved in Afghanistan, they need to be careful about Salafis and Deobandi. However, as both Barelvi and Deobandi are not concerned with international news, they need to only warn their citizens visiting Indian subcontinent. So, internationally, they only need to worry about the Salafis. As Salafis form a very small portion of the Muslim population, and Salafis can also be from peaceful sects (like Madkhali), it is only a specific kind of Salafis that any government has to be worried about when it comes to terrorism.”

As the conversation developed, the level of specificity of the type and geographic locale of Islam and its association with terrorism, in this preliminary analysis, continued onward. Islamic scriptures can be a juncture of conversation for some. In that, if the purported holy texts of the religion of Islam relate to the full and theological foundation as a grounds for war, for terrorist

incidences, then this should be dealt with in a theological manner. But there may be a more effective means by which to see a relation between religion and violence, and religion and peace.

Faizal, as a mathematician, deals with the issue “mathematically and statistically here. He notes the totally peaceful interpretations of Islam with the Ahmadis and the Quranists. Then he also described the “totally violent” ones with the Barelvis, Deobandis, and Salafis. Most Muslims, Faizal argues, are within the range of these two sets of extremes of the totally peaceful and the totally violent.

“So, instead of getting involved in an academic theologically discussion, we can analyze this problem mathematically, by simply identifying the common features of peaceful Muslims and violent Muslims. This way we can get a better more accurate practical understanding of the problem. It may be noted here that even though not all Salafis, Deobandis, and Barelvis are violent,” Faizal stated, “but all acts of violence, with a Sunni Islamic justification, comes from these groups. On the other hand, no act of violence with an Islamic justification has ever been conducted by the people in the first group, such as Ahmadis and Quranists.”

This can lead to some analysis, of the features of those who would be peaceful Muslims and violent Muslim sects – or interpretations of Islam with the possibility of leading to more peacefulness and more violence. By implication, this can be applied to other political, social, religious, and secular ideologies.

“There is an interesting correlation between what peaceful and violent Muslims sects believe, and this holds for most sects in the two groups. To understand that we need to first understand that apart from Quran and Mutawatir practices (collective practices which most Muslims perform, like prayers), theirs is a huge body of ahad Hadith literature, which describes what Muhammad did, and it was written some two hundred years after Muhammad,” Faizal explained, “The idea of Muhammad marries a six-year-old girl comes from this literature, the idea that apostates should be killed also come from them, the idea that homosexuals (as well as people who commit adultery) should be killed also come from them.”

The ahad Hadith literature is filled with both peaceful and violent passages based on the interpretation, where these ahad Hadith pieces of literature were written about 200 years after Muhammad. Most or all terrorist organizations have a common belief in some of the verses from the Quran abrogated from these ahad narrations.

Thus, the ahad narrations rather than the Quran in this context becomes the basis for the violent interpretations. Faizal argues that the peaceful verses of the Quran, for the terrorist organizations, were abrogated for violent purposes. For those who do not adhere to the abrogation theory of the narrations, they can be seen in their own outcomes, which, apparently, are far more often mostly or completely non-violent, as in the Ahmadi Muslims and the Quranist Muslims.

That is to say, the Ahmadi and Quranist interpretations of Islam do not adhere to the ahad narrations and, by implication, can be seen as less violent or completely non-violent compared to those who believe in this theory of abrogation with the ahad narrations.

Faizal continued, “Even Sunni Muslim scholars, such as Adnan Ibrahim and Javed Ghamidi, who actively preach against violence, do not hold to this theory of abrogation, and base their belief on

the Quran rather than ahad Hadith. In their theory, the violence in any verse is contextual (and those verses only refer to war), and has to be read in the light of general more peaceful verses of the Quran. So, we can again establish a mathematical relation between Muslims who not hold to a textual discontinuity in Quran (the discontinuity between a Meccan and Medinan verses), and peacefulness.”

Such is the working of a mathematical mind, there is the basis for some means of hope and reasonable discourse, especially for much of the West that does not seem to know much about Islam or the ways in which various sects or denominations function in the terms that seem to matter to most Westerners: violence and the relation to textual-theological discourse on the Quran, Hadith, and the life of Muhammad.

” In fact, there is a direct statistical correction between those Muslims who base their belief on the Quran (rejecting the theory of abrogation) and peacefulness. Furthermore, there is also a direct statistical correction between those Muslims who base their beliefs on ahad Hadith (accepting the theory of abrogation) and violence. It is important to realize that not all Muslims, who hold to textual discontinuity in Quran are violent, but all Islamic terrorists, believe in the existence of a textual discontinuity in the Quran,” Faizal said.

Faizal asserts, based on this analysis, that no terrorist incident has occurred within the framework of textual continuity rather than textual discontinuity or, for example, the theory of abrogation proposed with such interpretations as the ahad narrations applied to the Quran within many terrorist organizations. Therefore, individuals who claim to be Muslim and take a textual continuity approach will not be a terrorist.

Faizal explained, “In fact, there has never been a terrorist, who holds to the textual continuity in Quran. So, the probability of anyone who believes in textual continuity of Quran, and basis his beliefs on it, to commit acts of terrorism is zero. In other words, it is almost certain that any Muslim who bases his beliefs on the Quran, rejecting the theory of abrogation cannot be a terrorist.”

Then the questioning comes to the issue of having the government involved to prevent and stop terrorism for the good of the general population. Faizal claims, based on the above analysis, that there should be a scientific approach by the governments in order to deal with the problems of terrorism and terrorist attacks.

“For example, they can identify the right kind of questions that are being asked during a visa application, or other application. If you ask a person about his sect, and come to know he is an Ahmadi or a Quranist, then you can be certain he will not commit any act of violence.

Furthermore, any person who is a potential terrorist will never identify himself/herself as such,” Faizal proposed, “In fact, for a Sunni Muslim, a good test could be a question (hidden in lots of other questions), where he/she is asked if they think that Ahmadis should be allowed to pray like other Muslims, and consider themselves as Muslim.”

With an affirmation or a “Yes” answer, this can indicate the possibility of this individual being a terrorist. Faizal proposes governments gathering and database of terrorist attacks that have happened into the present. Then there should be a mathematical and statistical analysis. From

these, we can see if common features exist in the total population, e.g., education, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sect, and so on.

This would not be a basis for discrimination with the data but a foundation for discriminating within specific probabilities. For example, there can be specific statistical weights given to the demographic characteristics within the general population.

Faisal stated, “They can weight each aspect of a person, give them a statistical weight, and then subject them to different levels of security checks. As this will be done scientifically, no one will feel discriminated by scientific data (discrimination is a human attribute, and mathematics cannot discriminate). It is also important to realize that whether Islam is a peaceful or violent religion, is an academic question, and it is not important for dealing with terrorism.”

He – Faizal – was firm on the argument that the perception of Islam preaching violence as a serious issue, where the perception can lead to real acts of violence by individuals who follow the religion of Islam. He notes the discontinuity interpretation exists in Muslims and non-Muslims who perceive the ahad narrations of the Quran.

“In fact, we can easily state one statistical fact, that it is this belief in textual discontinuity in Quran that is directly proportional to the intrinsic (not circumstantial) acts of violence by violent terrorists (like the ISIS), and everything that can be done to counter it (with the constraint that it does not violate the freedom of speech), should be done, to minimize the probability of terrorist attacks,” Faizal concluded.

Ask Dr. Weld 2—These are That Which Malthusian Dreams, or Nightmares, are Made

Who else was important alongside Malthus in the history of provoking thought about demographics?

March 13, 2019

Madeline Weld, B.Sc., M.S., Ph.D., is the President of the Population Institute Canada. She worked for and has retired from Health Canada. She is a Director of Canadian Humanist Publications and an editor of Humanist Perspectives.

Malthus is the source of the term “Malthusian.” He has been seen as a controversial figure throughout the history of the study of demographics. Nonetheless, this became a point of import to me, to bring Malthus to the fore.

Weld pointed out one of the main purposes of identifying Malthus, many times, simply comes in the form of using a derogatory term “Malthusian,” mentioned before. She noted Google doodle did not mention his 250th anniversary on February 13, 2016, either.

Weld said “Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834) was English Anglican cleric and academic who is most famous for his book *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, first published in 1798 and re-published in a greatly expanded second edition in 1803. This was followed by four more editions with minor changes from the second edition, the last published in 1826.”

The main argument within the text was the growth of the human population in exponential ways. The ways in which the food supply and the human population become important for consideration in their mutual interplay.

“The crux of *Principle of Population* is that the human population can grow exponentially, while the food supply can only grow arithmetically. Therefore, Malthus reasoned, whenever the food supply is increased (through improvements in agriculture or the opening of new lands), human numbers will always increase until the abundance is eliminated and the poor are once again clinging to the edge of existence, on the borderline between survival and famine,” Weld explained in more detail.

There are, as Malthus stated, “positive checks” on the mortality that increase it, including disease, starvation, and other things leading to – let’s say – premature death. Then there are things called “preventive checks” that reduce fertility, including late marriage and contraception.

He saw birth control as a vice. Malthus published the first version of the text based on the urging of his father. Those ideas discussed of William Godwin and the Marquis de Condorcet, and others.

Weld stated “Malthus did not share their optimism about the inevitability of human progress. His views were informed by his own observations of his impoverished parishioners (at Oakwood Chapel in Surrey), whose diet consisted mostly of bread and whose children developed late and were stunted in growth. But despite the misery, the number of births Malthus recorded in the parish registry greatly exceeded the number of deaths.”

He – Malthus – argued that science and human progress could be eaten by the growth of the population. There was, in a sense, an upper limit increase with a rapid gain on the upper limit by the ongoing growth of the human population.

With more food, more children of poor backgrounds or families would not survive and the share of each family, in terms of general food or nutritious caloric intake, would be decreased per family, per individual.

“Malthus is criticized for being indifferent to the suffering of the poor because he proposed the gradual abolition of the ‘poor laws’ (i.e., state welfare) by reducing the number of persons qualifying for it, and thought a private charity could help those in dire distress. He thought the poor laws tended to ‘create the poor which they maintain,’” Weld said.

Weld reported on a statement by John Meyer who spoke about Malthus. Meyer stated Malthus was making a call for an end to growth with higher real wages, a reduction in inequality with an emphasis on economics for the provision of the necessities of life for the poor, as opposed to the “luxury goods for the rich.”

Malthus was arguing for more power and influence to the middle class and a reduction in poverty for the poor. This would tie to removal of the means by which the rich accumulate wealth, i.e., cheap labour and asset inflation.

Weld said, “Malthus also thought the rich were morally obliged to produce fewer children because if they had large families, the poor would disproportionately suffer material shortages. He questioned the morality of colonization and anticipated and deplored the fate he foresaw for the inhabitants of the New World as settlers claimed their lands. In short, Malthus wanted a better life for people and greater social equality.”

Malthus was a historian. He looked at historical events from the analysis or referent frame of logic and mathematics. Within the first and second editions of the book, he travelled a fair bit.

Within this travel, he worked hard to provide detailed accounts of the European explorers and gathered data from a variety of societies of the time. He described the ways in which societies were “replete with population surges and collapses.” Indeed, he was, according to Weld, the first person to describe population cycles.

“Malthus was limited by the data that was available to him 200 years ago. We now have far more detailed data that stretches back thousands of years and this data supports his concept of population cycles. Given the rate at which we are consuming and depleting resources, while our population is still growing by one billion every 12 years or so, it would be imprudent for us to assume that we are not in a global population cycle,” Weld said.

Weld mused about the reason for Malthus not being a popular or a prominent name now. She described how Meyer talked about Darwin, da Vinci, Aristotle, and others, who opened minds to the wonder of the natural and abstract worlds. Malthus talked about societies dying or decaying. Truly, and to quote Weld, “Who likes a party pooper?”

Malthus had and has a bad reputation because of the elites of the day. Those who saw the ideas produced as threats to power and prosperity for them. Even those without the ascent in the social

and economic worlds, the socialists dismissed Malthus as offensive. Then there are the techno-optimists, who believe technology will solve all problems and, therefore, dismiss Malthus.

Weld said, “Since Malthus’ time, the world’s population has increased almost 8-fold, from about one billion to over 7.6 billion today. This is often used as evidence that he was wrong. However, the fact that close to one billion people are hungry and about three billion suffer from nutritional deficiencies that affects the physical and mental development of many supports Malthus’ argument that the human population will grow to meet the food supply such that some people remain impoverished. In fact, it is precisely the countries with the most rapid population growth that are unable to pull themselves out of poverty.”

She noted two limitations in the vision of Malthus. One is the massive increase in the number of humans via the intervention of oil into the energy life of the world. It has powered economies for the last 150 years. The next is the green revolution connected to the developments in agriculture.

Weld also noted a 19-fold increase of the global economy, which is remarkable, since 1950. Within this framework, the global population has simply grown significantly in a short period of time. Reflect, without an international economy with the imports of foods from around the world, how many populations, at a local level, would simply collapse along the lines of decaying and defunct societies tracked by Malthus.

Weld described how the expansion of the human population has left many other animals, non-human animals, to die to a large extent because of the funnelling of the fruits of the planet, artificially induced and natural, into the coffers, bellies, and infrastructure of humans and human societies.

“There is a crucial concept outside of Malthus’ ken – overshoot. Many informed people believe that humanity is in overshoot. Overshoot occurs when a species greatly exceeds the long-term carrying capacity of its environment,” Weld explained “This can happen when a species encounters a rich and previously unexploited stock of resources (think oil in our case) that promotes its reproduction. Without significant predation or disease (think advances in hygiene and medicine), while large amounts of the stock remain available (“age of oil”), the population of the species can grow many-fold.”

When the stock begins to decrease, lower quality versions of the resource become the transition point, e.g., tar sands in Alberta or deep-sea drilling off the coast of North America. Without the resources, the population can die when the resources run out. This is called a “population crash or die off” in the parlance of ecologists.

Humanity is taking oil as the be-all and end-all of their energy resources, for the most part, now. This inevitably will lead to ecological catastrophe without alteration of our collective course, seems like the implication to me.

On an interesting note, Weld stated, “Malthus thought that the human population would approach a sustainable limit and then hover there, with many people living in poverty and misery. The crash of a human population in overshoot will bring about the death and misery of billions: a catastrophe on a scale far beyond anything that Malthus could have imagined. Therefore, in the words of the late David Delaney, ‘Malthus was an optimist.’”

She provided an example of St. Matthew Island in the Bering Sea. Reindeer are not native to the island. 24 female and 5 male reindeer were released into the island in 1944 by the US Coast Guard. The purpose was to provide a possible food source for the employees stationed.

As things developed, there wasn't a predator for the reindeers on the island to keep the population in check. There was a lot of food for them, lichen. By 1957, 1,350 reindeer were present; 1963, 6,000 were present. The vegetation on the island had been altered by the time of the 1963 survey.

“...the vegetation on the island had been significantly altered and the condition of the reindeer showed major deterioration and there was a greatly reduced percentage of young animals. At the next survey, in 1966, the population had crashed to 42 reindeer with no fawns or yearlings. The curve of the population growth of the reindeer on St. Matthew Island leading up to the crash is eerily similar to that of the human population since Malthus' time,” Weld said.

The conversation veered into fears, legitimate and illegitimate, around overpopulation. Weld provided an opening remark on the difficulty to find any illegitimate fears around overpopulation. In other words, to a professional and nearly adult-lifelong demographer, overpopulation is a serious issue with far more legitimate fears surround the issue than not.

Weld stated, “No one can predict the future, the best we can do is make educated guesses. But our impact on the environment — both the physical environment and its biodiversity — is undeniable. It has been so dramatic that scientists are calling the times we live in the Anthropocene. The techno-optimists point out that we're wealthier and longer-lived than we ever have been, and they argue that things will only get better.”

She also noted the ignoring of the costs of a more crowded and stressful world with many individual human beings impoverished and malnourished. With the extermination of other natural life, this is not stated as a loss. That is concern to Weld or, to a minimum, an oversight, especially within one major concern of a depleted planet.

Weld said, “Climate change receives the lion's share of the coverage of our depredations on Earth, in terms of its potential to acidify the oceans, raise sea levels and flood coastal communities, and change rainfall patterns in many areas, including in our vital breadbaskets. But humans have also taken over about one-third of the Earth's land surface for their own use (and over half the land surface that is habitable).”

Furthermore, 3/4 of the land on Earth is covered by human activities and affected by them to some degree, even “significantly.” Major fisheries are depleted, where others are beyond the capacity to replenish themselves. This is the problem of overpopulation, of too many people.

In a recent study from the World Wildlife Fund, 60% of birds, fish, mammals, and reptiles have been “wiped out” by human beings. This is widespread extinction due to human activity. We are a deadly species by many reasonable interpretations of this data.

“In the words of Rose Bird, the late former Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court: ‘We have probed the earth, excavated it, burned it, ripped things from it, buried things in it, chopped down its forests, leveled its hills, muddied its waters, and dirtied its air. That does not fit my

definition of a good tenant. If we were here on a month-to-month basis, we would have been evicted long ago," Weld explained.

We do not have to destroy the ecosystem and ecological balances of the Earth. However, the current dogmas of the economies and political systems around the world remain tied to the unsustainable aspects of the world. We are adding more than 80 million new people to the population of the Earth per annum. There is a wider understanding of proper contraceptive use and the importance of family planning.

We should set a limit on the number of children with the threats of global warming before us. In addition, on an opining note, Weld disagrees with Malthus that birth control is a vice. However, his arguments about the severity of the real limits to growth of the human population forever are valid.

Weld concluded, "Norman Borlaug, the father of the green revolution, is almost universally honored, while Thomas Malthus is more often than not dismissed and even vilified. But when Borlaug was awarded the Noble Peace Prize in 1970 for his achievements, he said in his acceptance speech: '*There can be no permanent progress in the battle against hunger until the agencies that fight for increased food production and those that fight for population control unite in a common effort.*' Thomas Robert Malthus would have agreed."

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Ask Dr. Robertson 5—Self-Actualization, Boys, and Young Males: Solution:Problem::Hammer:Nail

What are the proper ways in which to raise boys and young men in the modern world with a different set of challenges still embedded in the perennial issue of rearing?

March 15, 2019

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson is a Registered Doctoral Psychologist with expertise in Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Human Resource Development. He earned qualifications in Social Work too.

His research interests include memes as applied to self-knowledge, the evolution of religion and spirituality, the Aboriginal self's structure, residential school syndrome, prior learning recognition and assessment, and the treatment of attention deficit disorder and suicide ideation.

In addition, he works in anxiety and trauma, addictions, and psycho-educational assessment, and relationship, family, and group counseling. Please see [Ask Dr. Robertson 1 — Counselling and Psychology](#), [Ask Dr. Robertson 2 — Psychotherapy](#), [Ask Dr. Robertson 3 — Social and Psychological Sciences Gone Wrong](#), and [Ask Dr. Robertson 4 — Just You and Me, One-on-One Counselling](#), as these are the previous sessions in this educational series. Here we talk about self-actualization.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Famously, so famous, in fact, as to become a common phrase indicative of common sense wisdom — which, as one may joke about ‘common sense,’ may be uncommon sometimes and other times not-so-wise, the late Abraham Maslow, American Psychologist, remarked on the existence of problems and tools to solve them:

I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail.

Dr. Philip Zimbardo, Professor Emeritus at Stanford University, and others — including Dr. Warren Farrell, who speaks in a pace and tone so as not to offend even the fly on the wall, for content reasons, obviously — continue to focus on some overlooked issues for males, young males and boys in particular; where as a collective, interrelated culture, these become issues for us, too. Maslow constructed the hierarchy of needs in the 1943 paper entitled *A Theory of Human Motivation*.

Zimbardo, who specializes in the psychology of evil (Stanford Prison Experiment in experiment and Abu Ghraib in reality, though this experiment came under more critical scrutiny, recently) and time perspective (e.g., living, mentally speaking, in the past, the present, or future), spoke on young men and boys since the early 2010s right into the present.

In particular, Zimbardo spoke on the failure of some boys and young men in multiple domains of life, where mainstream cultures — multinationally speaking — demand certain levels of performance and expect achievement of specific milestones by culturally affirmed ages for social approval. If not, then cue the epithets and societal reproval.

It is not an all-or-nothing evaluation, but it is a change in the ratio of the boys and young men succeeding compared to previous generations on average — and, especially, in contrast to the wonderful rise of girls and women. It becomes a dual-facet phenomenon of decline for boys and young men and incline for girls and young women with higher-order analysis implications, in time and in persistence of culture in bounded geography. Zimbardo reflected on the failures, by his estimation, as indicative of a hijacking or hacking of the hierarchy of needs by pornography, video games, and fatherlessness/(male-)mentorlessness — in part.

That is to say, with the self-fulfillment and psychological needs removed from the hierarchy of needs or ignored by the boys and young men, this left, at least, pornography, video games, and mentorlessness as central pillars in the decline of self-actualization and psychological needs, in boys and young men.

In the end, Zimbardo argues the result becomes a context in which young men and boys find themselves fulfilled as purely safety-and-physiological-needs-based beings, while also creating, in his research and assertions, i.e., not formally accepted by the academic psychological community in the DSM-5, “arousal addictions”: a psychological mode of a move towards pleasure and drift, or shift, away from pain in every life dynamic with a consistent need for novelty, which is an addiction for similar hyperstimuli with perpetual novelty, e.g., pornography and video games, as opposed to the same hyperstimuli, e.g., cocaine and gambling.

Of course, as a side remark, Dr. Leonard Sax, M.D., Ph.D., American Psychologist and Physician, describes endocrine disruptors and educational system changes as additional factors in this.

No planning, no contingencies, no notions of the future, no orientation towards larger life goals, and little or no incentive to move out of this hedonistic, presentist mental state. Did Maslow predict this psychological orientation of young men and boys? If so, how? Did anyone (else)?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: Your pre-amble certainly covers a lot of ground, Scott! The short answer as to whether Maslow predicted the current psychological orientation of young men and boys is “no.” He was interested in individual as opposed to collective psychological development. On the other hand, his hierarchy of needs may be applied to such developments.

There is a lot of evidence that males in modern Euro-American cultures are not doing well. Males, on average, die younger. Male unemployment is increasing with large numbers of younger males considered virtually unemployable, yet 97% of workplace deaths are men. Seventy percent of graduates in Canadian universities are women. Male suicide rates are four times that of women. Men are more likely to suffer from addictions, be incarcerated and be victims of violent crime. Eighty percent of homeless are men. Things have gotten worse for men since ex-feminist Warren Farrell wrote his book two and a half decades ago. From a Maslow hierarchy of needs perspective, things have not been going well, and part of that can be attributed to the influence of feminism.

Sax, whom you also referenced, in a brilliant analysis of kindergarten curricula in the United States, said that the curricula had been changed in preceding decades to conform to girl’s normative development. Specifically, he said that kindergartens had come to emphasize verbal

skills which developmentally favour girls at that age. Had kindergartens emphasized spatial skills then boys would have been favoured. The result of this gynocentric curricula is that boys are more likely to experience frustration in their early schools, like school less, and more frequently experience failure. If female normative development and behaviour is set as normative across society, then boys and men will be disadvantaged. But that is only part of the story.

Using qualitative methods, I was able to demonstrate that a diverse sample of Canadian men have experienced harsh stigma as a result of their sex. Stigma is the imputation of characteristics to a class of people that renders them unfit for certain social roles. The men were viewed as a threat to others or irresponsible with respect to family responsibilities simply because they were men. As a result, they were judged as unfit, or less fit, in their roles as parents or as employees in specific occupations despite a lack of evidence of any wrongdoing. We see this stigma in society with notions of “toxic masculinity” where guilt does not have to be proven, it is assumed. Thus, even when men overcome disadvantages built into education, they remain at a disadvantage. The alienation of fathers from their families, in large part because of stigma, compounds the problem because boys, raised by single parent mothers, are less likely to have effective role models matching their gender and they are more likely to experience addictions, incarceration and suicide.

So, as Zimbardo has argued, many young men are dropping out. They are not competing for careers. They are not establishing families. They are not contributing meaningfully to society. They are occupying themselves with short term gratification. Maslow argued that until self-esteem needs are met, people are more preoccupied with meeting those needs than pursuing self-actualization. If a group of people are disadvantaged in education and suffer stigma for being a member of their group, it could be expected that in accepting the dominant society’s normative view, they suffer low genderized self-esteem. Zimbardo’s famous prison experiment showed definitively that people tend to become the roles societies set for them. The scary implication of this is that many of these young men could become the “toxic masculine” stereotype feminists have set for them. But I think there is another way of looking at this.

About three decades before Maslow built his famous pyramid, Alfred Adler said that all humans are born with a “striving for perfection” which is similar to Maslow’s idea of self-actualization. Those who give up this striving are people who are discouraged and this describes those young men who are dropping out. We need to combat society’s message to boys that they are both bad and failures and we need to reintroduce the striving for goodness.

Robertson’s article on Male Stigma can be found at: https://www.hawkeyeassociates.ca/images/pdf/academic/Male_Stigma.pdf

Jacobsen: Following from the previous question, what therapeutic methods, in a professional setting — group and one-on-one, work with the young men and boys, who, by standard cultural expectations, continue to fail at, probably, increasing rates?

Robertson: In 2012 I attended a workshop on how to counsel men at a Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association annual convention. The presenters were both women one of whom asked, with wide eyed innocence, how many of the attendees, who were overwhelmingly

women, had actually counselled a man. Fewer than half the workshop participants raised their hands. The workshop then proceeded with a review of statistics on how few men seek psychotherapy, how men experience depression and suicide ideation less but nonetheless commit suicide at higher rates, and how men sublimate their mental health needs through alcohol, anger, and violence. The prescription of the presenters was that men need to learn how to admit their failings and seek help; they need to be in touch with their feelings more and make themselves “vulnerable” by discussing those feelings; and they need to find allies and build support systems. In short, they need to become more like women.

The suggestions of these female facilitators are not totally wrong. Many men benefit from honing these skills; but I would argue that many women would benefit from learning skills in which men tend to more easily excel. The problem with the paradigm that was presented at this workshop is exactly the problem Sax found with gynocentric kindergarten curricula — it sets up female developmental experience as normative to which both sexes should aspire.

The dominant themes in psychotherapy have always been gyno-normative, even when most of the practitioners were male. For example, Freud’s patients were all female (and rich females at that), and it was on his experience with them that he based his theories. It is probably no coincidence that the psychoanalysis he developed consists of symbolism, dream interpretation, random thoughts, free associations and fantasies in a process that can take years. In contrast, the male approach is to define a problem and solve it. Sometimes this involves setting aside one’s emotions so that rational processes are better able to take charge. My experience with men is that they do not want to be in therapy for a long time. Albert Ellis’ Rational Emotive Therapy makes sense for many men although women may equally benefit from this approach.

I don’t mean to recapitulate John Grey’s Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus thesis. A non-sexist psychotherapy will treat each person as a culture of one with the therapist setting out to learn that culture; however, we need to recognize that there are certain tendencies that may be culturally or genetically driven. Sexist psychotherapy occurs when the normative experience of one sex is set as the norm for both. For example, the presenters at the “How to Counsel Men” workshop I just cited were mystified as to how it was that men were far more likely to commit suicide than women but were far less likely to suffer from depression. It did not occur to them that the American Psychological Association defines depression using the female normative experience. Male symptoms that differ from the female expression are not recognized, and I submit this is one reason why men are under diagnosed with this condition.

It is not at all clear that men’s mental health needs will receive serious attention any time soon. The APA Guidelines for the Psychological Practice with Men and Boys released last year, attempts to link traditional masculinity to racism, ageism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism, and this, we are told, results in “personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self.” The unsubstantiated suggestion is made that men commit higher levels of intimate partner violence and are estranged from their children because they lack the will or ability to have positive involvement in healthy family relationships. Psychologists are cautioned about believing their male clients who protest their innocence because, in the words of the APA, “Male privilege tends to be invisible to men.”

I think we should consider the possibility that men do not seek counselling or therapy because they do not see counsellors and therapists as sympathetic to their experiences and the APA guidelines fail to dispel this perception. This should not be seen as an indictment against all therapists. Jordan Peterson's "Twelve Steps" are based on practices that are common to Rational Emotive and Cognitive Behavioural therapies, and he expressed surprise that his approach has been overwhelmingly endorsed by young men because those approaches are gender neutral. I think his experience demonstrates that men are willing to seek help for their mental health issues if the helpers are seen to be sympathetic to their lived experience.

My advice to men who are interested in psychotherapy is to interview a number of psychotherapists before settling on one. Ensure that the therapist you choose is sympathetic to your needs and has an approach with which you feel comfortable. I think most therapists would feel comfortable answering such questions, and if they do not, you do not want to use the services of that therapist.

Jacobsen: Recalling a remark by Sax, he noted, after the age of 30, no reliable intervention — inasmuch as his research and professional practice work are concerned — for the aforementioned failure, in terms of steerage back onto the high seas of normal cultural life. He states, according to recent research on the architecture of the brain, an adult female is aged 22 and an adult male is aged 30.

Robertson: Neuropsychology is not my field; however this sounds like an old idea that girls mature faster than boys. I will rely on Susan Harter on this who did a meta-analysis and concluded that the frontal lobes normally complete their development around age 25 for both sexes. She published this in her 2012 book, and there may be subsequent research of which I am not aware. On the other hand, Sax is on solid ground in contending that there are inherited sex-linked differences with respect to personalities, drives and certain aptitudes although it should be remembered that when discussing such differences we are talking about averages and that knowing a person's sex will not reliably tell us anything about any individual person's personality or aptitudes. In any case, we are not born with a blank slate as Steven Pinker classically articulated in his book of that name, and on that point I think Sax is on very solid ground scientifically.

The 1950s and 60s popular notion that girls mature faster than boys was grounded in a number of observations that included girls verbal and social development, and the fact that young women were often ready to settle down and raise a family by their late teens. Young men, on the other hand, were often more interested in things than people and would rather explore and experiment than settle down and raise a family. The related conclusions regarding maturity was again grounded in a gynonormative perspective. We now know that different lifestyles and experiences can affect the brain's structure such that male curiosity, if allowed expression, will result in a strengthening of relevant parts of the brain. Neo-natal scarcity can also lead to phenotypical gene expression that may be adaptive in a world of grinding poverty but are maladaptive in the modern context. Sax may have been thinking of this research in putting limits on when profitable interventions may be undertaken. Recent research has debunked the idea that the brain loses all

plasticity by age 30, and in any case, I have helped many adults past middle age to lead satisfying lives after having had a career of dysfunctionality.

Jacobsen: Looking at the last two questions, if we look at the short, medium, and long term futures of men and, thus, in part, societies, what will be the outcomes for those who begin to succeed, and those who continue to fail, by the standard cultural expectations in Canada? What will be the outcomes for the Canadian culture if the trends lean towards further failure or further success — as defined before? For example, Sax reflects on the work by Professor David D. Gilmore, Professor of Anthropology at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, with the likely dissipation and replacement, as an assessment and not a judgment of Gilmore, of secular English-speaking culture in North America, and, in fact, elsewhere, because of the lack of strong bonds across generations and the current cultures with young men and boys on one failure, and girls and young women on another standard success, trajectory, where these sub-cultures in larger Canadian society will not reproduce themselves for a variety of reasons and, therefore, will undergo steady replacement by other sub-cultures enacting the behavioral, communal, familial, and mating patterns indicative of those who have endured in previous generations for millennia, e.g., the Navajo, the Chinese, the Jewish, and so on.

Robertson: Again, there is a lot packed into your question. I would predict that some men will continue to succeed and they will assume the position of alpha males. I predict that large numbers of men will continue to fail, in part due to societal structures that lead to this result, and in part due to their own state of personal anomie flowing from a breakdown in the intergenerational transmission of values. I would argue, however, that reproduction below replacement levels is occurring worldwide and cannot be attributed solely or even primarily to events unique to Euro-American cultures but seem to be correlated with higher levels of educational opportunity available to women that allow for alternate avenues to self-actualization besides the mother archetype. I don't think a low birth rate is necessarily a bad thing, but I am concerned about male roles in this new culture.

With the words "alpha male" my mind went immediately to the Canadian prime minister who may or may not be prototypical. Alpha males operate by different rules than are available to ordinary males. Feminists in Trudeau's cabinet like Chrystia Freeland and Jane Philpott gave Mr. Trudeau a pass on substantiated allegations of a past sexual assault while applauding the expulsion from the Liberal caucus backbench members who faced unproven allegations of sexual assault. This would be an example of how rules between classes of men differ in the new society. The problems men who are not alpha face are either invisible or ignored. Even though three times as many male aboriginal men are missing or murdered as compared to aboriginal women, a Canadian inquiry into the problem excluded consideration of the men. When the government announced that Syrian refugees would be admitted, single males were specifically excluded from refugee status. When foreign aid increases were announced, agencies receiving the aid had to agree that none of it would go to men. I do not think the majority of men can expect much consideration from such feminized alpha males.

One problem faced by the majority of men is we do not normally confide in and support other men. I have been part of that problem. In 1969 I marched with Women's Liberation to protest the

“Saskatoon Club.” This was a club for well-to-do men in the city of Saskatoon. Men got to relax, play pool, discuss business and politics, and enter into mentoring relationships without the perceived distraction of women. We succeeded in opening it up to women. About three years later a succession of women rose at a meeting of Women’s Liberation to state that there were women present who felt intimidated by the presence of men. They politely asked the men present, who numbered about a quarter of the group, to leave, and we did so without protest. The result is that there was no net gain in inter-sex cooperation. The difference involved a shifting of gender specific networking and mentoring capacity. Ordinary men to this day remain largely unorganized.

The lack positive male self-identity can be traced to an intergenerational fail in the transmission of values. This fail began long before the advent of feminism. With the Industrial revolution men were forced to work in factories for 12 to 16 hours per day six days per week. Men became absentee parents whose contribution to the family was largely as a “good provider.” Mothers raised their children but necessarily gave them a woman’s perspective. This division of labour became a cultural norm, maintained long after working hours were reduced. Most men still measured their self-worth by their ability to be that good provider for their families differing to women in matters of child-rearing. But now, if men work hard and achieve financial success they are told that they are the recipients of unearned male privilege. Some men are saying, “Why bother?” I think the appeal of people like Peterson is that he has given them a reason to bother that transcends current ideological constraints, and that reason has to do with the development of personal integrity. In a sense, he is reaching out intergenerationally, filling a need in building positive male identities, as I also hope to do in this interview. Thank you for the opportunity.

Ask Mark 1—Somethin' About Nothin': The Nones Ain't Nothin'

What is the deal, as Seinfeld would say, with the "Nones" - so called?

March 15, 2019

Mark Gibbs is an independently educated nonbeliever, who has some interesting and precise thoughts about the terminology in the survey data presented to the unbelieving community over the years. Here, in this series, we will explore some of the content, starting with the term "Nones."

With the general conversation on the nature of the terminology within the secular community, Gibbs remarked on the independent research into the demographics of atheism in Canada. He notes several studies and surveys indicate modest trends in the atheist beliefs or characteristics in Canada, as in flavours of atheism within a Canadian conceptual landscape.

On the term the “Nones,” Gibbs stated, “As near as I’ve been able to trace its origins, it seems to have *literally* started out as a joke. [The story I’ve heard](#) is that in 2001, while doing the second American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS), Professor Barry Kosmin noted the massive growth in the number of people who did not affiliate with any religion — they’d almost doubled in size since the previous survey from 1990 (8.2% to 14.1%; these are US numbers). He realized there wasn’t really a term for this group — they were the ‘No religion’ category, but what would you call them? ‘No-religionists’?”

He quotes the article, which states:

“Nonreligious” was a possibility. So was “non-faith” and “non-affiliated.”

But Kosmin rejected all of these. The “non” part bothered him. “Non-affiliated” would be like calling people “non-white,” he said. “We didn’t want to suggest that ‘affiliated’ was the norm, and every one else was an ‘other.’”

“Nomenclature,” he added, “is quite important in these things.”

Gibbs notes how the intention was, in fact, positive. However, the term “none” arose out of the mishmash of “none of the above,” as a truncated version of it. The base reasoning was the following: if someone did not have a religious denomination presented, then they would choose “none of the above” or “none.” It started as a joke and then created a life of its own.

“It’s really important that we clarify what ‘None’ actually means, because there is a lot of confusion about it. ‘None’ does *not* mean ‘not religious’, or ‘having no religion’. ‘None’ means *specifically* having no religious *affiliation*,” Gibbs explained, “Surveys like ARIS and population censuses usually don’t ask about your *beliefs*; they usually ask a question that looks something like this: ‘Which religion or denomination do you identify with?’ Note that the question is about affiliation, not belief.”

Gibbs remarked on the definition of religion based on the [definition of religion](#) provided by Statistics Canada. In fact, it was used for [the 2011 National Housing Survey](#). As far as Gibbs found through independent research, this was the last time the census asked about religion, where the next time will be 2021. He quotes the documentation’s definition:

Religion refers to the person's self-identification as having a connection or affiliation with any religious denomination, group, body, sect, cult or other religiously defined community or system of belief. Religion is not limited to formal membership in a religious organization or group. Persons without a religious connection or affiliation can self-identify as atheist, agnostic or humanist, or can provide another applicable response

Gibbs states the definition of religion does not amount to what you believe in particular; however, it does relate the faith one feels a personal connection. Gibbs makes a distinction between the 2011 National Housing Survey and the 2011 census.

As he states, “[In 2010, the Harper government scrapped the mandatory long-form census and replaced it with an optional survey](#). They justified it as answering calls from a tiny minority of people who objected to the government collecting personal data. The move [sparked outcry from just about everyone who cared about social research and evidence-based governance](#), and, as predicted, [was a disaster](#). The mandatory long-form census was [restored by the Trudeau government](#) in time for the 2016 census, but unfortunately we won't actually get religion data until 2021. Until then, the dodgy 2011 National Housing Survey data is all we have, other than data from the 2001 census.”

Gibbs explains, firmly, a “None” does not equate to an individual without a religion. A “None” is someone who simply does not affiliate with a religion or a religious group – full stop. Gibbs points to the extreme cases, in the extremely religious individuals.

He notes those with extreme religious beliefs become particular. A situation in which the belief system becomes idiosyncratic and weird, no doubt. He described the syncretism within the extreme religious community or the mixing of beliefs of the extant religious traditions.

Extremely religious people far more often affirm rather than deny their religiosity than deny it.

Via an example, Gibbs stated, “For example, a person might believe literally every single part of the Catholic dogma *except* that they reject [dyophysitism](#) (Jesus has two natures: divine and human) in favour of [miaphysitism](#) (Jesus has one nature that is *both* divine and human), and feel so strongly about it that it's enough for them to reject any affiliation with Catholicism.”

Then he noted the ways in which “religion” has become a bad word. It gets lumped with a denial of the natural world discovered through empirical methodologies and scientific tools. Individual may hold to core beliefs of traditional religions while also working to never proclaim identification with the title of a traditional religion. Words matter, but so does the content of beliefs implied by the words.

Gibbs talked about spiritual but not religious or SBNR. however, was unsure as to the StatCan filing of this terminology. Based on a [graphic from recent Pew surveys of US adults](#), most of the “Nones” are within this category:

Gibbs further explained, “The situation may be even more extreme in Canada. [A 2014 Angus Reid survey](#) found that a plurality of Canadians are SBNR, and even if you single out the people who *reject* religion, 41% of those are SBNR.”

Gibbs, as articulate and intelligent as he is, emphasizes the importance of precision, as he is here, when using the terms. We may slip in the future. However, this can be a note to be mindful of the utilization of the terms “None,” “nonreligious,” and “atheist.” If one mixes these, they make “huge mistakes.”

Gibbs provided a favourite example from [*The Atlantic*: “Atheists Are Sometimes More Religious Than Christians”](#). The admixture is between atheists and Nones for the entirety of the article. He quotes the article:

Second, the researchers found that American “nones”—those who identify as atheist, agnostic, or nothing in particular—are more religious than European nones. The notion that religiously unaffiliated people can be religious at all may seem contradictory, but if you disaffiliate from organized religion it does not necessarily mean you’ve sworn off belief in God, say, or prayer.

The third finding reported in the study is by far the most striking. As it turns out, “American ‘nones’ are as religious as—or even more religious than—Christians in several European countries, including France, Germany, and the U.K.”

“That was a surprise,” Neha Sahgal, the lead researcher on the study, told me. “That’s the comparison that’s fascinating to me.” She highlighted the fact that whereas only 23 percent of European Christians say they believe in God with absolute certainty, 27 percent of American nones say this.

In the utility of surveys and censuses, and in the usefulness of classifications of the population for demographic analyses, bad terms can slant the reality shown by the research on the nonreligious. Gibbs continued to emphasise the “None” category as a census and survey category. He lamented the “tragic dearth” of science on nonreligious people, real scientific and social scientific research on secular people. He made a recommendation to see [Professor Melanie Brewster’s 2014 talk at Skepticon 7](#).

In his framing, the current researchers are not appropriately collecting data because the terms are misleading, and so lead to misleading conclusions about the nonreligious.

Gibbs summarized, as follows:

- *It doesn’t mean what most people think it means. It has nothing to do with being nonreligious. It’s only about affiliation; it’s only about identifying with a religion, not believing in that religion’s tenets.*
- *The category is actually dominated by the “wrong” people. By “wrong” I mean: not the people “Nones” are generally assumed to be. Most people assume “Nones” are nonreligious. In fact, most “Nones” are very religious, and in some ways even more religious than the average person that affiliates with a mainstream religion.*
- *The categorization has already negatively impacted science. In the talk linked above, Professor Brewster explains how lumping atheists in with the “unaffiliated” distorted psychological research for almost two decades, and led to false notions about the mental health and social success of atheists.*

- *The categorization has already negatively impacted atheists. Following from the point above, those false notions about the mental health of atheists led to actual discrimination. To this day, you don't have to look too far to find people repeating myths that "science" has proven that atheists are psychologically unhealthy.*

Ask Mark 2—Squeezing More Some Things from Nothings

How can we get some more nothings out of the "Nones"?

March 16, 2019

Mark Gibbs is an independently educated nonbeliever, who has some interesting and precise thoughts about the terminology in the survey data presented to the unbelieving community over the years. Here, in this series, we will explore some of the content, starting with the term "Nones" in an extended conversation continuing from [Ask Mark 1 — Somethin' About Nothin': The Nones Ain't Nothin'](#).

We started on some definitional issues. Those focused on the proper definitions for terms. Gibbs, astutely, identified the need to target the specific population. That is, the sub-population ones to research, for example.

Gibbs stated, “You see, Professor Kosmin wasn’t wrong. ARIS is the American Religious *Identification Survey*; the whole point of it is which religion you *identify with*... not what you *believe*. Kosmin knew exactly what he was talking about: he was talking about people who don’t identify with any religions... he was *not* talking about nonbelievers; they’re *not* the same thing. The problem isn’t the term *itself*.”

Thus, the problem was not the word use, but the misuse and subsequent – or, maybe, presequent – reflected a deep problem in two other words. Two other terms reflecting operations-of-mind. On the one hand, the affiliation with a religion. On the other hand, the belief in a religion. These can overlap in a Venn diagram. However, these do not necessarily have to fit snugly one into the other.

“That’s always a problem — for example, Islamophobic bigots make a point of not differentiating between believers in extremist Islamic ideologies and literally everybody who calls themselves ‘Muslim’,” Gibbs explained, “But it becomes particularly acute when you start talking about the *lack* of a religion: are you talking about the lack of *affiliation*, or the lack of *belief*? Or both? If your goal is actually *specifically* to talk about people who are not affiliated with any religions, then ‘None’ is exactly the right term.”

There is a “But...” there, though. The trouble with “None” comes from the synonymous interpretations of “None,” “nonreligious,” “atheist,” and the like. He continues to describe the ways in which reality is a messy affair, apart from the abstract descriptions of terms more interesting in the isolation of a linguistics or a philology class.

To make the point, Gibbs described how the idiosyncrasies of extremist ideological stances or fundamentalist religious views create an interesting situation, as follows: someone holds the same beliefs of a religion and does not claim to follow the faith.

“And most of the time, affiliation is useless as a categorization anyway. There’s lots of evidence out there that fundamentalist Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and so on have more in common with each other than they do with the moderate, casual, or progressive members of their own religions,” Gibbs said.

With the percentage of Christians who may hold “some awful belief,” the label “Christians” becomes difficult for proper interpretation and may, in fact, blur the lines of the true diverse categories of Christian believers.

Gibbs stated, “I’d be far more interested in learning how prevalent the awful belief is among casual religious believers — and it doesn’t really matter whether they’re Christian or something else; *that* would better tell me whether it’s something to be concerned about or not. *That* would be more useful in assessing whether the problem is only extreme religion, or if even moderate religion is a concern.”

Gibbs summarized the position for him. He thinks None can be used, but he believes “None”, as a term, should be used in the proper context. A context in which None makes sense or appropriately applies. With the confusion, though, Gibbs argues against the use of the term, as a practical matter.

Even further, the situation becomes more complicated, according to Gibbs. The entire “typology” of the terms will become new, in meaning and addition of words. Apparently, last year, Pew Research worked to [came up with a new typology to help understand religiosity](#).

Gibbs stated seven categories arose with two new non-religious ones. One for the spiritual but not religious and the others for those who do not believe in supernaturalism. Shown in the image below:

Pew’s new religious typology

Gibbs explained, “Pew’s new grouping actually illustrates how useless the ‘None’ grouping is (unless all you care about is *specifically* affiliation, and not beliefs). The ‘Solidly Secular’ are pretty much synonymous with ‘nonbelievers’... yet 24% of them identify with a religion. The ‘Nones’ include most of the ‘Solidly Secular’ and ‘Religion Resisters’... but it also includes 30% of the ‘Spiritually Awake’ and 17% of the ‘Relaxed Religious’, and even 22% of the ‘Diversely Devout’. So ‘Nones’ doesn’t just include a lot of people who aren’t nonreligious, it also excludes at least a quarter of those who are!”

Affiliation in Pew’s new religious typology

Gibbs appreciates the Pew grouping. While, at the same time, the main criticism remains the focus on Christianity and on the United States. The emphasis can skew the outcomes of the research, unfortunately. The questions arise about the nature of terms in relation to other faiths or faith groupings, and adherents.

“I think I would do something very similar to what Pew did, though less US/Christianity-focused; so asking about belief God or a god generally, not specifically ‘God as described in the Bible’. But I’m not a fan of the name ‘Solidly Secular’. ‘Secular’ already has too many other meanings, and this is just guaranteed to sow more confusion. For example: technically, devout Catholics who aren’t clergy are secular. But don’t get me started on all the problems with the word ‘secular,’” Gibbs concluded, “I think a better term for that group would be ‘unbelievers’, because these are people who don’t believe in the tenets of religion — whether they still identify with a religion or not — and also don’t believe in other woo that isn’t normally called ‘religious’,

like psychics and pyramid power. So I think I'd use a more generic variant of Pew's typology, but with 'Solidly Secular' renamed to '[something] Unbelievers'; I'll leave it up to Pew to come up with a cute alliteration."

Image Credits: Pew Research Center.

Ask Gayleen 3—Negative What Ifs

What could have gone wrong but, happily and thankfully due to the sacrifices of others, didn't in South Africa?

March 16, 2019

Gayleen Cornelius is a South African human rights activist from Willowmore; a tiny town in the Eastern Cape province. She grew up a coloured (the most ethnically diverse group in the world with Dutch, Khoisan, Griqua, Zulu, Xhosa Indian, and East Asian ancestry). Despite being a large Demographic from Cape Town to Durban along the coast, the group is usually left out of the racial politics that plague the nation. She has spoken out against identity politics, racism, workplace harassment, religious bigotry and different forms of abuse. She is also passionate about emotional health and identifies as an empath/ humanist. Here we talk about South Africa and progressivism.

The context for South Africa simply comes out as one of the most progressive countries in the world. Without the progressive movement, South Africa would be in a terrible mess due to the human problem at the source of many societal issues in many countries.

The problem of racism and its outpourings through the generations. It is, simply put, an illusion with real implications and disastrous consequences for the lives of individual citizens, for groups, and, indeed, for the health and wellness & wealth of societies around the world.

Cornelius stated, “South Africa is a very diverse country with 14 national languages. Historically rival ethnic groups like the Zulu and the Xhosa would have continued with the tribalist violence that almost got out of hand before the reconciliation programs in 1994. Xenophobia against other African nationalities would have been violent and gruesome. Racism wouldn’t have progressed at all since the Apartheid era and boiled out to a civil war. The LGBTQ community wouldn’t have come out of hiding fearing for their lives. These are situations that many people considered inevitable when Nelson Mandela assumed power in 1994 but he did a great job implementing a culture of progressivism and averting all the tribalism, racism and bigotry.”

One perennial threat to progressive shifts to a more peaceful and just society, especially in terms of race relations, is towards animosity or antipathy with one another. Even with the knowledge of the tree of life and the terminology of species, there can still be instances of problems for all peoples coming into the world. It can be problems of the race as too embedded in the social networks and the social fabric.

“The race issue is the most volatile for as long as I can remember. We still have a large number of white supremacists from the who weren’t very happy about the end of Apartheid because they benefited a lot from it,” Cornelius said, “There have been many cases of white farmers killing their black workers for sport and various surveys have shown that a great number of farm workers are sexually abused by these farmers.”

There has been retaliation by black workers with murders of white farmers. Neither situation helps with the peace and just desired by most South Africans. Racisms threatens the fabric of South African society. However, it does not mean all hope is or should be lost.

“Racism has threatened a lot of aspects affecting South African civil society and that has led to the rise of a far left wing of black nationalists and an alt right wing of white nationalists. The populist sentiments that have risen through Julius Malema’s Economic Freedom Fighters and the Afrikaner community’s Afriforum can possibly worsen identity politics and if any one of them get into power in 2019, it would be a newer version of Apartheid all over again. That is the single and most imminent threat to progressivism in South Africa and a lot has to be done to prevent the worst from happening,” Cornelius opined.

Ask Dr. Weld 3—The Demographic Rap: Terms and Definitions

How important is the complete suite of vernacular relevant to the patois of Demography for proper understanding of where the professionals are coming from when they say things?

Very.

March 17, 2019

Madeline Weld, B.Sc., M.S., Ph.D., is the President of the Population Institute Canada. She worked for and has retired from Health Canada. She is a Director of Canadian Humanist Publications and an editor of Humanist Perspectives. In the work of interviewing a professional demographer, the importance of precision in the terminology of the field becomes of utmost importance. Weld provided a summary listing at the outset, as follows:

Abortion rate: The number of abortions per 1,000 women ages 15–44 or 15–49 in a given year.

Abortion ratio: The number of abortions per 1,000 live births in a given year.

Birth control: Practices that permit sexual intercourse with reduced likelihood of conception and birth. Abortion is included in the definition of birth control.

Carrying capacity: This is an ecological term that you won't find in a glossary of demography although it is relevant to humans. Carrying capacity refers to the number of organisms of a given species that can be supported indefinitely in a given environment. (See also Overshoot.)

Cohort: A group of people sharing a common temporal demographic experience who are observed through time.

Contraception: Practices that permit sexual intercourse with reduced likelihood of conception. Modern methods include the pill, injectable hormones (such as Depo-Provera), implants (small hormone-releasing rods implanted in the upper arm), intra-uterine devices or IUDs, condoms, and sterilization.

Contraceptive prevalence: Percentage of couples currently using a contraceptive method.

Crude birth rate: Births per 1000 population.

Crude death rate: Deaths per 1000 population.

Demographic transition: The historical shift of birth and death rates from high to low levels in a population. The mortality decline usually precedes the fertility decline, resulting in rapid population growth during the transition period.

Demography: The scientific study of human populations, including their sizes, compositions, distributions, densities, growth, and other characteristics, as well as the causes and consequences of changes in these factors.

Doubling time: The number of years required for the population of an area to double its present size, given the current rate of population growth.

Emigration rate: The number of emigrants departing an area of origin per 1,000 population in that area of origin in a given year.

Family planning: The conscious effort of couples to regulate the number and spacing of births through artificial and natural methods of contraception. Family planning connotes conception control to avoid pregnancy and abortion, but it also includes efforts of couples to induce pregnancy.

Fecundity: The physiological capacity of a woman to produce a child.

Fertility: The actual reproductive performance of an individual, a couple, a group, or a population. See general fertility rate.

General fertility rate: The number of live births per 1,000 women ages 15–44 or 15–49 years in a given year.

Growth rate (or population growth rate): The annual rate of change in the size of a population. This change includes the increase (or decrease) from births over deaths and the net migration (immigration minus emigration), expressed as a percentage of the population at the beginning of the time period.

Immigration rate: The number of immigrants arriving at a destination per 1,000

population at that destination in a given year. Infant mortality ratio: The number of deaths of infants under age 1 per 1,000 live births in a given year. Life expectancy: The average number of additional years a person could expect to live if current mortality trends were to continue for the rest of that person's life. Most commonly cited as life expectancy at birth. Maternal mortality ratio: The number of women who die as a result of pregnancy and childbirth complications per 100,000 live births in a given year. Migration: The movement of people across a specified boundary for the purpose of establishing a new or semi-permanent residence. Migration can be international (between countries) or internal (within a country). Net migration: The estimated rate of net migration (immigration minus emigration) per 1,000 population. For some countries, data are derived as a residual from estimated birth, death, and population growth rates. Net migration rate: The net effect of immigration and emigration on an area's population, expressed as an increase or decrease per 1,000 population of the area in a given year. Overshoot: This is not a term that you are likely to find in a glossary of demography, although it should be there. In population ecology, overshoot occurs when a population temporarily exceeds the long-term carrying capacity of its environment. This situation arises when a species or population encounters a rich and previously unexploited stock of resources that promotes its increase. When the stock is exhausted, the species faces a precipitous population decline or crash. Many ecologists think that the age of oil has sent the human population into overshoot. Population: The total number of persons inhabiting a country, city, or any district or area. Population control: A broad concept that addresses the relationship between fertility, mortality, and migration, but is most commonly used to refer to efforts to slow population growth through action to lower fertility. Population density: Population per unit of land area; for example, people per square mile or people per square kilometer of arable land. Population increase (or population growth): The total population increase resulting from the interaction of births, deaths, and migration in a population in a given period of time. Population momentum: The tendency for population growth to continue beyond the time that replacement-level fertility has been achieved because of the relatively high concentration of people in the childbearing years. Population projections: Computation of future changes in population numbers, given certain assumptions about future trends in the rates of fertility, mortality, and migration. Demographers often issue low, medium, and high projections of the same population, based on different assumptions of how these rates will change in the future. Replacement level fertility: The level of fertility at which a couple has only enough children to replace themselves, or about two children per couple. Rule of 70: You aren't likely to find this term in a demography glossary but it's very useful to determine the approximate doubling time of a population based on the annual growth rate. To get the doubling time, divide 70 by the annual growth rate. For example, populations growing at 1, 2, and 3% annually have respective doubling times of 70, 35, and 23 years. Total fertility rate (TFR): The average number of children that would be born alive to a woman (or group of women) during her lifetime if she were to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the age-specific fertility rates of a given year. This rate is sometimes stated as the number of children women are having today. Unmet need: Women with unmet need for spacing births are those who are able to become pregnant and sexually active but are not using any method of contraception (modern or traditional), and report wanting to delay the next child or limit their number of births. Zero population growth: A population in equilibrium, with a growth rate of zero, achieved when births

plus immigration equal deaths plus emigration. You can get more information about terminology at these and many other sites: <https://www.prb.org/glossary/> <https://population.un.org/wpp/General/GlossaryDemographicTerms.aspx> http://www.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/glossary_demographic_terms.pdf http://www.bestlibrary.org/ss11/files/glossary_of_demography_and_population.doc

With this glossary, I would highly recommend continuing to it, whether for this current in-depth educational article or prior, or future, ones in this educational series on demography. The terms for fields can amount to jargon; however, within the disciplines, these can increase speed of communication and clarity in the productions of the discipline to the experts. Weld noted the ways in which the consequentiality of the increase in the global human population, its growth, is vastly understated as an impactful factor on the outcomes of the future world.

She said, “How many people know that Syria’s population quadrupled from 5 million to 20 million between 1950 and 2010? Once self-sufficient in wheat, Syria has become increasingly dependent on more expensive imported wheat. The 2007–2010 drought was the worst in modern history its water resources dropped by 50% between 2002 and 2008.”

The subsequent or even concomitant crop failures led to hundreds of thousands or mostly Sunni populations moving from rural areas into the coastal cities. Those dominated by the Alawite minority. This may be one of many correlates, or even causes, of exacerbations in the conflicts in the region.

Weld believes the situation may have been better with a more stable population, at the time, of 5 million compared to the 20 million seen in 2010. Or, let’s take the ways in which there is reportage on the problem of underpopulation and overpopulation, a city, region, or country having a population loss is stated in positive terms.” More fuss has been made in the media about Japan’s shrinking population than about the out-of-control growth in many sub-Saharan countries, Syria, Gaza and some others. Yet Japan is coping much better with its decreasing population than the others are with their growing populations,” Weld stated, “As for the use of demographic terms, many people probably couldn’t give dictionary-perfect definitions of a lot of them and many may confuse such terms as fecundity and fertility (both defined above). Nevertheless, the gist of some terms can be intuitively grasped. For example, the definition of total fertility rate (TFR) given above may sound a bit convoluted, but in a nutshell it is the average number of children that women of a given country or region have in their lifetime. Most people would probably get some sense of that from the term itself.”

She covered 6 areas in this session in-depth. The first is population density. This is simply the number of people in a given unit land area. Tokyo, Japan, is more densely populated than probably any area of Canada. That is, Tokyo has a higher population density than Edmonton, Toronto, or the numerous small towns through Canada.

Weld dispensed of the myth that Canada has infinite space for the inclusion of more and more people. Newcomers tend to congregate in the cities rather than attempting to make a living within the spaces on the outskirts of the societies, or in the tundra. This is a fact of the outcomes of the immigration policies in Canada. With the rapid increases in the growth of the population,

cities in Canadian society continue to experience stresses on both infrastructure and social services while losing biodiversity, wildlife, and farmland. The second topic was population growth and population growth rate. It is the increase or the decrease in the total numbers of the population.

It is a modestly more complicated calculation, but, nonetheless, it comes to a reasonably straightforward calculation of the births minus the deaths and the immigration minus the emigration. Canada's fertility rate is 1.6. The replacement rate of the population is 2.1. That means Canadian citizens, on the whole, are not replacing themselves.

The population of Canada can retain its size due to the fact that there is a significant amount of immigration into Canada to maintain the population size. Weld said, "A population can be growing in absolute numbers even if its rate of growth is slowing down. The growth rate of the global population has in fact slowed down a lot in the past several decades. This has led to a perception among many (including in the media) that the problem is solving itself. But the absolute number of people being added annually has gone up, because the size of the population is bigger. This is illustrated in the table below. It is the absolute number of people that puts pressure on the environment. Yet many people seem to think that a decreasing growth rate solves the problem."

The third section was the Total fertility rate or the TFR. Weld talked about the average number of women per child in a country or region throughout said woman's lifetime. The TFR was 2.5 in 2018 based on UNFPA's State of the World Population. There is a 'plummet' of the TFR over the last decades. According to Weld, this is a good thing.

It is indicative of the overpopulation problem, or 0.4 above 2.1, solving itself. This is all part and parcel of a continuing problem of the decrease in the number of people in the world per year compared to if the TFR was increasing or maintained itself from the previous year. The growth rate, not the total population, of the world is on the decrease.

However, this is not the whole story, Weld said. Because this is simply a coarse metric not taking into account the global population and the population differences when comparing regions or countries.

"For example, the countries defined by the UNFPA as 'more developed regions' have a TFR of 1.7, while those in the 'less developed regions' have a TFR of 2.6, and the 'least developed countries' have an average TFR of 4.0. The TFR of Somalia is 6.1 and of Niger 7.1," Weld explained, "Many, probably most, of the countries with very high TFRs are failed or failing states, with emigration pressures that are already huge and that will likely only worsen with time. Africa's population is projected to explode from 1.2 billion today to 2 billion by 2050 and over 4 billion by 2100."

The fourth part was contraceptive prevalence versus unmet need. Contraceptive prevalence is the percentage of couples who are actively and properly using a contraceptive method (actively and properly, hopefully). Unmet need are women who remain capable of pregnancy and are sexually active but do not want to become pregnant and are not using contraceptives.

Sometimes, there is a correlation between contraceptive prevalence and unmet need. Although, there are times when the want of a large family does not reflect lack of access to contraceptives.

Weld stated, “That is why the completely hands-off approach taken at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo conference) with regard to promoting small families represents a huge failure, in my opinion. People were to ‘freely and responsibly’ decide on the number and spacing of their children, but this idealistic thinking did not take into consideration the strong influence of cultural norms, religion, and tradition on desired family size. The UN developed no programs to educate people about the impact of population growth and to promote smaller families. (Unlike, for example, programs to promote and implement child immunization that were developed right after the World Health Organization was created.)”

A stark example given by Weld is Kenya, where there was an understanding of married women (96%) and their husbands (98%) of modern contraceptive methods. 40% of the women did not intend to use contraception ever. 8% of the non-married women gave the reason for their not wanting to use contraception, which was, quite simply, to have more children.

“Among the reasons given for not using contraception by women who were not pregnant and did not want to become pregnant, only 0.8% cited lack of availability of contraceptives, and 0.4% cited cost. The top four reasons among those who are still fecund: (1) concern with the medical side effects of contraceptives (31%); 2) religious prohibition (9%); (3) personal opposition (8%); and (4) opposition from the husbands (6%). (The information on the DHS survey is from a December 2012 paper by William Ryerson of the Population Media Center.) In a 2015 presentation by Dr. Ryerson summarizing the major reasons given for non-use of contraceptives in over 30 rapidly growing countries, lack of access was the main reason in only 1% (a single country) or below of the people surveyed in every country,” Weld said.

The big reason being fear of side effects. This was followed to varying degrees depending on the opposition of the spouse, the health concerns, the religious prohibition, and the lack of knowledge. The changing of fertility rates, especially the high ones, will have to take more into account than the simple notion of contraceptive knowledge leading to an increase in the use of the contraceptives

The fifth section was the population projections based on the assumptions of fertility, migration, and mortality. The fecundity of the population; the transfers into and out of the population in a specified bounded geography; and the deaths of the population.

The projections or the estimates of the population only become so good as the assumptions plugged into the calculations and the terms used in order to gather the data according to the definitional constraints. Research is tough. This explains the reasons for the differentials in the lower, moderate, and higher projections as to the future population of the world.

Weld said, “...there was optimism that the world population would peak at 9 billion before 2100 and then decline, but current projections are for a still-growing population of over 11 billion in 2100. Almost all of the increase in the projected global population is because fertility rates did not fall as quickly in sub-Saharan Africa as had been assumed. In 2004, the United Nations projected a population for Africa in 2100 of 2 billion, but by 2015 had upped its projection for

2100 to 4 billion. The increase in the projected population of sub-Saharan Africa accounted for almost all of the increase in the projected global population.”

The decrease in the TFR is one consideration. But this is one among many different considerations in the world. One of the assumptions was that there would be a transition of the demographics for the developing countries. Those that would automatically happen around the world as a matter of natural science or inevitable history. It did not happen in sub-Saharan Africa and some other countries.

“One thing that population projections do not take into account is the depletion of resources. The human population may not undergo the gradual decline that demographers foresee based on their assumptions of fertility decline, but a rather more abrupt crash based on resource shortages, starvation, war, the outbreak of diseases resistant to antibiotics, and other dystopian factors,” Weld said.

The sixth section of the interview with Weld was the demographic transition or the demographic transition theory (DTT)/model (DTM). Weld see the DTM or the DTT as the main reason for individual global citizens becoming complacent about the mostpressing problem of our era, which is the laziness towards too many people and too little resources.

Weld stated, “The demographic transition theory posits that societies will transition from having high fertility and high mortality to low fertility and low mortality as a natural consequence of socioeconomic modernization. The transition is usually divided into four stages. In the first stage, the population of a society is fairly stable because the high birth rate is balanced by a high death rate. In the second stage, as the society develops and health and hygiene improve, the death rate falls but the birth rate remains high, leading to rapid population growth. In stage 3, population growth starts to decrease as the birth rate falls due to better economic conditions, more education and an improvement in the status of women, and more access to contraception. In stage 4, both the birth rate and the death rate are low, and population growth is negligible or even declining.”

It isn’t based on inaccuracies if taken in the abstract, as there was important developments in the work towards transitions for the demographics of a nation or region seen in Europe from the middle ages to the more modern technological and industrial societies. The ongoing and damaging mistake in the reasoning is the application of the conditions of middle age Europe to the contexts of other regions in the modern world now.

Weld pointed out that the “DTT was embraced by the 1987 Brundtland Commission on sustainable development. Sustainable development would be achieved through economic growth in developing countries, social equity, and environmental protection. But how would these be achieved without controlling population growth? The demographic transition would take care of it because people would have fewer children as they became richer. The same thinking guided the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994.”

Since 1994, the global population has grown from 5 billion to 7.6 billion. The hoped-for continued developments have stalled to with increases in the population and the subsequent damage to both the natural world the biodiversity of the natural world. This is where we find

ourselves at the crossroads of theory and reality with reality repeatedly standing right in front of our faces awaiting an acknowledgement.

“Much emphasis has been placed on things like education for girls and economic development to indirectly address population growth. There is indeed a negative correlation between the level of female education and the TFR, and education and equal opportunities for girls and women are desirable in their own right. But, as Dr. Jane O’Sullivan has shown, expecting an increase in wealth to lead to a reduction in fertility is putting the cart before the horse,” Weld stated.

The fertility decline is associated with increases in wealth and with an increase in per capita wealth comes when the birth per women hits between 2 and 3 children. Girls’ education was “neither a pre-requisite nor a sufficient measure” to set forth the decline in the levels of global or local fertility. However, fertility decline was important for sustained economic growth.

O’Sullivan explained how the best contraception is not development, as per the adage.

Weld firmly stated, “There is an urgent need to make population growth an issue in its own right. Some countries, such as Bangladesh and Thailand, have done so. But most have not, nor has the United Nations made population growth a central part of its Millennium Development Goals (launched in 2000) or its Sustainable Development Goals (launched in 2016). The American population activist Rob Harding has proposed a [UN Framework Convention on Population Growth](#), in which every country would take responsibility to bring its own population to a sustainable level. Other countries could help rapidly growing countries to achieve a sustainable population, but would not be expected to take in their surplus population (which appears to be the objective of the UN’s [Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#).”

The DTT simply received too much credit for insufficient reasons. The seventh and final section in the responses by Weld were the Overshoot. It was based on William Catton’s book entitled *Overshoot*. It was published in 1980 while still remaining relevant. In it, the basic argument that every decision-maker who believes in infinite growth within an infinite planet are making a catastrophic mistake because the world exists with limited resources on a finite planet, or, more appropriately framed as a counter to the framing before, an infinite growth within an infinite planet can lead to catastrophic conclusions in argument and in reality. This echoes the sentiment of Malthus, not as extreme but, simply put, in spirit and result if not taken seriously to some degree.

“The gist of Catton’s book is that oil provided the energy for humans to draw down the world’s resources, which has allowed the human population to greatly exceed the long-term carrying capacity of the Earth (i.e., to go into overshoot). When resources become scarce or run out, there won’t be enough to support the human population, which is likely to undergo a steep decline or a crash. The world is an ecosystem with limits to growth and nature will have the last word,” Weld stated, “It took until 1804 for the human population to reach one billion. It increased to 2 billion by 1927, and 3 billion by 1960. The next three billion were in 1974, 1987, and 1999. In 2011, the human population reached 7 billion, and is now over 7.6 billion. Our population increases by 1,000,000,000 every dozen or so years. There is an eerie parallel of this spectacular increase in the growth of the reindeer population on St. Matthew Island, a remote outcrop in the Bering Sea, 300 km from Alaska.”

As noted about the reindeer on St. Matthew Island, the end-result can be troublesome for both the human population and the ecosystems on which human beings and other fauna and flora need to survive. The food supply, the lichen, by the reindeer was consumed in a short time, only a matter of a couple decades or so, and then when the researchers visited the island once more; they found the island littered with reindeer skeletons. The health of the reindeer was worse. These are the dynamics of growth of an organism population in a finite area of land with a finite amount of resources.

Weld concluded, “It’s true that the Earth is bigger than an island, and humans are smarter than reindeer, but we are exploiting resources globally on a colossal scale and the negative impacts of this drawdown of resources are becoming ever more evident. We would be wise to take heed.”

Ask Mark 3—Peeves, to Nones, and Back Again: A Tale of Marko Gibbons

How does this story of the fabled non-theist end, or simply continue and expand into new intellectual territory? See the Affilmillion.

March 17, 2019

Mark Gibbs is an independently educated nonbeliever, who has some interesting and precise thoughts about the terminology in the survey data presented to the unbelieving community over the years. Here, in this series, we will explore some of the content, starting with the term “Nones.” Two prior sessions here: [Ask Mark 1 — Somethin’ About Nothin’: The Nones Ain’t Nothin’](#) and [Ask Mark 2—Squeezing More Some Things from Nothings](#).

The surveys and the analysis of the surveys can be another level of issue or concern for Gibbs. The conversation, to conclude for this topic, shifted into the issues of statisticians, analysis of experts in the relevant areas of studying the non-religious, and more.

When asked about some hypothetical do-overs for surveying and analyzing the belief landscape of the unbelievers by Pew Research, Gibbs described the technicalities and precision required for proper surveys and analysis. This may be truer in a population, probably, not studied as much as they could be, but Gibbs’s complaints remain valid.

“There’s a very good reason why they keep using affiliation as a metric: it’s so easy and cheap. It’s a single question, it’s easy for survey respondents to understand, and it’s trivial to group data by. It also allows your data to be easily compared with just about every other survey out there. And, honestly, there are times when affiliation *is* a useful metric,” Gibbs said.

His example was the higher proportion of Catholics who hold a “disgusting opinion,” which can be important if one wants to know this fact about some Catholics. It may lead to lines of inquiry about them.

Gibbs stated, “*However...* it is true that using affiliation as a metric just doesn’t work for finding out about nonbelievers. And nonbelievers are my people; I want to know more about them. So with respect to the experts, I’ll just brainstorm some possibilities. And I want to stress this is really only aimed at people doing opinion surveys, not actual social scientists. This may already be a solved problem in social science; I don’t keep up with the field closely enough to know.”

His main concern was on the emphasis on affiliation at present. He believes there should be more focus on beliefs and the intensity of belief. Gibbs provided an example, in a modest & humble-Shire tone:

Which of the following best reflect your beliefs (choose all that apply):

- *I believe that God exists.*
- *I believe that there is life after death.*
- *I believe in reincarnation.*

- *I believe that psychic powers (precognition, telekinesis, remote viewing, etc.) exist.*
- *(and so on...)*

His issues with typology or the terminology & interpretation set become the need to provide a new one based on the aforementioned re-emphasis on beliefs and intensity of beliefs, and a de-emphasis on “affiliation.

Gibbs concluded, “Is that actually practical? You’d have to ask experts in the field. Certainly it would be more complicated (and thus, more expensive) than a simple affiliation/identification test. But I think that’s justifiable given that religion is such a complicated topic. And we *really* need more research done about actual beliefs — not mere affiliation — not least because you can’t really learn anything about nonbelievers if all you ask is mere affiliation.”

Ask Sally 2—Feedback on AIPAC: ‘Vitriol’ and Israel

How does anti-semitism play into politics? How does its appearance get used, too?

March 18, 2019

Sally Buxbaum Hunt is a Sexual Education, Sex-Positive, Separation of Church and State Activist and Organizer, and a Progressive. Here we talk about AIPAC and Israel.

Some media items can be overblown by both the Left and the Right. Especially true in the instances of individuals who simply speak the truth in a direct way about the problems of aspects of foreign policy, there can be excuse-making, as should be expected, by apologists for state violence; one’s own state violence and rights violations around the world, even internally, too.

Hunt and I had the chance to talk about the mainstream media narrative around Rep. Ilhan Omar, who has been branded as an antisemite. The real question here is if this is the case. If it is not the case, then the issue of the claim to antisemitism, or the charge to the epithet becomes another concern, because this would appear to be an invective intended to blast the individual making the claim so as to make the claim seem undeniably insane or immoral.

Hunt, in response to the claims of antisemitism about Ilhan Omar, stated, “It has been difficult seeing the mainstream media narrative that Ilhan Omar has been antisemitic based on her remarks. It has been the main messaging from most of our politicians. That is unacceptable because it’s not true. Ilhan Omar did not say anything antisemitic.”

Hunt is Jewish. She is secular and non-practicing, but ethnically within the heritage Jewish. She went on to explain the basic claims made by Omar. That is to say, AIPAC is a lobbying group and lobbying groups can be a problem. In this case, AIPAC is a pro-Israeli lobbying group that gives money to politicians in the United States in order for those politicians, in return, to support Israel, probably often unwaveringly.

Hunt said, “That is the whole point of AIPAC. They are a pro-Israel lobbying group. AIPAC raises money, gives this money to politicians, and then those politicians should give unwavering support to Israel and special privileges to Israel. That this lobbying group, AIPAC, is giving extra tax dollars — US tax dollars — to Israel’s government. This is true. This is absolutely true [Laughing]. Ilhan Omar was pointing this out. Then many people freaked out and said this was antisemitic.”

Then within the forcefulness of the Democratic leadership, Omar was pressured or coerced into retracting or watering down the statements. In the apology, though, Hunt appreciated how she still made an important or salient point about the problem with the lobbying groups and their impact on the political contexts in the United States.

Hunt considers the pressure from the Democratic party wrong. She thinks that the pressure or coercion for an apology by Omar never should have happened in the first place. Indeed, even with the statement or with the apology, in fact, Omar said nothing intrinsically wrong or factually incorrect.

“She was pressured to make the apology. She definitely shouldn’t have been pressured to apologize at all. Because she said absolutely nothing wrong. Part of this fake controversy is just because she’s a Muslim. A big problem is the extreme bigotry against Muslims, and also that she is black,” Hunt stated, “That makes her a bigger target. I think racism is another reason here. She is a target for being a Muslim woman and a black woman, especially [Laughing] being both of those at the same time. But this idea that no one can criticize AIPAC or can ever criticize Israel is irrational and illogical.”

Hunt was moderately flabbergasted with the notion of Israel representing all Jewish peoples, as Jews are not a monolith and Israel is the Israeli state – not the Jewish state. Therefore, it cannot, in any way, speak for all Jews or Jewish people. If it was a solely Jewish state, then this may leave Arab Israeli citizens as second class to say the least.

Hunt said, “Not every Jewish person supports the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. That is what this issue is about. No one should support the occupation. That is the bottom line. Palestinians who live in the occupied territories are trying to live their lives. Their home communities are constantly under military occupation. They are constantly being terrorized, brutalized, harassed, and oppressed. They don’t even have voting rights regarding the government that rules over them every day.”

The inability to live a free life, free of poverty, away from an utter sense of hopelessness, and so on, is a problem for the Palestinians and much less so for Israelis. Hunt states unequivocally that the Palestinians are rightfully angry at the Israeli government.

“The government of Israel is an occupying force of a government. They are a warmongering and oppressive government to Palestinian civilians living in these occupied territories. That is the point right there. Ilhan Omar is right to point out AIPAC, the pro-Israel lobbying group, has one mission. That is to raise money for politicians, so they give unwavering support from US taxpayer funds that are supporting this occupation,” Hunt concluded.

Ask Terrah 2—The Core of Customer Service

What is the central aspect and purpose of retail?

March 18, 2019

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One of the main jobs of the individual who is working with each customer is keeping them happy. This is not an easy task. Indeed, it is highly difficult. Although, retail work is considered lowly and menial work, and can be in many instances; the skill-set required for the proper delivery of retail customer service is high-level sociability and affable interaction with a wide smattering of customers who may be coming to the store with a variety of issues.

Short said, “You must take into account the individual, with each customer. When I really think about it, it does seem quite exhausting! Like in all facets of life, it’s important to remember that they are each an individual person, just like every retail worker. To get more in-depth, how I manage each customer is going to depend on what shift I’m working, what time of day it is, how busy it is, and sometimes it comes down to my own mood or what’s going on in my life, though I do my best not to let that affect my quality of service.”

She makes an explicit and concerted effort to meet the customers where they’re at, so Short can be provided for their need relative to the role and mandate of the role for her retail position. Some need meat. Others need soap. Still others, they may need bags; whereas, others may not care so much.

Short stated, “I recall a customer who appeared able-bodied, but when I asked if they needed their bags light (they had brought a large amount of them), they lit up and were grateful I asked as they had recently had surgery and couldn’t lift more than 10lbs. At the end of the day, I think we all appreciate someone taking an interest in the big or small needs that we as a customer may forget to ask or just appreciate even if we weren’t in need of the accommodation.”

There can be problems of a customer who is wrong. This is one problem. However, if the customer is amiable and willing to cooperate and converse with the retail service worker, then this can expedite corrections to the issue. The real issue is a customer who is both wrong and belligerent. This can create a stressful and nigh impossible task of de-escalation.

Short puts in the effort to hear them, to see where they are sincerely come from; nonetheless, as you might imagine, this can be a difficult task at times. One solution is simply getting the transaction done and then offering whatever is needed to soothe and manage the situation most amicably. As with other areas of work, if something rises to a rather unmanageable level, then there can be escalation to higher levels of authority. Those with more responsibilities within the mandate of their roles.

“The biggest challenges have come up when I personally was working our swing/night shift (generally 8pm-3:30am), and I have other co-workers who work this shift and have had similar experiences. At night, since there can be anywhere from myself (the cashier) and four others (our grocery night stockers) to just myself and the night PIC,” Short explained, “Generally, I would try to triage the situation myself, tolerate what could be described as abusive behavior from customers, because if I wasn’t in danger or if it wasn’t becoming too much of an issue, there was no reason to bring the PIC into it.”

Those who come into retail stores will, quite predictably, come from a wide range of the population of America. Within this population sampling, Short will experience a wide set of the total population of the United States, including the mentally ill, the deranged, high school and college students, professors, tourists from Europe, and others.

Certainly, one problem can the issue of helping the lower-level employees deal with a problem that has been escalated to the level of Short. If the lower-ranked employee can manage, then this isn’t an issue. However, in other contexts, it can be an issue. That is when there is a need for an escalation to a higher level of the issue, to the supervisors for example.

Short concluded, “I think it relates to all of it. Do your best to provide a positive experience for the customer, but make sure you adhere to, or even defer to, company policy. That is one way we are encouraged to protect ourselves or to explain decisions made, especially when selling alcohol or tobacco, that it is company policy and there is nothing we can really do. I think it is important that we as retail service folks start to stand up with the power that is being afforded us through our Unions and support from our supervisors. Taking care of ourselves needs to be the priority, but far too often, we just need to pay the bills and sometimes that means putting up with unpleasantness.”

The Incredible Politeness of Being: Women in the Secular Communities

What happens when women in the international non-religious communities speak their minds?

April 7, 2019

By Way of Digression: Tip-Offs and Tips of the Hat

I stumbled across a discussion between Susan Jacoby and Rebecca Newberger Goldstein (Center for Inquiry, 2016; Jacoby, 2018; Goldstein, 2018; Jacobsen, 2016a; Center for Inquiry, 2012; Center for Inquiry, 2013).

Jacoby has spoken articulately on Robert Ingersoll; indeed, she has spoken in an articulate and informed manner on the need for women to change their image of themselves, the dumbing down of the public within the education system, the further dumbing down of the general populace through language simplification, on the importance of the clear meaning of facts, and the need for more political clout amongst secular people including non-religious women (Jacoby, 2012; Jacoby, 2018; FORA TV, 2015; JamesRandiFoundation, 2014; FFRF, 2017; BSGSpeakers, 2015; cunytv75, 2017; LibertyPen, 2012).

If you would kindly please indulge some time today, I would like to take a winding journey from within the context of the dialogue between Jacoby and Goldstein, where this sparked a modest international conversation with some women in the secular community to be explored in the second part of this article.

After one commentary and presentation on the insightful dialogue between the two of them, this article will present qualitative and limited, though international and in-depth, commentary from interviews with secular women. The interviews from several regions of the world, where the complete interviews will be in the first footnoted reference to each individual interviewee.

“Secular” in this context means “non-religious” in some traditional meanings. That is, it means the rejection of the traditional religions here, though colloquial in interpretation, which is a weakness in a metric of precision of the qualitative research.

As many inside and outside of the non-religious community remarked about some modern atheists, it is mostly comprised of young white men in the following and older white men in the leadership.

“White” here meaning “Caucasian with a European heritage.” “Young” here meaning 18-to-35-year-olds. Not good or bad but a factual observation, a larger grouping of young Caucasian men looking for easy answers in an increasingly complicated, uncertain, diversifying, technologically advanced, and changing world.

The branch of atheism known for an impolite tone, tenor, even vernacular, and a peculiar, obvious, and understandable lack of awareness about the ways in which this appears to others within the secular communities and the communities of the religious. It remains palpable and a marker of some of the newer brand of atheism, or some of, in short, the New Atheism.

New Atheism experienced ascendance in the 2000s with a denouement, in most regards, in the 2010s. Similar arguments to the older atheism, but more assertive, sometimes aggressive, and certainly impolite argumentation and presentation at times, for example, alcohol increases aggression and disinhibits drinkers. One revered New Atheist, Christopher Hitchens, may have been an alcoholic.

Other movements grounded in mythology and centred on Christian narratives and implicit apologetics, and the imagery and life of Christ as penultimate, leech off the membership and the talking points, at this point, of New Atheism.

Its implicit or tacit endorsement within the movement remains Western flavours of Christianity linked to right-wing libertarianism from the social and economic values to the messaging to the language to the imagery to the literature considered central.

It is mostly in Western Europe and North America while gathering mutual followings from some of the New Atheist movement membership or has been throughout the latter 2010s.

Something akin to some ideological components of the New Atheist movement with the emergence in the second decade of the 21st century. It may be properly titled the New Mythologist movement with a secular emphasis on myths and a centrality, in sum, of what they deem or see as the essence of Western civilization. Not so strangely, all with implicit Christian narratives, imagery, apologetics, and so on.

For the most part, it is comprised of white men aged 18-to-35-years-old in Western Europe and North America. Those with what seems like a Christian family and cultural heritage, who, without doubt, find interest in, and to no surprise, affirm the absolute orientation of the movement in the notion of Western traditions with Christianity alone as supreme.

Again, not as a judgment but an observation, older white men from the same advanced industrial economies appear to comprise most of the leadership of the New Mythologist movement if the descriptor seems accurate or may be permitted at this time.

Some can be observed. The individuals decrying the insistence of marginal individuals and peoples in society for their human rights to be implemented while also lambasting the violation of their own free speech rights as an individual. The former seen as collectivists; the latter seen as individualists. Both, whether knowingly or not, arguing for human rights and equality.

Human rights exist as individual rights by their nature with the inclusion of various forms of collective rights at an emergent level, e.g., individual rights of a Palestinian child to clean water and the collective right to self-determination of the Palestinians.

The apparent or tacitly asserted separation between individualism, collectivism, and fundamental human rights, freedoms, and responsibilities remain illusory.

This misapprehension or misunderstanding becomes the basis of some modern movements focusing either on rights solely, responsibilities solely, or one or the other mostly, *und so weiter*.

For one example, an implicit assumption as “pro-free speech rights, for us, and anti-human rights, for others,” where, of course, freedom of expression remains a human right. Not often used in this language; however, this remains the implication of the points.

In fact, the movements across the spectrum take the public platforms to speak on the right to “free speech” when outside of an American context, which seems factually and, even tactically, wrong. As a technicality, the human right remains right to freedom of expression with speech as part of it.

Whereas, the focus of the individuals travelling the lecture, debate, and panel circuit is “free speech” within a “free speech crisis” framework, which exists as a misnomer in a way. This means a misnomer within an entire social justice movement narrowly focused on free speech rights alone.

“Social justice” defined as “human rights and equality,” where freedom of expression remains a human right in numerous national contexts and, certainly, in an international one. They should mean freedom of expression in most countries and in an international context; only freedom of speech within an American context.

As with the ill-conceived and oxymoronic “Postmodern Neo-Marxist” epithet or descriptor, there will need to be backtracking to clear their names and terminology, such is the nature of ideologues unable to see their ideology, e.g., “I knew the meaning all along of Postmodern Neo-Marxist. Here’s what I meant after formal criticism,” and having been shown to be flatly wrong and ignorant. If one knew, as a safe assumption, one would not use the term; one would use a different word or set of them.

Anyhow, Jacoby and Goldstein brought forward some internal dialogue for me. The discussion between two of the most prominent and respected secular women within the Western world centred on the polite conduct of some women around the subject of religion and in the company of the religious in contrast to some men.

Some in observation of the religious institutions raise legitimate and valid questions about the place of women within the faiths. Where are the women in the positions of influence?

Where are the leaders and prominent figures in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or in the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, in the Islamic communities around the world – Shia, Sunni, Ahmadiyya, and otherwise, the Freemasons (leaving aside the issue of their “no atheists” policy too – no specification as to the flavour of atheism), and so on?

We can see the emphasized imagery in the Virgin Mary and Mother Mary, as one example. This simply provides an example of the two attributes most valued in the women within the faith, which, in turn, determines, and has determined, their value within the community of the faithful with the virginity, or chastity, of the woman and the motherhood of the woman as their most important capacities.

Many secularists adhere to the Utilitarian ethic expounded and propounded on by John Stuart Mill, in chapter 2 of *Utilitarianism*, where he explained:

I must again repeat, what the assailants of utilitarianism seldom have the justice to acknowledge... In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbour as yourself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality. [1] (Mill, 1863)

Insofar as I can discern, if we want to employ an “ideal perfection” of the Utilitarian ethic or the Golden Rule in its fullest or truest sense, then the questions about the women leadership and representation within the churches, the mosques, the synagogues, the temples, and other places of worship, and in the general organizational structures of the religious institutions should extend to home turf of the secular.

Is this desired? Or, more properly, what would be a preferable expression of this ideal perfection in secular communities around the world on this specific question? Indeed, the answers will differ, and have differed.

In fact, the answers may reflect different emphases on the tacit question for communities within the framework of leadership, governance, the Golden Rule, high ranking of some secular and humanistic values, low ranking of other of the self-same values, removal of other values, or addition of novel ones, and so on.

Of course, individuals harbour the right to freedom of belief and freedom of religion. If they deem fit for their lives, then they can worship as they wish without qualms, as a human right.

Which implies, the same for the secular in nations killing them for existing or punishing them for questioning tenets of the faith, or, in the utilization of freedom of expression, punished with the fundamentalist religious crime of blasphemy.

Thus, the emphasis on the equality of women becomes social and legal equality or a sociological question about the equitable structuring or ordering of secular society for the benefit of the non-religious and the religious, especially as the benefits for women in a variety of contexts will benefit the men.

Women’s rights, as human rights and inseparable from one another, become beneficial on, at minimum, three levels: women, men, and societies.

Back to the dialogue enquiry formed by Goldstein and Jacoby, in one framing of the questions, where are the equal proportion of women leaders in the non-religious or secular in general communities and movements, especially the modern ones given the disproportionate representation of men in the membership and the leadership?

Sincerely, I ask this in an inquiring tone and in the most inviting terms possible, as I observed this as a sensitive and charged topic within the community of the secular (and the religious): the subject matter of equality. A legitimate and valid question as to why this is the case. Many women exist in or out of the non-religious movement working to instantiate equality in a variety of ways or working with the non-religious movements on topics of import to the irreligious community.

Aside from the few known dead, some of the living, from personal archives, who fight for secularism, women’s rights, medical assistance in dying and dying with dignity, sex positivity,

evidence-based sexual education curricula, secular evidence-based recovery programs, and the equality of the formal non-religious exist around the world – and who may adhere to a faith but remain tolerant, accepting, and progressive regarding the non-religious.^[2]

One of the early points from Jacoby came from the women without religion, reluctant to describe themselves as such to their children, family, and community out of terror. Fearful their children might get bullied because parents and even a single parent, not both, and potentially the kids, do not harbor the preferred faith of the neighborhood and the community possibly finding out about their disbelief.

As many have experienced in work and school, whether someone who is known to you or, indeed, yourself, this happens to be the case from kindergarten through postsecondary school right into the workplace, whether positions of menial labor or public influence. The non-religious women's politeness, in this domain, emerges in the form of protection.

The care and concern by women for the well-being of their children in educational institutions and within community social networks because of the simple potential for bias, bullying, and generalized prejudice against children with non-religious parents or, potentially, kids who identify as the formal non-religious, too.

Goldstein remarked on the next subject: women being more religious. Why do some women identify as more religious than men, especially in religious activities including attendance at places of worship (Powell, 2017)? Indeed, even in the university system, women, to the detriment of professional progress, work in service to others more (Flaherty, 2017).

In the United States, Christian women are more religious (Fahmy, 2018; Carter, 2018). Nature and nurture explanations exist for attempts to explain the gender gap in religiosity (Pew Research Center, 2016a). The World Economic Forum reported on the higher religiosity of women in contrast to men around the entire globe, not simply a single nation (2016).

Some researchers claim the gap remains “clear and consistent” (Zuckerman, 2014). Indeed, the global phenomena into the present reflect the total population of the religious and the religious leaders and supposed holy figures (Pew Research Center, 2016b).

In Canadian society, even, women of all ages do more chores, e.g., housework and childcare (Hawkins, 2017; Tejada, 2017). Women head most single-parent families (OECD, 2016). In Canadian society, about $\frac{1}{4}$ of citizens totally agree or somewhat agree “men have a certain natural superiority over women, and nothing can change this” (CROP – PANORAMA, n.d.).

According to Ipsos MORI, in a survey of 24 countries, the research discovered 9 out of 10 men and women believe in equal opportunities, $\frac{3}{4}$ women believe inequality existed within their nation, $\frac{1}{4}$ men and women fear to speak of equal rights, and 1/5 men and women believe in the inherent inferiority of women with the number rising to $\frac{1}{2}$ in Russia and India (Ipsos MORI, 2017).

Some women may, or may not, cling to this hope that there could be a better world as dictated by religion, administered by males, and in their acceptance that their personal actions have the

power to bring about this nirvana, they take far more punishment and harsh treatment for the better good of all.

Some women come to these areas of life with different epistemologies in a way. Although, Jacoby considers the phrase “spiritual but not religious” (SBNR) vomit-worthy. The comment earned applause. She clarified on the probable meaning of SBNR: someone without religious practice/belief but wanting to be a good person. Of course, other less often mentioned religions exist in the rubric of SBNR.

Of course, even on issues seen as unanimous such as pro-choice concerns in the secular community, the landscape remains complex; secular women hold pro-life positions too (Fetters, 2019). There is more discussion, too. Jacques Berlinerblau, Director of Jewish Civilization at Georgetown University, talked about the representation of women in secular communities, decently (Berlinerblau, 2017).

Some positive trends exist. Some secular women are rising in Pakistan (Su, 2018). There is Secularism is a Women’s Issue (Secularism is a Women’s Issue, 2019). Women remain more tolerant of homosexuality (Pew Research Center, 2019).

These manifest, potentially, as aspects of feminism in the modern period; however, Elsa Roberts, Co-President of Secular Women, notes feminism in the current period does not differ substantially from feminism 100 years ago (United Coalition of Reason, n.d.).

Some ongoing negatives include impacts on the internal decision-tree of dating (Saxton, 2017). Some find the notion of secular white women as partners beyond the pale or within the dark (Judge, 2015). Secular Jewish women may retain senses of modesty, thus their covering hair (Pockrass, n.d.).

Why? It can be a personal choice. Also, it could be based on public and social reproof seen easily in public opinions, from the frame of many women, with the public expression of denigration based on religious authority (TOI Staff, 2017).

Jacoby continued to note the – with Goldstein affirming non-verbally – ways in which SBNR statements and declarations amounted to some women placating – read: some women being polite – about what they believe, think, and feel about some sensitive topics including religion, and spiritual beliefs and practices.

She continued to add nuance to the argument with the admixture – rather intellectually sloppy of people – of the concept “soul” and the idea “consciousness” with one another. When they say, “Soul,” they mean, “Consciousness,” and vice versa. A consistent flippancy with the meaning of terms or asserted interpretations of words.

Regarding the politeness of women in religious communities, women, according to Jacoby, with these terms and others remain polite and in good social favor, some women, in a way, say, “I am more than this body and brain. I have something eternal. I am spiritual but not religious. I am a good person.” My translation and words, not hers.

Goldstein extended the thought. Maybe, there exist belief structures behind them. In other words, a social acceptance argument from Jacoby plus an epistemology and ontology about the world, and the woman's relation to the universe, behind them – from Goldstein, too.

Goldstein noted the belief in existing as more than an animal. Jacoby clarified; something beyond the genes and environment to produce the brain and its neural patterns and electrochemical activity.^[3]

In Biblical terminology, this becomes something higher than, on another plane from, the “birds of the air and beasts of the field.”

Although, Goldstein noted the outlier men who think in dualistic ways, including Rene Descartes – as seen in one long rationalistic argument in *Meditations on First Philosophy, in Which Is Proved the Existence of God and the Immortality of the Soul* (Skirry, n.d.; Watson, 2018).

Goldstein makes an intuitive leap in the middle of the conversation with the connotation of the term “spiritual” used by some women meaning something more than the physical brain. Then this may explain the lower levels of women entering the “hard sciences” compared to the soft sciences (Center for Inquiry, 2016).

The hard sciences defined by astronomy, geosciences, functional biology, and cellular biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, and logic, and so on. The soft science shown in social sciences including psychology and sociology, and associated fields. It seems instructive to note the surpassing of boys and young men at most educational levels now. Something short in the historical record. Now, we seem to harbour boys and young men with a motivational ceiling, as girls and women existed with a deliberate and derivative glass ceiling.

That is, a connection exists between the lack of belief in the complete scientific picture and the fields some women feel more drawn towards in professional life. Jacoby, intriguingly, spoke to the fewer numbers of women in surgery, but more in family medicine, obstetrics, gynecology, and so on.

This led to the next interesting question around sex as a factor. Jacoby thinks, women, whether old or young, “think, feel, and expect” sex to be more than the physical alone (Ibid.). She argues this relates to religiosity.

Jacoby talked about the roles imposed on them, to be women as females, where this creates strain and difficulty in leaving the faith. Goldstein cited the work of Jonathan Haidt on the want for purity and immortality, where the body represents impurity and mortality.

To have a body, to be having sex, we begin to identify intimately with ourselves as bodies, which makes the want to control this extended into the desire to, socially and communally – and religiously, control women – women's bodies.

Thinking of control as a non-conscious aspect of modern theology and religious outreach is not necessarily the case, it can be extremely cynical and dangerous, in terms of reaching out to the men in order to control the families and the children with the religious institutions controlling the fathers in these families as, for example, heads of the household.

Let's take the example of Pastor Mark Driscoll from the collapsed Mars' Hill Church praised by Pastor Rick Warren, before, in Seattle, Washington who, after the implosion of the Mars' Hill Church moved to Arizona to re-constitute the Driscoll ministry with the Trinity Church, if you get the men, you get everything.

As stated by Pastor Driscoll:

... You got around Paul when he was a young guy. You got around John the Baptist or Elijah, these dudes seemed pretty rough to me. They do not look like church-boys wearing sweater vests singing love songs to Jesus. I mean, guys like David are well-known for their ability to slaughter other men. I kind of think these guys were dudes, heterosexual, win a fight, punch you in the nose, dudes. The problem in the church today is it is just a bunch of nice, soft, chick-i-fied church boys. 60% of Christians are chicks. The 40% who are dudes are still sort of chicks. It is just sad. When you walk in, it is seafoam green, and fuschia, and lemon yellow. And the whole architecture and the whole aesthetic is feminine. The preacher is kind of feminine. The music is kind of emotional and feminine. We look around and [are] going, "How come we aren't innovative?" Because all of the innovative dudes are home watching football, or out making money, or climbing a mountain, or shooting a gun, or working on their truck. They are going to get married, make money, and make babies, build companies, buy real estate. They are going to make the culture of the future. If you get the young men, you win the war. You get everything. The families, the women, the children, money, the business, everything. If you do not get the men, you get nothing. (Brody Harper, 2007)

Again, it can be extremely cynical and a conscious tactic among the more hyper-masculine religious movements with an emphasis on hyper-masculine male authority, magical thinking, and mystery. The male as the head of the household with reflection in the church leadership as male-only or male-dominated and God as the Father, where this becomes the hierarchical metaphysics of the movements.

The magical thinking in the purported efficacy and reality of sin and healings, and prayer, and immaculate conception, and the divine inspiration of writers of supposedly holy books, where these form a particular psychological torture chamber for many followers through, as the late Christopher Hitchens astutely noted, being created man from dust, and woman from Adam's rib, unfixably or "incurably" sick and then commanded to be well (NIV, 2018a; NIV, 2018b).[\[4\]](#),[\[5\]](#)

The mystery about the workings of the world – usually insinuated – rather than the best-known and widely accepted by relevant experts' considerations on the operations of the world, instead focus on these narratives and mythological authority figures purported to have existed in the past.

Modern movements reflect this, potentially as a similar conscious and cynical tactic seen in the hyper-masculine religious movements – of which Pastor Driscoll amounts to a derivative form in the Evangelical Christian sect or tradition of Christianity.

It affects the level of belief in evolution, too. Although, we can see the positive trends in the evidence for belief in evolution, in its proper definition within the modern framework of evolutionary theory with the unguided national selection (Archer, 2018; Masci, 2019; Pew

Research Center, 2016c; Miller et al, 2006; Pew Research Center, 2019; Evolution News, 2018; IFLScience, n.d.; Erasmus, 2019).

Even on morals, where this amounts to a large focus for the Evangelical community, religion does not provide protection against pornography viewing. It merely adds to moral incongruence (Dolan, 2017).

As well, a belief in hell motivates leaders and, therefore, followers. As noted by Pastor Rick Warren in conversation with Pastor John Piper, “love compels us” or love compels them to prevent individuals from entrance into the fiery doom pit of torture and terror found through hell (pastorsdotcom, 2011).

Francis Chan states, “We’re talking about real people here. We can’t just have these theological discussions about a doctrine, when we’re talking about people’s eternal destinies here” (David C Cook, 2011). Hell is real, to Chan and Warren.

The manly man culture continues: Francis Chan argues against more modern standards for men (Keith Thompson, 2017; venetable, 2011). It comes in the form of crying, which gets the pejorative “sissy.” The men are told to “man up.”

Chan explicitly mentions what others insinuate or indicate; that he represents God. This provides a basis for excusing much behavior in history and right into the present. Pastor Brian Tome remains part of the “man up” culture in American Christianity as well (Northview Church, 2014).

As one of the most prominent pastors now, Chris Hodges, notes, Christians live in a world rejecting everything they believe (Christianbook.com, 2017). However, as with others, he makes a call to action rather than a live-and-let-live stance.

This is a common story and stance. Religious people seeing others not living to their lifestyle and then working to impose on them but not vice versa. And they talk with one another; they issue public warnings about the culture, from their point of view, but in the language of “the Enemy” (BRMinistries, 2018).

That is, this amounts to a battle between good and evil, the enemy around the corner working to thwart God’s Divine Plan (always 1.0, unchanged). His concerns are worship songs are not about God. Also, the belief in one thing not being possible in the Bible extending to others in the Biblical narratives.

As he further explains how Christians are not interested in their own culture as far as they are interested in the control of the whole culture, especially as the culture “shifts”: Hodges calls this the “Daniel Dilemma” (Crank Ministries, 2017).

Even if prominent pastors, such as Andy Stanley, come out in new interpretations around homosexuality, some Christian talk and radio will call him out, often speaking about the “Homosexual Agenda” (TM) (AFRTALK, 2014).

Others work within the context of a perspective of a “homosexual lifestyle” rather than homosexuals, which amounts to the denial of an individual’s self and replacement, based on

theological and not scientific views, with the affirmation of an individual's behaviour without the linkage with gay or lesbian person's self as a homosexual (Brandon Branson, 2015).

There is a reason to never hear of a straight lifestyle, as this remains assumed as part of some Christian fundamentalist unscientific and mistaken belief.

Homosexuality, and gay marriage, become core social issues considered of the highest import within the community (Premier On Demand, 2013; Christ Community Chapel, 2015; Matt Robinson, 2014; DrOakley1689, 2013; Steve Yamaguchi, 2009; Seedbed, 2012; The Veritas Forum, 2011; Seedbed, 2017; Reveal, 2013; Desiring God, 2015; GlobalVisionBC, 2015).

Tony Campolo remains a marginal improvement, but noteworthy (Premier Christianity, 2016). Others see intellectual – or “intellect” – predators on campus coming to de-convert the faithful on university campuses (Clint Loveness, 2013). Pastor Robert Morris is bold and blunt in the assertion no atheists exist; or if they do, they hold a foolish position (Taylor Eckstrom, 2015).

Dr. Andy Bannister and others posit how best to share their faith with atheist friends on postsecondary institution campuses (RZIM Canada, 2012). Some argue for “witchcraft” as a problem and claim the Holy Spirit speaks to them, “Tell the Church, so far, Trump has been telling with Ahab, but Jezebel is fixin’ to step out from the shadows” (LocalRadioFrance, 2018).

A man who claims to be a prophet, in fact, who then went on to speak in tongues, to the perspective of the believers, or enacted glossolalia, to the view of the skeptics (Ibid.).

So it goes, these provide the basis of the issues talked about within some of the Christian community, which, in the end analysis, have real social, legal, and other impacts on the lives of the secular and others; same for secular women and the dialogues had within community exported to the general culture, explicitly or implicitly.

Continuing from the dialogue between Jacoby and Goldstein, Goldstein spoke to the tradition in family heritage with the Jewish tradition, where the men read *Talmud* and the women were modestly dressed and in the home. Jacoby spoke to many cultures where modesty is the only means by which women can protect their livelihoods.

Some cases involve honor cultures. In that, if the woman is raped, it is the woman's fault; many times, it becomes a family dishonoring, extending Jacoby's thoughts. Although, Jacoby knows religious feminists. She feels sorry for them.

As many have heard, and Jacoby relates, “That is not the real Islam.” An argument for some Platonic abstract notion of a perfect version of the religion applicable to any extant religion (RationalWiki, 2018).

Then Jacoby makes a central discovery or point within the dialogue with Goldstein. The degree to which moderated forms of religious faiths – e.g., Reformed Judaism, Unitarianism, Liberal Catholicism, and so on – are not dangerous to women is the degree to which they have been altered and reformed through the secular ideas coming from the outside into them, and not vice versa.

Goldstein continued the line of reasoning with the argument of this coming from the Enlightenment and continuing right into the present with, for example, few or no people truly wanting to stone others, based on purportedly holy scripture, or to keep slaves.

She continued to argue the secular values and secular reasons coming forward and then forcing religion to modernize, liberalize, and become progressive in orientation – to adapt to the modern industrialized world’s perspectives on the nature of the universe and human beings in relation to it. Our genomes remain, for the most part, the same.

Our environment changed drastically since the Industrial Revolution right into the present with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as observed in anthropogenic climate change or human-induced global warming.

As you know, our views come with deep time to the Earth and the universe, gradual development of human beings from prior species, and a decentering of both the Earth in the Solar System and the Solar System in the Milky Way Galaxy, and the Milky Way Galaxy in the cosmos, and then, even in the modern period of asserted enlightenment, things become even weirder and, in many respects, uncertain.

The reforms happen, apparently often, outside and then innervate the operations of the faiths for updates and changes. Secularism buffers fundamentalism. Jacoby notes the reforms took place in 19th century Protestantism within the United States and happened in dialogues, discussions, and debates, mostly, with men.

It amounted to a wide-ranging debate of men based on the advances of Charles Darwin with the Theory of Natural Selection posited in the 1859 text titled *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (Desmond, 2018).

By the way, if you get the chance, the strong form of the Watchmaker Argument/Analogy in the 19th century emerged from William Paley’s 1802 text entitled *Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity collected from the Appearances of Nature* (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018a).

It provides one of the older sources to see the robust effort taken for the construction of a text and reason to believe in God. In particular, the text exists within a reasonable span of time, and had some influence, relative to the publication of Darwin’s most known publication, *On the Origin of Species*.

Also, not a trivial anchor point in the history of Western thought and dialogue, in an interview with Professor Francisco Ayala several years ago, he mentioned the 1802 book as one source of analogy-based-argument for God (Jacobsen, 2014).^[6]

Jacoby seems correct. The 19th century remains a vigorous era of debate and subsequent reform. “Appearances of Nature” seems like the giveaway: something seems one way by observation and, therefore, implies not only a singular Deity but also the aspects or traits of its character.

The argument for centuries comes from peculiar perspectives on the nature of the world inculcated over generations and formed within the framework of the Abrahamic religion and theology.

Goldstein makes another plausible point about the 19th-century debates. Women were there. However, their voices were ignored. They may not have been recorded at all. Jacoby retorted with Elizabeth Cady Stanton (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018b).

Jacoby explained how Stanton was published while writing nothing about evolution. Same with Matilda Joslyn Gage (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018c). Gage wrote, was published, and said nothing about evolution.

Goldstein stated some women wrote about evolution in the 19th century without a specific statement as to the individuals who wrote and were published as women in this regard. Nonetheless, she fell back on the original position: women of the 19th century had more trouble getting published than the men.

This phenomenon may explain why women of the period had to publish under pseudonymous identities – male personas. In short, women published less, had more trouble publishing, published under pseudonyms often if published, and almost never on evolution.

To Jacoby, in the freethought literature of the time who got published, their attitudes and interests can be inferred through their written work. She also remarked on the greater interest in contraception, in an outspoken way, of Robert Ingersoll compared to Stanton.

Goldstein brought Margaret Fuller into the discussion. Fuller was a progressive-minded woman. However, when women come out, they undergo mockery and ridicule and dismissal, far more often compared to men. This may amount to another form of social control to make the women feel less secure in their thinking, in their actions, in their right to make statements of thought.

Jacoby then argued more atheist women exist today than indicated by the current statistics. Interjecting some personal research here, the statistics – some old and some new – on the belief in supernatural and non-scientific phenomena differ by nation.

For example, the belief in haunted houses, witches, astrology, purported communication with the dead, extraterrestrial visitations, and so on, are different depending on the nation in question (Lyons, 2005).

Furthermore, this differs via sex or gender. Someone's identified sex associates with a disparity in the number of believers and disbelievers in supernatural and paranormal phenomena. (If interested, please see the second image in the Lyon article.)

Back to the dialogue, Goldstein remarked on being in conversation with a believer who "laid it all out on the line," where she felt protective and thought, "Your poor person. I want to protect you" (Center for Inquiry, 2016).

Jacoby quipped, while laughing, nothing could be said to smash their beliefs anyway. She relayed a professional experience of a debate about the existence of God, where the debate is ridiculous and would not change anyone's belief about the existence of a Theity or even a Deity.

Goldstein disagreed and considered debates useful, especially in potentially turning the marginal people – the fence-sitters. She raised the question about seeing polls taken before and after. The views when attendees entered and then when they left the debate.

This would most likely depend on the charisma of the speakers, the influence of their delivery of message and how they played the audience. How lasting would it be? Do people really keep the same intention of thought going or is it fluid and subject to constant revision?

As some or many of you know, the *Intelligence Squared* debates do this. It does function as an indicator of the willingness of a decent-sized audience to change its mind in real-time based on the back-and-forth of a debate format.

Jacoby recalled a personal story in 2004 after *Freethinkers* was published at the time. She was giving a lecture at a “historically Lutheran college,” Augustana College. It is a half-Catholic student population now. Parents send the kids there to protect them from secular education. However, they receive a secular education with a wide range of exposure to a variety of academic subject matter.

Jacoby encountered a student and began a conversation. The topic was a separation of church and state. The young man, a first-year student, wanted to be a minister and then switched into wanting to be a teacher.

He said, “I understand what you’re saying. That this is necessary in a democratic society. But how can I believe that that should be allowed when I know I have the truth?” (Ibid.) This amounted to someone with a firm upbringing in faith and not an “idiot,” according to Jacoby (Ibid.).

Jacoby recommended a few books to him. A young man only recently in life, at the time, being exposed to a series of latest ideas. The next query from the audience was about the subject of room for emotionalism in religion and secularism.

She interpreted the implicit idea in the question was that some women are more emotional. Emotional intelligence – or, more properly, emotional sensitivity – to a degree, is only now being recognized as a valued commodity.

Goldstein remarked on the possible veracity in interpreted implicit assumption about women’s more expressive and varied emotional states. However, she firmly disagreed with the premise of the question about religion providing a basis for more emotionalism than secularism or more expression of emotion compared to secularism.

Goldstein noted secular art, dance, music, and poetry in the world. Truly, if you miss the areas of culture – most – with non-religious expressions of the self and the community, and the ‘human spirit,’ then one may be aesthetically impaired, blind and unable to see the beauty of the world.

These forms of expressing emotion and more. Jacoby agreed with Goldstein. However, she affirmed the perception of secularists among many of the religious. The emotionless nature of the secularists. Jacoby even remarked on receiving many letters with the opinion, after writing a piece about Newtown, of the president only being able to comfort people via religion (Jacoby, 2013).

Jacoby argued another way as well. The non-religious parent who had a child die. The idea that parents could have comfort in human empathy only through Jesus Christ seems absurd to Jacoby, who thinks no one since Ingersoll in modern society among the prominent atheists conveyed the warmth and human passion seen in Ingersoll.

It is normal human sentiments, which means freethought as a positive ideal. Because women are not slaves to the home but free, as having “intellectual freedom and reason,” is the basis for relationships of “equality and sharing” rather than a master and slave dynamic (Center for Inquiry, 2016).

Goldstein took this as a reflection point, and pivot, into the feeling as if one matters. She recalled coming out as an atheist for the first time. She received letters asking about the motivation for getting out of the bed in the morning.

She explained how the idea never occurred to her because she had too much on the day’s plate. Goldstein felt taken aback by the query. Jacoby loved the similar comment, stated on American radio stations often as a trite trope and convenient negative insinuation, on not believing in God leading to committing murder.

That is, the assertion of religion as a bulwark against murderous tendencies and motivations and eventual actions. Of course, many with Christian upbringings or theological training may recount images in the Bible of horrific bloodletting, rapacious murdering and raping, and even the genocide of most animals and people on the planet at once.

Goldstein joked with a hypothetical witty repartee or raillery in response to needing God to prevent murder. Goldstein said, “Or at least, they could ask, ‘Why aren’t you spending all of your time in an orgy?’ That, at least, I can imagine.” Her comedy received an instant big laugh from the Center for Inquiry audience. An image of the Greco-Roman bacchanalia come to mind for me.

She continued the motivation behind the questioning about mattering in the world. People feel as if they do not matter in the world. They live lonely and meaningless lives, but they matter to the God of the Bible, of the universe, or otherwise. Goldstein considers this a possibility for the fundamental basis for the motivations of the questions about meaning in life without God.

Goldstein explained:

Obviously, I am going to pursue my life. I am going to pursue it with everything I have. But that, I get, and you get, and many of us who have the courage of living secular lives, get, a lot of reassurance that we matter; that we are doing work that matters. That we have relationships that matter. This is why I do feel the secular movement demands that we also address issues of social justice. That when there is this inequity among us. You know, some of us feeling, not giving it a moment thought; of course, we live lives that matter, and so many people not and turning to religion to fill that vacuum. I think that is a lot of the force for of the emotional support for religion. It demands social justice. (Center for Inquiry, 2016)

Jacoby posed the question from the audience about part of the problem for some women in atheist and humanist communities is the men relying on the religious involvement of women for

a prominent social benefit. She continued the insight of the question. The reliance of some women to pass on the religion.

She relayed her personal experience with her brother. Jacoby's brother sent his children to Catholic instruction, baptism, and so on. Jacoby could not be godparent as a non-Catholic. She asked about the inclusion of the kids in religious instruction and communal activities despite his (Jacoby's brother) being an atheist.

He responded, "I didn't feel that they should grow up without religion" (Ibid.). Jacoby remarked how her brother relied on his wife – "who I don't think is any more religious than he is" – to decide for this (Ibid.). She then linked this to the earlier statements from some men in correspondence, "Women are stupider than men" (Ibid.).

Jacoby asked about what could be more stupid than thinking to bring kids up in something not believed by you. Then Jacoby's brother caused surprise when his last wishes, after death, were for having no priest and to be cremated. The children did not know what their father thought about these religious issues.

The next question posed about women being potentially more masochistic and self-sacrificing. Both Jacoby and Goldstein did not like the question. However, Goldstein remarked on the possible truth of the claim.

Goldstein then posed other questions, "Why do women seem cross-culturally to be more religious than men, even though religion is often not good for them? Why are they politer when they are no longer believers? The other question is, 'Why are they less likely to join freethinking, atheist, secular organizations?'"

Jacoby then followed with another question leaving the previous one open. The query posited the privilege to who becomes an atheist, especially in public, where the expectation imposed on women creates some dependency; whereas, for the men, there exists the good reason to assume, culturally speaking, for independence of them, simply for being males.

Jacoby commented on the "Village Atheist" in the folk, frontier stories (Ibid.). Goldstein noted the real lawlessness of the men "carousing, having a hell-of-a-good-time" (Ibid.).

The women, as they travelled from the East to the West, carried the religion and civilization with them. Jacoby remarked on the reason for social control by men because the men wanted access to these women. Goldstein concurred.

Jacoby concluded, "I want to say one thing. I was itching to say this morning when everyone was commenting on Male Genital Mutilation (MGM), which I call circumcision. I hate to disagree with Katha Pollitt, who, I admire enormously, but I don't think women get a vote here" (Ibid.).

Evaluative Stories: Narratives and Valuations

Secular women retain the same rights and responsibilities as others, including freedom of speech or freedom of expression dependent on the bounded geography for, at least, one of the terms there.

Here, in Canadian society, we have Article 2(b) of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* with the phrase “freedom of expression.” In Article 10 of the United Kingdom *Human Rights Act*, we have “freedom of expression.”

In Article 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, it is “freedom of expression.” In the *European Convention on Human Rights* as well, it becomes Article 10 for “freedom of expression,” *und so weiter*.

Individuals may best direct efforts internal to the nation-state in which they inhabit to optimize efforts for human rights and equality, whether from a conservation of culture or a progression of civilization perspective. One should work within the culture, simply as a pragmatic or practical matter.

To gripe about crimes millennia ago or in another country without the clear purpose of the empowerment of the national populace, it can seem intrusive and not effective – even nothing other than grandstanding.

No value appears absolute by necessity, especially with the existence of numerous values competing with others in some instances. At the same time, a value in truth and logical consistency may remain two absolutes necessary for a foundational conversation of solutions and in conversation.

Freedom of expression with qualifications in Canada. Free speech via the First Amendment in the United States. Article 2(b) seems clear in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* for Canada. The First Amendment seems clear in the United States Constitution. Article 19 in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* represents the international framework. In America, more freedom of speech has been won.

No place is at an obligation to host someone. I heard an analogy of a radio, probably attributable to George Carlin. If a station is on, and if you do not like the music, and if it is in this sense non-coercive, then turn the dial to another station or turn the radio off.

It is like the UN in a way. Member States live and let live but with the freedoms for nontheists and the freedom of theists to believe and such, in theory.

For violations of those rights, the courts can help. But it will never be perfect. It can be approximated, the ideals. But the ideals are set, each vying for priority but each balancing one with the other past rhetoric.

It may be boiling down to values differences. One likes free speech more. Another likes social justice more. Although, if social justice gets defined as human rights and equality, and if the argument for freedom of expression is a human right and the equal protection of it for every Canadian citizen, then this would imply different streams of social justice at work in societies now. A simple emphasizing of different rights more. We may be witnessing a widespread misunderstanding.

Perhaps, a reasonable preliminary middle position with belief in the same right in this country – freedom of expression, or freedom of speech if American – and then the balance with other rights.

Something kin to religious, belief, and conscience objections to reproductive rights for women and the abortion rights for women – non-absolute, contingent upon one another, where this means not being left apart from the consequences of one's expression or speech, not being automatically deserving of a platform or having a platform kept, and if something is not particularly interesting as a topic simply don't go to the talk.

Freedom of expression and freedom of speech become important for these women in secular communities considerations. Within the overarching framework or structure provided within the dialogue between Jacoby and Goldstein, I reflected on the commentary and began to embark on the collection of some preliminary perspectives of women in secular communities in a position to make overview comments on the experiences and observations within the aforementioned community set.

What follows amounts to a representation of some of the narratives of secular women from different regions of the world working within different domains of the secular communities, if one looks at some of the narration on the religious communities around the world, then the stereotyping of a complete set of members self-identifying as a participant and believer of the faith due to bad leadership or immoral acts of individuals seems unfair to some extent.

Similarly, this analysis, by logical implication, should apply to the world of the secular. Some of these experiences expressed in the written word through interviews, commentary on figures and readings, and narratives of difficulties in lack of representation can be shared within religious communities by women, where this raises, as noted, the questions about secular women not only in a historical context of the intelligentsia of the West or the prominent American intellectuals, including Rebecca Newberger Goldstein and Susan Jacoby.

The interviews were conducted through email, mostly, with a relatively standardized question set. The weaknesses of the research are the email basis for the interviews, the wordiness of the questions, the qualitative nature of the research, the limitations in the sample size, the asymmetry in places of the world represented, and the self-selection of participants to take part in the research.

Nonetheless, this can give glimpses into the community. The strengths will depend on the reader interpretation of the honest reports provided on a serious subject matter.

In a rational analysis, and without the intrusion of pejoratives or epithets in place of rational thought, the reportage here provides some modicum of windows into the experience of some women in secular communities from multiple regions and nations of the world.

The interviews, henceforth, will continue in a linear order with a description of experiences. One interviewee was the American Marissa Alexa Lennex-McCool, who is a Podcast Host of "The Inciting Incident Podcast" and "The Cis Are Getting Out of Hand" and the Co-Founder of The Trans Podcaster Visibility Initiative.[\[7\]](#)

When I asked about the expression of economic, political, and social concerns of women, McCool spoke to how many women feel tired of being talked over, not represented, being told they're too emotional or to enter the kitchen and raise the children alone, or to serve the husband, even simple condescension.

McCool stated, “While many women may not agree with each other, a good percentage of them are sick of having things decided for them without a say, especially when men make decisions about women’s bodies without the faintest idea of what it’s like.”

Another set of questions asked about economic, political, and social domains in the secular communities. The first response from McCool centred on the increased awareness of a social pathology seen in sexual harassment and sexual assault in the workplace in addition to the mechanisms for reportage on sexual violence.

“Even with people being temporarily inconvenienced by allegations, they’re often free to come back whenever they want with few, if any, repercussions for their actions,” McCool said, “The political conditions see evangelicals returning to power and asserting their theocratic views over others under the guise of religious liberty, among many others. Making sure women’s healthcare is dictated by their specific religious beliefs and everything else puts an undue burden on them, not to mention the queer, trans, and women of color who are disproportionately affected by the religious right’s influence on the government.”

The #MeToo hashtag and Me Too movement is diverse, expands women and men, not women alone with a rejection of victimized men, and present a unique opportunity to express openly about the problem of sexual violence as a widespread social pathology needing opening discussion, dialogue, and ears on it.

As you will see in the presentation of the interviews in this second section of the article, the presentation represents the #ChurchToo, #MeccaToo, and so on, sub-movements within the general work of Me Too started humbly by Tarana Burke.

On the main concerns of North American non-religious or secular women, McCool stated, “That this behavior has consequences, that it’s not just a temporary hiatus or vacation from the spotlight before they try to return like nothing happened. But, and more importantly, that it isn’t just celebrities who face any consequences for these allegations.”

McCool expressed the opinion that the individuals who may be worse are the “perpetual defenders” of the men credibly claimed to have sexually assaulted, who stand in defiance of the presented evidence and the allegations – “no matter how much evidence or credible allegations.” She notes how this can create a sense in many women or non-men within the secular community to remain silent or to leave it.

One of the reasons for leaving religion is to remove this mindset from their lives, according to McCool; however, within the community of the secular, many non-men or women continue to find this behaviour played out, which remains reflective of the mindset.

In the presentation of the overall conversation of secular values on the international scene, McCool remarked on how she, at the time, recently, spoke at a convention with eight women speakers, or a line-up comprised completely of women. The reason for the panel of women arose from the previous year being all men.

“Other voices in the community are often attacked, harassed, silenced, or bullied out of the movement, and when platforms are often given preferential treatment to white men, it can make

it discouraging,” McCool said, “Marginalized communities need to be given the opportunity to speak, and given the chance to speak on more than just the experience of being marginalized.”

She continued to state women of color will have more authority to speak on race issues. In that, someone from a relevant and appropriate background can speak more properly and accurately from experience on the backdrop while, also, acknowledging the ways in which members of a specific demographic does not represent some homogeneous blob known as the demographic, the abstract.

McCool continued to mention queer and trans on queer and trans issues. The frustration in the inability to speak or the pigeonholing within an identity by the wider community or set of communities. She remarked on three degrees from Ivy League schools earned by here: “None of those three are degrees in Being Trans, Being Queer, Being a Woman, etc.”

Within this framework of issues or concerns for women in the non-religious or the secular communities, there may become a personal adaptation to the rejection by the wider community, whether inclusion in speaking engagements or the ability to speak more openly about experience within specific communities: the adaptation of secular women speaking to secular women more frankly about experiences and not to secular men.

McCool described, “I belong to a women’s-only Facebook group, because often the regular ones are intolerable. Women are harassed and spoken down to, queer and trans women are bullied, mocked, doxxed, and virtually treated like the religious communities treat them, but science and logic are the words of defense rather than God and Jesus. Often, we discuss things in those places because we are sick of being ignored, spoken over, or having to stop every six seconds and educate someone who might just be JAQing off (Just Asking Questions.) Often that comes from someone not actually interested in learning, but just disrupting, and it is hard to tell the difference. We don’t owe anyone an education.”

The final question within the interviews tended to focus on the actionables. Once the opinions and recollections and summarizations of experiences and observations have been presented, one next possible logical line of questioning revolves around recommendations or suggestions to the secular communities: for equality, things to be done.

This can range from women, people of color, individuals from a wider range of nations within the global non-religious or secular community, and in a variety of domains including community, literature, media, and the like. McCool opened with simply allowing others than whites and men the chance to have a platform, provide personal experience, relay personal views, and so on.

“People who aren’t given a certain level of privilege have perspectives, experience, and opinions that weren’t formed in a place that men, especially white men, can understand and empathize with. The experience is not the same for everyone, and we need to stop pretending the perspective of a white man is universal or speaks for everyone. Men can turn down opportunities to speak if others aren’t being represented, and some have made it a practice to do so,” McCool stated.

In that, with the most power within the community, the men may have more power to influence the trajectory of the community or to alter the conversations within the secular community for

the betterment of secular women of color, queer and trans people, and others desiring individuals who reflect them and their backgrounds to represent them, who look like them, have their background, and so on, too.

“The white men of the movement have the power to change that by advocating for others, and not just checking off a list (see: have the person of color talk about being a person of color, a trans person talk about being trans, etc.) The secular movement is as diverse and complicated as the population itself; the experience of being an atheist goes beyond just white men speaking about it,” McCool concluded.

Another interviewee was the Founder and President of Black Nonbelievers, Inc., Mandisa Thomas, who is American.^[8] Black Nonbelievers, Inc. which may be the large African-American atheist and nonbeliever organization in the United States. Mandisa remarked on women being more assertive through the creation of organizations relevant to specific issues. For example, the organizing and work done around protests, marches, online media campaigns perhaps, and so on.

Mandisa remarked on how women have begun to get “more involved in the political process by voting and running for office. This is important because while being a woman doesn’t necessarily equal effective change, it does show that women are more likely to consider factors that will benefit the masses as opposed to special interests, especially when working together.”

To Thomas, the main concerns for women in America are subjection to harassment, complete objectification by men, lack of equal consideration in the creation of policies impacting their lives or in the workplace, and the access to contraceptives or birth control. When these related to the Me Too movement, Thomas had more to explain about it.

“The main concern IMO is the entitlement that men feel to say and do whatever they want without consequences, which has been the case for many years. Such entitlement and power have kept women silent and enduring harsh treatment, and now that more are speaking up, there’s a concern that there will be more backlash by men AND other women,” Thomas stated.

Thomas reflected on the domination of the conversations around the world by secular men, noting the historical production of this domination. The fact of men owning conversations with men assumed as the ultimate authority on secular matters.

Where this should be changed, according to Thomas, is looking at the record of what has worked and what has not, this historical perspective could gift a basis for change or reform.

On the question about things secular or non-religious women discuss with one another and men, Thomas explained, “Nonreligious women are definitely discussing their concerns with the men. Discussing and debating. The responses range from many men being supportive and changing their actions, to many others becoming combative and remaining obstinate. But they are hearing our concerns for sure.”

The inclusion of secular women in the conversations came with a singular answer from Thomas: “first and foremost – LISTEN.” The point of open ears plus an attentive to meaning mind. An act

of listening to understand without dismissiveness, reactionary acts, connected with actions including more secular women in the discussions, in the events policymaking, and so on.

Thomas concluded, "...and it should be consistent. Not one-time initiatives, or when issues fade from the spotlight. Support the organizations that are working on these efforts, financially and with resources. And work with them too. That is where the difference is made, and where it counts."

A further interviewee was Yasmine Mohammed, a Canadian author and the Founder of Free Hearts, Free Minds.^[9] Mohammed spoke on the higher assertiveness of women in the present moment. Secular women pushing for their rights and further equality in more domains of life.

"It is important because there seems to be this prevailing fallacy that the work of feminism is done—that we have achieved equality. Unfortunately, this is an untrue statement. To varying degrees, there is still a lot more work to be done," Mohammed, "In the West, women have fought and succeeded in achieving equality in many ways, but social changes do not occur at the flip of a switch. Just like in the fight against racism, winning civil rights battles did not ensure that there is no longer racism. Of course, there is."

Mohammed observes the fights as having been fought and won, and admirably so, in fact; furthermore, she sees large strides made in Western societies on the advancement of rights and equality. She views some other societies in the Middle East and North Africa as never having made the strides seen in some Western societies.

"Women in Saudi Arabia have recently won limited permission to drive cars (they still need their male guardians' permission to obtain the license, purchase a car, or even leave the house). It is important for people to understand that not only is the battle not over, in some places the battle has not even begun," Mohammed stated.

For the economic, political, and social conditions of women, Mohammed spoke about Canadian women and North American women in general with the fight for equality with male counterparts. In that, as a female or as a woman, she observes the attacks as "far more and far more" vicious.

Mohammed said, "A specific example would be when I was a co-host on Secular Jihadists podcast. In that podcast, one of my male peers made a controversial statement 'Islam is worse than Nazism.' My other male peer agreed and added 'I think all religions are worse than Nazism.' Although I was present, and agreed with my co-hosts, I said nothing. However, even though I never said a word, the resounding backlash on social media was entirely in my direction. It is easier for men and women to attack a woman for her views than it is to attack a man. We are still perceived as weaker – even by our non-religious community which purports to know better."

She – Mohammed – began to comment on the economic aspect of the question. She noted the lack of an economic offering in terms of speaking engagements. Other times, no financial incentive or reward existed for speeches by Mohammed. She relayed a delayed set of talks by two other female speakers and herself. She felt summarily ignored and disrespected – in addition to the other two females – that this would not happen to a male, in the opinion of Mohammed.

On the Me Too movement, Mohammed stated, “I think all women, religious or not, have the same concerns. We just want to be regarded as equal human beings. We would love for people to treat men and women with equal respect.”

When the subject or topic matter of men dominating the global secular communities’ conversation, Mohammed started with an affirmation of the fact. By the historical record, too, men could become and remain atheists more easily than women, as atheism exists with the reputation of confrontation and controversy as its mode of being.

“Women are generally expected to be the caregivers and the social/community support of a religious group aids in family cohesion. There are many reasons why men far outnumber women in our community. And that is exactly why more women need to be given the opportunity to speak publicly. ‘You cannot be what you cannot see.’ If all our atheist talks are all male speakers, how will that encourage more women to see themselves as having the courage to be open about their atheism?” Mohammed asked.

The women in the secular communities, according to Mohammed, should see examples of women and mothers making the successful transition to inspire others. It becomes an aspect of liberation through observation; it becomes an act of freedom incarnating through the example of others. They need to see examples of women, of mothers, successfully making that transition. Then they will be inspired and will then they will know that it is possible.

On only speaking about some issues with women and not with the men, Mohammed spoke about religious patriarchy, in her terms, and the ways in which women police other women through religious environments. It becomes women oppressing other women. In her view, men made religions for men. Women have different experiences under religion compared to the men, by implication.

Mohammed stated, “It is not just an intellectual epiphany for us. As a woman, you have been bred to see yourself as lesser-than. The modesty and shame culture thrust upon you from an early age – all those poisons need to be cleansed from our bodies. Our experiences are more like that of LGBT people who have left their faiths. We were raised to think that we are dirty sinners and that our existence provokes more sin.”

On the actionables or the things-to-do, Mohammed relayed the difficulties and the failures as the same as in any other industry. In that, the solutions remain the same, where a vicious cycle can begin with male writers and speakers preferring to read and hear males. In this, women will fight an uphill battle for the right to be heard and read.

“Women need to fight for our seat at that table. Make ourselves heard. Make ourselves known. It is a battle we are accustomed to. We just should not be lulled into thinking that, as atheists, we are immune to the same social ills as all other human beings,” Mohammed stated, “Of course our issues are nowhere near to the same extent, and I am very grateful for that, but if we are unaware of the fact that women are fighting tooth and nail in our community, then we won’t be sensitive to reaching out a hand. Knowledge is key. I think if more men understood that it is a problem, then they would be more than willing to do what they can to change the landscape.”

An American director, feminist, novelist, and playwright is Sikivu Hutchinson.[\[10\]](#) Bear in mind, the prominent women involved in these investigative and coda statement serious interviews remain highly respected within their domain of expertise and nation. Sikivu remained crunched with other projects at the time of correspondence.

In this, she answered two of the main question sets: one on men dominating the global conversation for the secular; another on modes and limits in the conversations representation of secular women, secular people of color, and so on, in the leadership of the non-religious organizations.

On the ways in which men dominate the international conversations of secular, Hutchinson specified, directly, the demographic in question within men: white men. Those who continue to hold most of the cards in the international conversations around the secular communities in structure, and so function, to determine the course or trajectory of the communities around the world.

The simple reason for this comes from the marginalization of women in the atheist communities, in the humanist communities, and in the secular communities. Overall, the general trend for the history of the secular and freethought communities remains the ways in which men harbour the power and influence, and positions associated with said “power and influence,” for the guidance of community life.

Hutchinson stated, “Non-religious contexts share the same sexist, misogynist conventions, ideologies and hierarchies as religious contexts. Although recent sexual abuse ‘scandals’ involving high-powered white male secular leaders are the most egregious examples of this, these hierarchies have always existed in the non-religious sphere. Simply removing god-belief from the equation does not eliminate hierarchies based on the sexual objectification, commodification and occupation of women’s bodies and the devaluation of women’s work.”

Whether in fundamentalist religious contexts stewing in supernaturalistic assumptions and tribal conflict or in the white supremacist colonial notions held in the secular liberated West, the constants of men holding the deck comes back into the central observation, as a factual matter, where men have the most prominent positions, and more often work – even live and speak from – the more dominant decision-making stations.

“Moreover, women of color have traditionally been under-represented in non-religious discourse and leadership due to the ways Black and Latinx female morality/respectability is tethered to religiosity and god. In addition, women of color are more likely to be connected to religious institutions because of the social, economic and political resources that they provide in capitalist nations with minimal social safety nets,” Hutchinson explained.

The next arena of questions becomes the aspects of representation and some of the interrelated notions problems, and so solutions, for the secular communities. Hutchinson first spoke on the international success of the New Atheism with the “best-selling white atheist rock star authors” and the “cult of personality like the Four Horsemen.”

“Unfortunately, this kind of idolatry has eclipsed recognition of and attention to the ground work being laid by grassroots humanist organizations in their local communities. Progressive atheists

organize around issues that go far beyond the usual church/state separation and ‘science and reason’ agenda,” Hutchinson stated, “You can’t fight for economic justice in communities of color without advocating for reproductive justice, unrestricted abortion rights and access to universal health care. You can’t preach ‘equality’ of genders without redressing the heterosexist lack of representation of queer and trans people of color in K-12 curricula.”

For the LGBTQQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning) enfranchisement, there, similarly, needs a confronting of the mechanisms criminalizing aspects of queer and trans youth of color, which places them at a greater range of risks in terms of health and wellness, incarceration, placement in foster care, and even becoming homeless.

“Coalitions that form around these intersectional issues should be actively promoted—especially those that cultivate ties with progressive believers and non-atheist secular community-based organizations. Further, non-believers who write about and organize around these issues should be tapped for leadership positions in humanist and atheist organizations,” Hutchinson said.

In that, few people of color exist in the executive-level managerial stations in the central atheist, humanist, and secular organizations, including AHA, AA, CFI, and so on. The lack of cultural responsiveness by humanist and associated secular institutions producing a lack of comfort in non-believer people of color; an inability to exist openly secular.

Hutchinson stated, “Where are the humanist institutions that support the realities of our lived experiences in a “Christian nation” based on capitalist, racist, sexist, heterosexist class power? When atheism is primarily associated with academic elites patronizingly condemning believers as primitive and backward—while systematically profiting from racial segregation and straight white male privilege—then many people of color will see no compelling reason to ally with atheist causes and organizations by coughing up hundreds of dollars to attend navel-gazing conferences.”

An American Founder of Minority Atheists of Michigan, the Detroit Affiliate of Black Nonbelievers (2013), and Operation Water For Flint (2016), Bridgett “Bree Crutchfield, spoke to me, too.^[11] Her commentary focused, at first, on the increased assertiveness of women in three important domains: economics, social life, and the political world.

The initial commentary focused on oppression and the intolerance of the oppression over time. In that, eventually, and in any case, a voice or set of them will rise for women, where, in Crutchfield’s opinion, the greatest advocates for women have been and continue to be women.

Crutchfield stated, “Men have subjugated, oppressed, judged, demeaned, humiliated women since the dawn of time. Why would we as women expect men to have a long awaited, well overdue, epiphany and do right by women? Women have ALWAYS been vocal. We gain strength by watching others share similar truths as ourselves. We’re no longer ‘alone.’”

On North American women in general and American women, as the interview was conducted in 2018, Crutchfield remarked on women continuing to wait for a “Mr. Maybe Right.” A sense of incompleteness without a child or a man in their lives, or to share their lives. In addition, the right to have a vote in personal reproductive rights – that is to say, a fundamental, unquestioned, and autonomous decision regarding reproduction – can be limited or restricted, if not denied.

She also noted the fight for equal pay and non-religious women being fed up with their identity as women – their “womanhood” – questioned or judged if they do not attend church. This becomes particularly true for women of color in general, and African-American women in, in

On the concerns of secular women, “The concerns are the same as religious women. Misogyny, sexual predators and rape apologists have been the subjects of many a think piece. Initially, I was embarrassed as I assumed secular men were...different. I have learned since then, it could not be further from the truth,” Crutchfield stated, “We want to survive romantic relationships. We want to NOT be victims of domestic violence. We want to NOT fear for our lives when we turn down the advances of men. We want to not fear for our daughters and not force them to live a life in hopes of not getting raped. We WANT LAWS that protect women and PUNISH MEN and their brutality REGARDLESS of their socioeconomic status. Is that too much to ask?”

On the male domination of the international conversation, Crutchfield passed on the question, as her focus remains on the women’s conversations. As well, she described how the conversations of the secular women correspond or parallel the dialogues of the religious women. Wherein, the oppression of some subpopulations, on average, lead to the requirements of some areas, or safe spaces proper, to discuss interactions with men without the second-guessing or explained by men rather than women.

In terms of the solutions, Crutchfield posed the first premise of the slow development of secular culture. In that, some progressive organizations exist within the secular community; however, not all secular groups or organizations adhere to a progressive philosophical standpoint, where the mistreatment of secular women is well-documented.

Crutchfield concluded, “Suggestions, ideas and proposals have been presented in doses and the disenfranchised are STILL disenfranchised. The secular community is not as open and freethinking as it purports to be to the religious. The community is disproportionately white male, conservative and I don’t see that changing anytime soon especially in the roles of major leadership.”

Marquita Tucker, M.B.A., is a Senior IT Business Analyst and the Co-Founder of Black Nonbelievers of Detroit, spoke on the increasing political, social, and economic activism of women in the current moment.[\[12\]](#) Her first remark stated the basic fact of women being half of the world’s population.

“We have been hushed and dismissed for so long and look how things have turned out. It is important and it is time for us to be more assertive and vocal about our ideas on social, political and economic concerns. Our input should be valued and taken seriously. You can’t run a nation let alone any part of the world with just one half of the population’s view and say on everything,” Tucker said.

On the main concerns of American women and North American women, Tucker spoke about one idea brought forward through two words. Reproductive rights as the central issue as a combination of economic, political, and social conditions. On the political side, the conservative political class work to restrict women’s rights. In social life, the right-leaning religious work to prevent women the right to bodily autonomy.

Tucker stated, “Economically, if a woman does need an abortion, that woman has several barriers in place from transportation to paying for the procedure. A woman’s right to choose sometimes makes the difference between her and her child(ren) living a life of poverty and poor education with little upward mobility or her being able to make moves that will improve her life and thus the life of her future children.”

Then this leads rather smoothly into the Me Too movement connected to the hashtags. Tucker sees the issue across ethnicities, political stripes, social classes, and so on. Another consistent problem coming in the form of men thinking that they know everything best, not as a fact of nature but as nurturance of poor behaviour.

On the domination of men in the global or international conversation on secularism on a variety or most issues. Tucker sees one main reason for the dominance of the men coming through the acceptability of men speaking as they wish. Men are the philosophers and the sexes. There have been plenty of female philosophers, scientists, writers, and the like.

“I know in the black community, when you go to a black church, you will see the church filled with mostly women. When you think about it, there are a lot more rules and conditions when it comes to being a woman in religion than there are for men,” Tucker stated, “So I guess rules are socialized into women from birth and not so much into men, giving men more of a chance to freely think outside of the box and express their disagreements with sects or religion as a whole and act upon those disagreements than women. I mean, how many female religious sect founders or cult leaders can you think of?”

When women speak only to other women, Tucker exclaimed that, of course, women speak to one another about things without men present; items of dialogue, triadogue, or what have you, never or rarely discussed with the men. She notes the ways in which the family treats her. She receives differential treatment compared to others in the family.

One reason is not believing in Jesus. In the black community in America, one cannot wash their hands without thanking God Almighty. For a black woman to not rely on a blond-haired and blue-eyed white male for all things, she can be an “outcast” in several ways. Tucker finds this a common experience for the non-believing black women.

In contrast, Tucker remarks, “I’ve come across many black male non-believers who state that they simply just never believed. That they were never really forced to go to church or required to pray or anything like that. So, when I bring it up, black male non-believers kinda say things like, “well, I just wouldn’t have done it. I just wouldn’t have gone.” Like, you do not get it. Girls are not given the level of autonomy that boys are most of the time. I’ve yet to meet an American black woman who wasn’t conditioned to have to believe in god.”

On solutions, though, and arguably the most important section of each interview, Tucker recalled the ways in which openness to learn from others different than oneself, to be vulnerable, becomes an important part of life. This can mean a basis for listening to understand the other person on a variety of topics.

Tucker mused, “It’s funny how the non-religious proclaim to be the opposite of those ‘closed minded religious people’ when there are parts of the non-religious community who are just as

closed minded in different areas. Non-religious men can start by having a seat sometimes and not always having something to say about everything. Sometimes you learn more by listening to others.”

The different perspectives and ranges of knowledge were not heard in the light of the historical trend of a dominant group not hearing others out. Tucker believes the era of not listening to women in the secular community should end, and the sooner the better.

Another American was Samantha A. Christian.[\[13\]](#) As an individual woman speaking for herself, as she makes clear in the interview, Christian believes more women feel empowered to speak in an honest, confident, and unapologetic manner. Within this culture or set of cultures in which gender roles or sex-defined roles become restricting in some manner, Christian finds this form of freer expression of women, now, as much more liberating, as if a cool glass of water on a hot summer day or an open window in a stuffy apartment.

Christian stated, “It takes even greater courage to do that! This also means that more women are finally realizing they deserve to be treated better and with respect for a change. So, when I see someone not allowing themselves to be ‘mansplained away,’ bullied and taken advantage of, it gives me hope for humanity.”

Speaking for herself on the concerns of American women and North American women, Christian does not participate in the formal secular or non-religious community or communities as a rule while sharing the concern for the attempts to normalize rape in America, North America, and other parts of the world.

Another grave concern based on the observations of Christian was the attempts to make individual citizens as ignorant and fearful as possible. Where there exist distinct and perpetual attempts to make the general populace hate the truth, despise facts, retreat in repulsion from knowledge, and fear education, she finds this highly scary.

“The psychological community is doing nothing about this while simultaneously enabling toxic majorities (religious people, god gullibles, bigots of all kinds) and ignoring the toxic influences that make them that way in the first place,” Christian stated, “There is this idea that if a lot of people say or believe something it must be true or even respected. I do not want a democracy I want a meritocracy. In the last question it was mentioned that women are becoming more empowered all over the world. I have noticed that there is one group of women that seem to feel less empowered as time goes on: white women.”

Christian described how this demographic – white women – voted for “abusive husbands and candidates” in the recent election. She thinks something needs to be done about this. A place where white women can feel empowered, safe, and supported. As far as Christian analyzes the situation in the United States of America, most of the domestic terrorism in the USA comes from the white men while those self-same individuals via the demographic retain positions of power.

On Me Too as a movement, Christian admitted, “I wasn’t aware that these other movements existed. Again, I can only speak for myself but sexism towards women and men is a fundamental problem. I think the sexism against men can be more suffocating which leads so many guys to

fear being honest or being themselves. This means that, whether it is in cult communities or non-religious ones, you will have the same toxic behaviors.”

A concern for Christian comes from the non-religious communities with “many men” developing a certain hatred and distrust of women. It shows in the ways in which rape and abuse claims become not believing the women and then blaming the victim. She gets responses equivocating with not believing in gods blindly and, therefore, not believing women in rape claims blindly.

“This is absolutely ridiculous. People are supposed to recognize gods are fictional. If you do not believe, then the consequences a minor. You can easily pretend that you do as a survival tactic if you must,” Christian stated, “In terms of rape and abuse it is so important to believe the victim. If you do not, then horrid acts of humanity go unpunished. There is no justice. So, many people’s lives are literally destroyed while it enables the rapist/abuser to keep raping/abusing other people, because they were not properly punished and held accountable. People do not really lie about rape/abuse. Maybe 4% tops. So, they should be taken seriously.”

In other words, when someone makes a claim of abuse towards them, the overarching probability is the individual telling the truth than not; this does not imply a disrespect for due process or a naïve belief the victim, but a strong probability as the basis for the outreach phrase of “believe the victim.” The consequences of not believing in a god tend to be mild. However, the consequences of simply being rejected offhand for claims of rape become “far worse,” in the opinion of Christian.

Next came the subject matter of the one dominating the international conversation of the non-religious or the secular, Christian said, “I do not think it is a problem, but it depends on the guys speaking. Have they internalized sexism on such a deep level? Do they feel they can be themselves 100%? Or do they feel they must act a certain role to survive in society? That is the problem. Whether the community is religious or not, we need to do something about this.”

Christian believes a positive general contribution would be the rejection of the false notion of the opposite sex, as men and women have far more in common than not. Here, most of the differences between the 2 common sexes – male and female – “are minor at best.” The genitalia remain homologous too.

“If we have a lot of men abused by sexism in society representing the atheist community, that is not good. If we have men who have overcome it and feel empowered enough to be their authentic selves, then it would not matter if there are a lot of men talking or a lot of women talking. People like Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris make the non-religious community look bad while people like Daniel Dennett, Neil Carter and Darrel Ray do so much to help the non-religious and anti-religious communities,” Christian said.

Christian went back to the ways in which white women apart from other women, in general, tend to feel less empowered; whereas, other secular women, and women generally, feel empowered more than before. She notes this in the secular communities, too, where white men dominate the discussion.

She feels more diverse faces for atheism would be a plus. In that, in an interconnected and globalized world, there are black men atheists, Latin men atheists, white women atheists, black

women atheists, Asian women atheists, and so on, where no singular demographic best represents atheism as atheism inhabits all cultures to various degrees.

Speaking for herself once more, on the issue of isolated conversational groups via sex or gender, Christian does not have this experience because, as an individual, she remains upfront and direct.

“I am upfront with everyone no matter their sex or if they are a cult addict (religious) or not. I cannot think of anytime when I was not upfront or honest about a subject, especially online. I am really the only non-religious, anti-religious, atheist person in my family, friends and daily life. My mom and BGF (boy-girlfriend, my lover was born intersexed. We use this nickname to protect her identity online.) are not into religion but have not called themselves ‘non-religious’ or ‘atheist’ officially. My point being, I really do not have many in person conversations about religion,” Christian stated.

In the internet-based or online conversations, Christian remains frank and upfront with them. Sex or gender does not restrict the expression and the conversation for her. She mused on the fact of more men reaching out than women to her. They reach out to Christian about the sexist expectations placed on men including around sexual orientation, desires, and identity.

Christian said, “Religion usually comes up because that is what is pushing those sexist ideas and destroying their lives to begin with. As mentioned earlier, a lot of women (except white women) feel empowered but the sexism against men is still very strong (at least in the USA). It is still on the same level. It is so important to help people realize that women are men are the same (with only minor differences). Thus, we should be treated the same way.”

Christian proposed a change in the expectations of the culture from gender expectations or roles to age expectations or roles. If someone, including oneself, is at a specific age, then there should be some role expectations of the age. When someone is less comfortable in honesty with someone because of their sex, she wonders why this becomes the case in the first place.

“I get the same thing from the guys I have spoken to saying they feel they cannot be honest or open with the women in their lives. Why the disconnect when we (women and men) have so much in common? [Feel free to read about the gender similarities hypothesis and the persistent disconnect with the high level of sexism in society](#),” Christian said.

On the solutions to the problems, Christian sees this as the easy part of it. It would be the divisive labels as the problem. That is, one can label oneself in one way or another; however, it becomes important to become educated about demographics to comprehend the statistical trends in various populations of a society.

Christian described how research over time shows the vast number of commonalities compared to differences, where the differences between people remain “minor and insignificant.” It becomes akin to the commentary, by Christian, on the issues of the biological sex categorizations of male and female – at least 2.

“...homosexuality and heterosexuality (monosexuality) are both the same thing. Gay men = straight women. They are both androsexual, the proper term to describe those attracted to men. Lesbians = straight guys. They are both gynosexual, those attracted to women. Same thing.”

Christian stated, “Another thing people obsess about and cause trouble over when the reality is, they are the same. Even more research shows that monosexuality is a myth and that humans are either part of the bisexual spectrum or asexual spectrum. What is my point? The quick spread of misinformation about race, sex, human sexuality and humanity in general is what is preventing a more inclusive system or community. Not just for non-religious groups but ALL groups.”

The focus should not be on more people of color or women. The emphasis should be more agnostics, atheists, humanists, and secular people together for a natural unity. That is one problem. A larger problem comes in the form of the misinformation abounding around secular people. The lies about God and religion; the lies about race; the lies about sex. There should be more educational opportunities to combat this.

In addition, there should be a stoppage to the shaming because of a demographic, where there should be an allowance – open permission – for individuals to feel comfortable as themselves. One of the biggest dangers, according to Christian is the deep need among human beings to feel needed, to fit in, and desired in some social way.

“That is why people join religions, create toxic group, do not stand up to bullies, bigots, etc. Therefore, we get the bystander effect, why so many men (especially white men) are just brutal to women and each other. To fit in, to be accepted. If humanity evolved past the need for such things, we would be more moral, happier, healthier and better friends to each other,” Christian concluded.

Judy Saint is the Founder and President of the Sacramento Chapter of the Freedom From Religion Foundation.[\[14\]](#) She remarked on the general nature of women becoming more involved and assertive with one another. For example, the fight for universal suffrage in place of suffrage to make women legal persons in a democratic society; as in, women harbour the right to vote.

Following this, things died down. Women began to focus on resembling the men in “clothing, competition and executive function.” The women began to stop talking to one another. Until sexual harassment took a crucial point among the numerous foci of concern for women, “women again found each other as mutual combatants.” She sees this work of women asserting themselves as fundamentally important because women’s rights are fundamentally important, simple as that.

To American women, Saint stated, “American women are not all concerned with their rights in any of these domains. We only see a portion of women out there advocating in these spheres. The concerns of those not fighting for rights seems to be to ‘fit in’ and fulfil society’s mandate of being a quiet servant to men. As for those who are out there fighting for women’s rights, their concerns are that women have all the advantages men are routinely given, and the ability to change society to a more cooperative world, away from the testosterone-laden competitive world men created for us.”

Saint provided the example of a survey of women. Women voted against women’s rights by voting for the presidential candidate – at the time – Trump, who is now President Trump. In

Saint's analysis of the situation, the women voted in the favour of the husbands, the "husbands' needs."

She also directed attention to the sponsoring of local businesses by Bill and Melinda Gates with the differences between the men and the women. It creates a statistically stark difference in the investment patterns, conducive to the health, or not, of the community. On the side of investing in the men who start local businesses, they tend to "take all the money with them away to larger cities so they can make more"; for the women, when they succeed, they invest in the local communities and one another.

Saint had thoughts on the Me Too movement, too, stating, "Secular women want responsibility to be placed on perpetrators of aggression toward women, rather than abusing women's rights as a cover for poor behavior. Responsibility and early training of little boys are the main concerns."

On the domination of the international conversation by the men, Saint described how atheism remains trivial as an issue, until the communities of the religious pose a threat. In these circumstances, men rise to become protective and combative – reflecting the out and vocal atheists, where she sees this type more common in the men than in the women.

Secular women may become subliminally influenced through a man asking the questions of the secular women. As Saint stated, "I could say the obvious: we can't tell you because you are a man. Seriously, being a male asking this question could subliminally influence the answers you get from women. But, let me try, anyway. Mainly it would be about cooperative and supportive efforts that men don't want to help with."

The notion of "women's work," including the provision of food for a meeting, garments in post-disaster, or assistance in leaving an abusive partner. Saint views this in the difference with women as cooperative and men as competitive. In this, men are not included in some of the conversations for women, because, for the women, it is, fundamentally speaking, not about the competition or the winner-take-all mentality. like providing food for a meeting or gathering clothing for disaster survivors or helping other women leave abusive husbands who are religious. Women are cooperative; men are competitive. That has why men are not included in women's discussions – it is not about competing or winning, and therefore of little interest.

On the actionables, Saint said, "We have in Sacramento a Black Humanist Group. They want their own secular organization because their discussions and concerns are not addressed in groups where they are in the minority. So, supporting more smaller groups that address unique subgroups of interests could give more people a home where they feel understood and listened to. Publicity of their unique problems could keep them energized and supportive of those groups."

In the African region, one member of the Atheist Society of Nigeria – and recalling the preliminary data points in the commentary here – was Jummai Mohammed, who had some time to provide some basic comments or statements, or observations and experiences, with a different question set, though.^[15]

In the description of the family background for her, Mohammed said, "I am a Hausa lady from the northern part of Nigeria. I was born into a muslim home but in a predominantly Christian

society. I was born and bread in the southern part of Nigeria which is mostly dominated by Christians.”

This upbringing and background had some interesting impacts on her. She was born in a Muslims home within a Christian majority nation. In Mohammed’s view, this has impacted person views of atheism right into the present day. In addition, she was able tot, potentially, some of the starker distinctions and contradictions in the different religions on offer. Nigeria is a diverse and interesting nation – dynamic.

“I never love Islam schools since the ustaz in those schools always look and act mean. The way in which children are beaten up, young boys tied into poles while being flogged mercilessly in the name of punishment made me hate going to Islamic schools; on the other hand,” Mohammed stated, “whenever I have the opportunity of following my Christian friends to church, I tend to enjoy the less tensed environment, the songs, the dance and everyone smiling faces and that paved my way into converting to Christianity in the later years. So, I have practised and experienced the two most popular Abrahamic religion.”

Yet, for the earliest moments of life or the early school times, Mohammed enjoyed the private nursery and the primary school. Religion, naturally given the prior facts, was part of the educational system. Then, into high school, there was more religion, as the high school was privately owned and religious. She, understandably, converted to Christianity in secondary school or high school. Not as an open Christianity, she was a “closet one.”

In questioning religion, Mohammed said, “I have always question religion right from primary school, I always question bible/Quran stories right from time, because the stories don’t add up. I ask questions like why God created us, why placing an apple tree in the garden when he doesn’t want humans eating from it.”

She found some solace in going into the online world. It is entitled nairaland, which influenced the decision to become an atheist. Now, as many with the privilege of an earlier life access to the internet, one of the common statements by atheists, agnostics, and such, about the formation of the non-religious beliefs came from the internet. On one level, it was the access to new perspective, added information. On another level, the ability to interact with others as per Mohammed’s interactions with others in the Nigerian online forums of nairaland. Both become important to relinquishing fundamentalist strains of faith.

On women in religion, Mohammed stated, “Yes, it is a glaring fact that religion preaches subjugation of women and it is very evident in the Nigeria society. Women are being treated more like a semi human or should I say slaves in Nigeria, most especially in the northern part of the country which I come from.”

She experiences this in personal and professional life. Religious fanatics will not make friends or do business with her or get close to her. She lives in a bit of a haven, in Lago. However, as she reports, if she were to live in the north, Mohammed would face death threats. When asked about some prominent female atheists, she listed Jummai Pearl, Neshama, Dorris, and others; on prominent atheist Nigeria men, she noted Mubarak Balah, Azaya, Calistus, Juwon, Dr. Leo Igwe, and so on. In other words, there are some, but few prominent male or female atheists in Nigeria.

On further treatment, “Discriminations varies, depending on the atheist environment. In the southern and eastern parts, the discriminations are; family and friends rejecting one, people not wanting to make friends or involve in any sort of business with one, relationship/marriage breakups...” Mohammed said, “In the northern part which is predominant by Muslims, atheist faces death threats, lynching and co, together with what I listed up there faces by southern atheist.”

Over in the Philippines, Marissa Torres Langseth, the Founder of the Humanist Alliance Philippines International, took the time to speak, too.[\[16\]](#) (Please note links exist in the footnote for Langseth with further information through the responses or interspersed in the responses of the straight question-and-answer interview.)

On the opening salvo about the equality of women as a more assertive push than before, Langseth commented on the importance of women seen as equals and partners, not only in an intimate setting but in a societal perspective. Within this perspective, we can come to the economic, political, and social enfranchisement of women in general.

Langseth said, “Misogyny is common in the Philippines because of patriarchal orientation, and upbringing. We were brought up thinking that a male is more dominant in any household and women should just stay home and take care of the children. Women are treated like baby factories in the Phils with the RH or Planned Parenthood on hold due to the religious nature of the Philippines, these women succumb to high morbidity and mortality rates.”

According to Langseth, who is a professionally trained Post-Master’s Adult Nurse Practitioner, South East Asian or SEA women, such as Indonesia, have a large Islamic population and place women “lowest in the totem pole” of the society. She notes the ways in which Islamic nations subject women to arranged marriages, gender discrimination of various forms, honor killings, and mutilation of sex organs.

Equality in the contexts described by Langseth become a distant goal, especially with the death penalty for apostasy. SEA women, Langseth reports, who travel to another country become subject to rape or abuse if working as maids or other service personnel based on “the belief of others that women in the third world countries will do anything to put food on their table including prostitution.”

Langseth lamented the women who do not acquire an education, or have the privilege of the opportunity, will become prostitutes and then get used and abused in this manner, even the most careful women can be raped or killed, or both. She recollected reading many stories about it.

On Me Too, it is an international story. It is a global movement. Interestingly, Langseth noted the lack of this movement for equality in social and professional life in SEA, “quite frankly.” In fact, she notes, directly, the SEA secular or non-religious women will not resist the men due to early indoctrination and fear. She stopped commentary on Me Too in SEA at that point.

For the comments or remarks on the domination of the non-religious conversation by the men, Langseth stated, “More and more women nowadays are empowered and unafraid of coming out as nonreligious. The stigma is waning and fading away. My take is that, if they can see us women as successful without gods, we can be notable examples of how to live decently and practice

clean living with high ethical values. Documentation and the advent of social media are just examples of how we can show to the religious world that we are equal to those who profess ‘good moral compass.’”

Akin, also, to some of the speaking on the issues of the isolation of some secular women in dialogue with some secular women apart from some secular men, the secular women who tend to feel able to speak more openly simply adhere to a principle of open discussion and saying what’s on their mind, regardless of the individual in the conversation with them.

“I am not afraid to divulge to anyone that I am nonreligious. I even said that to the church members where my husband and I go to occasionally. I have even said that to my husband’s male friends who are Italian, and Jewish. I did not care what their opinions are,” Langseth said, “and who cares anyway about their opinions. I know who I am. If my husband values me and sees me as an equal. That is enough for me. My husband is even ready to leave his church, if the church members will ostracize me, truth be told. He is a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP).”

On the greater inclusion, or the solutions for the disparate representation or lack of representation of secular women in a variety of ways, and others, within the secular communities, Langseth pointed to more awareness and education about equality. Perhaps, with an assumption of goodwill, education can solve part of the issue observed by many secular women and some secular men.

Langseth proposed more social media coverage, more coverage from young women and old women, fewer men in the spotlight – “maybe,” and an emphasis on women leaders holding “higher and better positions in nonreligious societies.” Some of the problems come in the interpersonal and sociopolitical dynamics of the secular communities with the backstabbing, infighting, and attempts to outsmart others “due to immaturity and vanity and self-aggrandizement.”

In conclusion, Langseth described how some men backstab due to insecurities and low self-esteem. Another Filipina was Alexus Jean Black^[17] Given some limitations, she provided some short commentary, which can supplement some of the more extensive and authoritative remarks and observations of Langseth.

Black, on the more outspoken times for women, stated, “I think that women especially now a days have been very vocal about those subjects it’s because we have more freedom than what we used to have. Although, in some parts of Asia, the Middle East, for example, have still some kind of discrimination towards the women. It is important for women to be included... as we also are a part of the nation. I don’t really know a lot of people who are non religious in my country as Philippines is one of the most religious countries in the world.”

She – Black – noted how the Christian subjects remained mandatory within the elementary schools, how some laws take their cue from religion, and the ways in which, for example, divorce in the Philippines remains illegal, which becomes something anathema to some new generations in other nations.

On the dominance of secular men in the international secular conversations, Black described, in her opinion, that the dominance of men in the non-religious or secular conversations does not

come from more secular men, but, instead, from the ways in which women are more conservative in their thoughts.

Black noted not talking too much about the subject of religion, as the surrounding culture remains highly religious. The note about a highly religious culture does not come from a place of denigration; she does not mean to “disrespect” members of the Philippines citizenry with the descriptor. Nonetheless, she identifies as an atheist – no mention of the flavor of atheism there. When asked about being an atheist, most of them are men asking the questions.

On some brief thoughts about the ways in which to bring more women into the secular fold, she simply suggested or recommended engaging women more, allowing them to become engaged more, as she does not feel oppression is helpful in discussion on topics sensitive to people.

Another America, Alisha Ann, from Pennsylvania.[\[18\]](#) On the reasons for the increasing prominence of women’s voices in the public sphere, Ann stated the level of safety women feel now; women felt too unsafe, before, to speak out. With an increased level of safety, women feel more confident to speak on negative experiences and observations in terms of the treatment of secular women and, in turn, to articulate their thoughts in the public sphere with lesser physical, social, professional, and intimate-setting reprisals.

Ann stated, “We’re no where near as safe as we should be. We have fought long and hard for the right to vote, earn a living outside the home and control our own reproduction. Those rights are not secure and are constantly threatened. As usual, we stand on the shoulders of the giants before us. We have the bravery of the feminist activists in generations prior and feminist voices today to build on. We are stronger together. And when one stands up, we tend to stand with them. Their fight is our fight.”

She noted how this was only in the United States and North America. Other countries in the world keep women highly repressed and oppressed in many ways, whether by law, by custom, by family, or other forms of force. Ann has noted the progress, though. The more progressive countries can serve as a “contrast to regressive ones.”

On Me Too and other aspects of social life, Ann said, “I’m concerned about male violence against non-males. From clergy raping children, to intimate partner violence, to attacks against the transgender community. Men have a problem. And only men can fix it. So, far, we have stuck band-aids on a mortal wound by asking women and children to take steps to not get raped and killed. Which is to say, ‘Make sure he rapes them instead of you.’”

This becomes a men’s issue, as they are the majority perpetrators. The responsibility of the abuser is to stop abusing, not on the abused to appease them, and on us to prevent the continued abuse and garner justice for the abused. As stated by UN Women, around the world, 35% of women endured “either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner at some point in their lives. However, some national studies show that up to 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime” (UN Women, 2018).

650 million women and girls, currently alive, have been married prior to their 18th birthday, which is stating the 9-figure numbers of women undergoing child marriage – partnership prior to

the age of consent (UNICEF, 2018). About 200 million women have been subject to female genital mutilation (UNICEF, 2016). For ages 15 to 19, 15 million girls around the world have endured either forced intercourse or forced sexual acts (UNICEF, 2017). Women and girls are 71% of the human trafficking victims (UNODC, 2016). 82% of women parliamentarians “who participated in a study conducted by the Inter-parliamentary Union in 39 countries across 5 regions reported having experienced some form of psychological violence while serving their terms” (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016).

Ann continued to explain the main issue in the social domain is rooted in male violence. Furthermore, on the political angle, Ann explained how “patriarchy lives on in the old white men” who run the country. In her opinion, they fear being treated the way women and minorities have been treated in the past. Therefore, they will resist progress in various forms.

Even worse, according to Ann, the blindness to injustices and inequalities, where simple equality can feel as if oppression from a privileged placement in society. This becomes the basis for resistance to the equal treatment for women, minorities, and themselves, e.g., the denial of reproductive freedom, voter suppression, poverty wages, and so on.

“Economic – poverty. We have consolidated power to a few, which disenfranchises us all. The economic system we have in place will fail. And the people who will suffer the most are not the 1%, they will just be the loudest,” Ann explained, “That they will not be better in my lifetime. That the standard bearer of meaningful change will not be retired with my generation and will require passage to my children to complete. If we cannot convince men to be better, we not only pass the responsibilities of progress to them, but the dangers of our failings.”

In terms of the domination of the men within the international conversations and discourses of the secular, Ann was firm on the position of the need for a change in the diversification of the landscape of opening, where the more diverse opinion set in a community becomes better rather than worse. The ability to relay one’s own experience in a community of others provides a democratic basis for allegiances and a form of genuine community-building the secular movements desperately need in a modern period shaken by the infusions of communications technology.

“Unless we only care about improving the experiences of white men, then we must include women and minorities. The way we do that is by checking ourselves and our privilege. We actively overlook an ethnic sounding name when hiring. We do not assume a woman cannot speak on a topic. We seek out and value the opinions of those not like us. We listen to each other and validate,” Ann said.

For those things that the secular women will speak about with one another, or not, Ann spoke about things existing not as whisper networks in a precise manner, but, rather, a certain comfort in common sub-community experiences. Women can feel more comfortable speaking with women on subject matter of common experience.

These can include abuse, inequality, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and violence. Many do not believe the level of the mistreatment within the secular community, as with other

communities. There exists a denialism, where soft ball concerns of skepticism can be homeopathy; the hard ball questions become internal issues within the community.

There is a tendency to blame the victims for what happened to them rather than place responsibility on perpetrators, or highly likely perpetrators, where this, in a sense, necessitates whisper networks for secular women – and, potentially, women in general – to protect themselves from the problems associated to some extent with the in-community secular men. It becomes a whisper warning network, in a manner of speaking, about “repeat or egregious offenders” for secular women to protect themselves.

On the questions about inclusion, Ann described the social failures as indicative of larger social failures of inclusion. Some come from the mostly male appointment to leadership with overlooking of women and minorities while also assuming women are less knowledgeable on topics, where this can become seen the lack of speaking gigs and resources for women.

“Assuming a man is better able and tasking him with more high-profile gigs – like public speaking or media events. Assuming women and minorities just do not want to be in certain fields, like science or philosophy, and therefore not seeking out those candidates,” Ann stated, “However, the secular community suffers from a lack of diversity for a unique reason in my opinion. It is been an older white man’s club because older white has historically retained their social, political, economic, and religious privileges regardless of their allegiances. Their survival does not depend on their adherences to certain groups.”

A Ugandan woman, and the Managing Director and Programmes Coordinator of Malcolm Children’s Initiative, Susan Nambejja, explained how the increased assertiveness of women comes from the continued struggle for women to act independently in the world with or without men.^[19] She noted the efforts of single mothers determined to raise their children alone.

Nambejja stated, “Politically women have engaged into leadership positions, at various levels, they are now community leaders, presidents, ministers and so on, for example our Kampala capital city authority Director is a woman. (Jennifer Musisi) Economically: women are now entrepreneurs nationally and internationally; they now operate big businesses worldwide. Importance of this is that: the time when women were considered as domestic slaves is now over, women are now enjoying liberty than in accent days hence boosting their esteem and lack of respect.”

On the concerns of Ugandan and African women, Nambejja relayed how many challenges still confront women in general. As a non-religious person, in Uganda, this becomes the basis of being “evil, immoral, inhuman.” This can create real-life impacts damaging to both personal and professional spheres of life for the woman.

For example, the knowledge of a woman as a non-religious or secular person can limit the ability of a woman to become a minister – secular minister exists in numerous religious traditions at this point – or a community leader, too. Individuals may vote for someone; however, religion becomes a large basis upon which to vote for this person.

“Socially marriage may not be a success for a non religious woman, and, but economically if a non religious woman sets up for example a business, most strict religions may find it hard to

support such a business for example the Muslims have a tendency of supporting fellow Moslems on a belief that any thing from a non Moslem is considered unclean (haraam)," Nambejja stated, "This makes it difficult for operate well businesses. All this means there is a lot of segregation in Uganda between the religious and non religious, this is because Uganda is a highly religious populated country. Non religious are still very few."

The Me Too movement, as noted earlier, about being one global phenomenon, but not necessarily hitting every region as much or equally – as per the insightful commentary of Langseth about SEA. Nambejja described how the men in Africa cherish the African cultural practices, where some put women as inferior. Even among the more educated classes of men, many still consider themselves as something akin to kings.

Nambejja said, "Most cultures men are still dominating, leadership is still for men in most cultures in African traditions. Women are still lacking self esteem due to the fear of how the society will interpret their actions, few women have come up to speak for others in our countries."

Then there was the near-unanimous factual observation and agreement of men dominating the secular conversation. Secular men, according to Nambejja, remain more open to different issues. The secular men do not have to fear speaking out about who they are, what their values are, and the women tend to remain hidden to a certain extent in which self-protection becomes more paramount for the secular women because of the potential negative impacts on them.

"For example, speaking about being non religious in Uganda is not safe unless if you have enough ways to protect your self. Men have no fear for segregation, women mind about it a lot. This should be changed, by giving more chance to women more than men, by supporting their causes, invite women as speakers at conferences, those who get a chance to speak will end up becoming more confident of their non religious beliefs. And hence others will get inspired, and do the same way," Nambejja stated.

On the isolation or siloing of some conversations more than others, Nambejja described how, in a social setting, a woman married to a religious man may speak about some of the problems with the non-religious woman friend rather than a man. The main reason is fear of judgment from the men.

"If it is an initiative, like projects on girl child, menstrual education, a non religious woman will feel more speak to fellow non religious woman more comfortably than woman to man. We have a tendency of thinking that this should be told to fellow woman. Yet, in a non religious way, I think this should stop. That is according to my thinking please it is just according to my assumption," Nambejja stated.

On the all-important question of actionables or action items as a global community, Nambejja, spoke about giving women more of an audience, e.g., work to provide an equal representation in the panels, in the speakers, in the hosts, in the topics of interest to community, and so on. The empowerment of women through causes of more interest to them, too.

Nambejja stated women can feel inferior without an inclusive initiative. Without this balance, women can lose hope. The spirit of togetherness, of communal solidarity, does not exist in a

global context for the secular; Nambejja nailed this concern. Part of the problem there lies in the fact of women simply not incorporated into the discussions and the groups.

“...if we can’t support ourselves, invite women by showing them the benefits of public talks, include them in media discussions, if a mistake is made by a woman, correct her silently, don’t criticize, educate women in different areas,” Nambejja said, “for example NGO management, business, leadership among others. In our non religious communities encourage women to get involved and aspire for or stand for leadership positions.”

Non-religious or secular communities “have failed” in giving this sense of brotherhood and sisterhood and community. There should be gatherings bringing everyone together in a single umbrella. These could “transform us into more useful citizens,” where can help those most in danger in a true spirit of humanism.

Nambejja concluded the interview by saying, “Our non religious communities have failed to initiate universities for non religious, have failed to have institutions which support the non religious in different areas for example banks for non religious where people can acquire loans and so on, scholarships for non religious, among others just to mention but a few.”

In the discourses provided, and the analyses – albeit qualitative in many regards, the secular community appears to present a unique opportunity with a singular problem of full inclusion and equality of approximately half of its constituency.

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[1] Utilitarianism: Chapter 2 *What Utilitarianism Is* (1863) states:

I must again repeat, what the assailants of utilitarianism seldom have the justice to acknowledge, that the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct, is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator. In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbour as yourself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality. As the means of making the nearest approach to this ideal, utility would enjoin, first, that laws and social arrangements should place the happiness, or (as speaking practically it may be called) the interest, of every individual, as nearly as possible in harmony with the interest of the whole; and secondly, that education and opinion, which have so vast a power over human character, should so use that power as to establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole; especially between his own happiness and the practice of such modes of conduct, negative and positive, as regard for the universal happiness prescribes; so that not only he may be unable to conceive the possibility of happiness to himself, consistently with conduct opposed to the general good, but also that a direct impulse to promote the general good may be in every individual one of the habitual motives of action, and the sentiments connected therewith may fill a large and prominent place in every human being's sentient existence. If the, impugners of the utilitarian morality represented it to their own minds in this its, true character, I know not what recommendation possessed by any other morality they could possibly affirm to be wanting to it; what more beautiful or more exalted developments of human nature any other ethical system can be supposed to foster, or what springs of action, not accessible to the utilitarian, such systems rely on for giving effect to their mandates.

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[2] These include Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, Rev. Gretta Vosper, Shanaaz Gokool, Allie Jackson, Karen Garst, Claire Klingenberg, Joyce Arthur, Colleen MacQuarrie, Catherine Dunphy, Melissa Krawczyk, Sarah Wilkins-LaFlamme, Sikivu Hutchinson, Mandisa Lateefah Thomas, Leslea Mair, Helen Austen, Angie Johnson, Ellen Wiebe, Wendy Webber, Marieke Prien, Shari Allwood, Violine Namyallo, Emily Newman, Sarah Mills, Terry Murray, Stephanie Guttormson, Tina Block, Christine M. Shellska, Cheri Frazer, Anya Overmann, Sophie Shulman, Monica Miller, Houzan Mahmoud, Tammy Pham, Ajomuzu Collette Bekaku, Pamela Machado, Julia Julstrom-Agoyo, Amanda Poppei, Kim Gibson, Marieme Helie Lucas, Nicole Orr, Jennifer C. Gutierrez Baltazar, Linda LaScola, Rebecca Hale, Roslyn Mould, Tara Abhasakun, Kate Smurthwaite, Maryam Namazie, Reba Boyd Wooden, Cynthia Todd Quam, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Morgan Wienberg, Anissa Helou, Marissa Torres Langseth, Hannah Lucy Timson, and others, including, and some repetition, Marissa Alexa Lennex-McCool, Mandisa Thomas, Yasmine Mohammed, Sikivu Hutchinson, Bridgett “Bree” Crutchfield, Marquita Tucker, Samantha A. Christian, Judy Saint, Jummai Mohammed, Marissa Torres Langseth, Alexus Jean Black, Alisha Ann, and Susan Nambejja from this article (Jacoby, 2018; Jacobsen, 2016a; Jacobsen, 2018a; Jacobsen, 2018b; Jacobsen, 2018c; Jacobsen, 2018d; Jacobsen, 2018e; Jacobsen, 2018f; Jacobsen, 2018g; Jacobsen, 2018h; Jacobsen, 2018i; Jacobsen, 2018j; Jacobsen, 2018k; Jacobsen, 2018l; Jacobsen, 2018m; Jacobsen, 2018n; Jacobsen, 2018o; Jacobsen, 2018p; Jacobsen, 2017a; Jacobsen, 2018q; Jacobsen, 2017b; Jacobsen, 2017c; Jacobsen, 2017d; Jacobsen, 2017f; Jacobsen, 2017g; Jacobsen, 2017h; Jacobsen, 2017i; Jacobsen, 2017j; Jacobsen, 2017k; Jacobsen, 2017l; Jacobsen, 2017m; Jacobsen, 2017n; Jacobsen, 2017o; Jacobsen, 2017p; Jacobsen, 2017q; Jacobsen, 2017r; Jacobsen, 2016b; Jacobsen, 2016c; Jacobsen, 2016d; Jacobsen, 2016e; Jacobsen, 2016f; Jacobsen, 2017s; Jacobsen, 2017t; Jacobsen, 2018q; Jacobsen, 2018r; Jacobsen, 2018s; Jacobsen, 2018t; Jacobsen, 2018u; Jacobsen, 2018v; Jacobsen, 2017u; Jacobsen, 2017v; Jacobsen, 2018w; Jacobsen, 2017w; Jacobsen, 2019a; Jacobsen, 2019b; Jacobsen, 2019c; Jacobsen, 2019d; Jacobsen, 2019e; Jacobsen, 2019f; Jacobsen, 2019g; Jacobsen, 2019h; Jacobsen, 2019i; Jacobsen, 2019j; Jacobsen, 2019k; Jacobsen, 2019l; Jacobsen, 2019m; Jacobsen, 2019n; Jacobsen, 2019o; Jacobsen, 2019p; Jacobsen, 2019q; Jacobsen, 2019r; Jacobsen, 2019s; Jacobsen, 2019t; Jacobsen, 2019u; Jacobsen, 2019v; Jacobsen, 2019w; Jacobsen, 2019x; Jacobsen, 2019y; Jacobsen, 2019z; Jacobsen, 2019aa; Jacobsen, 2019ab; Jacobsen, 2019ac; Jacobsen, 2019ad; Jacobsen, 2019ae; Jacobsen, 2019af; Jacobsen, 2019ag; Jacobsen, 2019ah; Jacobsen, 2019ai; Jacobsen, 2019aj; Jacobsen, 2019ak; Jacobsen, 2018x; Jacobsen, 2018y; Jacobsen, 2018z; Jacobsen, 2018aa; Jacobsen, 2018ab; Jacobsen, 2018ac; Jacobsen, 2017x; Jacobsen, 2018ad; Jacobsen, 2018ae; Jacobsen, 2018af; Jacobsen, 2018ag; Jacobsen, 2017y; Jacobsen, 2017z; Jacobsen, 2017aa; Jacobsen, 2017ab; Jacobsen, 2017ac; Jacobsen, 2017ad; Jacobsen, 2017ae; Jacobsen, 2018ag; Jacobsen, 2018ah; Jacobsen, 2018ai; Jacobsen, 2018aj; Jacobsen, 2018ak; Jacobsen, 2018al; Jacobsen, 2018am; Jacobsen, 2018an; Jacobsen, 2018ao; Jacobsen, 2018ap; Jacobsen, 2018aq; Jacobsen, 2018ar; Jacobsen, 2018as; Jacobsen, 2018at; Jacobsen, 2018au; Jacobsen, 2018av; Jacobsen, 2018aw; Jacobsen, 2018ax; Jacobsen, 2018ay; Jacobsen, 2018az; Jacobsen, 2018ba; Jacobsen, 2019al; Jacobsen, 2018bb;

Jacobsen, 2018bc; Jacobsen, 2018bd; Jacobsen, 2018be; Jacobsen, 2018bf; Jacobsen, 2018bg; Jacobsen, 2018bh; Jacobsen, 2018bi; Jacobsen, 2018bj; Jacobsen, 2018bk; Jacobsen, 2018bl; Jacobsen, 2018bm; Jacobsen, 2018bn; Jacobsen, 2018bo; Jacobsen, 2017af; Jacobsen, 2017ag; Jacobsen, 2017ah; Jacobsen, 2017ai; Jacobsen, 2017aj; Jacobsen, 2017ak; Jacobsen, 2017al; Jacobsen, 2017am).

[3] Now, this stands apart from theories of consciousness and conscious mental activity found with, for one instance, Sir Roger Penrose and Stuart Hameroff with the Orch-OR Model of Consciousness or Orchestrated Objective Reduction Model of Consciousness, where Penrose remains one of the more prominent and respectable individuals positing stretches in the scientific methodologies and epistemologies for explanation of a difficult phenomena (some say epiphenomena) – consciousness – and did receive a tip-of-the-hat from Edward Witten (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018d; Артём Журавель, 2016). Penrose argues the comprehension of non-computable facets of the basic operations of the universe by the human mind in the case of being capable of knowing the truth of the Godel Incompleteness Theorems, and their relationship between axioms & the truths of mathematical formal structures and the computations of the human mind, creates the basis for the expanded model of space-time and physics to include consciousness and space-time geometry as fundamentally interrelated with one another. This creates the basis for models of the universe & consciousness, and the brain and so the mind, with non-computable aspects because of the implications, within the perspective of Penrose, of the realization of some human operators being capable of understanding the Godel Incompleteness Theorems. Something which should not be possible if human computation involved only systems with formalized axiomatic mathematical structures and systems. The mind does; so, new models needed, argues Penrose. He posits isolated collapse of a quantum wave function superposition into a single state in a closed system as not simply a reduction of the system or a collapse of the wave function – as is seen in open systems – but as an Objective Reduction or OR. In complex closed systems or isolated systems, this may become an orchestrated phenomenon as in, for example, consciousness and, therefore, the Orchestrated (Orch) OR or Orch-OR (sorry for that one) Model of Consciousness becomes the possible bridge. The potential state selected from the superposition links to spacetime geometry as non-random and non-algorithmic and non-computable. You see the idea there. To Penrose et al, the span of time until the quantum wave function collapses/the quantum superposition of states reduces to one/objective reduction or OR occurs approximately equates to the simple division function with the gravitational self-energy of the space-time object as the denominator and the reduced Planck constant as the numerator, where the implication of the eventual computation amounts to the bigger the object or the more self-energy then the faster the gravitational self-collapse or the smaller then the slower the rate of the process through time. Important things have more energy; small things have less; thus, big thing OR faster than small thing OR. OR needs isolation. That is, an isolated system for OR. The brain and even neurons are too big and non-isolated for OR in Orch-OR. However, the neuronal microtubules have the approximate correct size and system isolation for OR. They may orchestrate massive OR. That is Orch-OR. Witten believes consciousness will remain a difficult problem despite the advances in the coming decades in knowledge about the detailed structure and function of the brain with modern

neuroscience and other disciplines in brain science. Witten remains skeptical of purported forthcoming solutions to the problem of consciousness, taking the position, probably, of consciousness not being a problem with a potential answer but as a mystery with no solution given the structure of the human mind and sciences used to discover the basic nature of the cosmos. Most professional researchers hold skepticism about Orch-OR. With the assumption of a discrete rather a continuous fundamental state of the universe, the proposition in Orch-OR equates to the quantity of self-energy in a given spacetime volume necessary to collapse a quantum superposition – a set of associated states co-occurring or mutually existent; the collapse would occur within a reasonable amount of time into a single new state with smaller objects taking longer and bigger objects taking shorter to self-collapse for a collapse to connect the non-computational aspects of decision-making [read: Gödel's incompleteness theorems, where “all consistent axiomatic formulations of [number theory](#) include undecidable propositions” (Weisstein, 2018)] to associate with the experiences – let's say *qualia* and other facets – somehow embedded into the fundamental substructure or even superstructure of the universe – in some Platonic theory about the lowest possible rung of the existent (makes sense as Penrose is a Platonist or a Neo-Platonist), where the neurons of the brain for this form of consciousness would be too large but the microtubules within each neuron – thousands in each neuron – would suffice in scale for sufficient self-energy and also isolation from potential decoherence effects impacting the functional quantum superposition collapse. As far as I know, no or very few minor evidences support, and no major evidence supports, this Orch-OR Model of Consciousness.

[4] NIV (2018a) *Genesis 2:7* states:

Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

NIV. (2018a). *Genesis 2:7*. Retrieved from <https://biblehub.com/genesis/2-7.htm>.

[5] NIV (2018b) *Genesis 2:22* states:

Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

NIV. (2018b). *Genesis 2:22*. Retrieved from <https://biblehub.com/genesis/2-22.htm>.

[6] *Dr. Francisco Ayala: Donald Bren Professor, Biological Sciences; Professor of Philosophy; and Professor of Logic and the Philosophy of Science, University of California, Irvine (Part One)*, in part, states:

*Prior to Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Priest William Paley in the 19th century argued in his book, *Natural Theology* (1802), he provided an analogy of the watch and watchmaker to reason by analogy for the existence of a designer. In your book from 2007, *Darwin's Gift to Science and Religion*, you discuss some of the larger theological aspects related to some modern biological debates, especially those relating to modern creationist and intelligent design theory. In it, you argue against creationism and intelligent design as scientific explanations. Dobzhansky makes note of this in his 1973 essay. He argues science and theology do not conflict. In that, science on the one half; theology on the other half. They deal with different subject-matter. Could you discuss*

some of the larger, brief historical aspects of the design arguments that have come around? In particular, how did they come to the fore?

*Yes, the sign of design in nature. Obviously, I have the eyes to see, hands can manipulate, and leaves can photosynthesize, and on and on. Organisms give evidence of being designed. That tended to be explored in classical Greece among the great philosophers of the 5th and 4th century BCE. They were looking at the signs this way. These signs were attributed to the gods, but not in the modern sense of a modern God – not a universal god. This was very much taken up in the Greek tradition. That organisms were designed because there seemed no other way you explain such design. Thomas Aquinas, a great Christian theologian in the opinion of many people, he used this as one of five arguments that God exists. Since the organism is designed, animals and plants, only a universal creator could explain it. That tradition continues. There are very important works including books written about it. The most complete elaboration of the argument was written by William Paley, published in 1802. He was an author of several books of Christian theology. Also, he was known in the latter part of the 18th and 19th centuries. You may have read this in the book. He was known mostly as a public speaker for abolitionism. He was fighting against slavery. He had to give up his public speaking career. Instead, he decided to study biology. He produced his book Natural Theology, which is the most complete book on the argument for design. He provides the most complete argument about design in organisms in nature such as plants and animals. It is a beautiful book, 350 pages or so. There was no other argument until Darwin came with the *Origins of Species* (1859). Well, first of all with the two earlier long essays written by him. However, the 1859 book was the greatest contribution to science and one of the most important discoveries of science was being able to provide a scientific explanation of the design of organisms. Because everything else, we have the Copernican revolution with Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, and others in chemistry, but the design of organisms seemed impossible to explain in terms of science. In terms of natural causes, the great contribution of Darwin was to provide the scientific explanations of design, which makes it one of the great scientific revolutions of all-time.*

Jacobsen, S.D. (2014, June 15). Dr. Francisco Ayala: Donald Bren Professor, Biological Sciences; Professor of Philosophy; and Professor of Logic and the Philosophy of Science, University of California, Irvine (Part One). Retrieved from <https://in-sightjournal.com/2014/06/15/dr-francisco-ayala-donald-bren-professor-biological-sciences-professor-of-philosophy-and-professor-of-logic-and-the-philosophy-of-science-university-of-california-irvine/>.

[7] Interview with Marissa Alexa Lennex-McCool:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Women have been increasingly assertive about their concerns about the social, political and economic conditions within their own part of a country, in their respective nations, and, indeed, regions of the world and on the international scene. How? Why is this important?

Marissa Alexa Lennex-McCool: This has happened because women in many of them are affected by the social, political, and economic conditions and are tired of not being represented and spoken over. In many instances, if we are not told we are being too emotional, told to get back in the kitchen or focus on raising children, or serving a husband, we're condescended to or pushed aside for the good ol' boys clubs. While many women may not agree with each other, a good percentage of them are sick of having things decided for them without a say, especially when men make decisions about women's bodies without the faintest idea of what it is like.

Jacobsen: In each of those domains – social, political, and economic conditions, in the non-religious communities, what are the concerns of American women? What about women in North America? Please give examples or reasoning.

Lennex-McCool: All those domains, and the women within them, are as diverse as the populations themselves. I think it is fair to say one of the biggest and most prevalent in recent memory is sexual harassment and assault in the workplace, not to mention the processes by which one can report those things, both at work and in general. Even with people being temporarily inconvenienced by allegations, they are often free to come back whenever they want with few, if any, repercussions for their actions.

The political conditions see evangelicals returning to power and asserting their theocratic views over others under the guise of religious liberty, among many others. Making sure women's healthcare is dictated by their specific religious beliefs and everything else puts an undue burden on them, not to mention the queer, trans, and women of color who are disproportionately affected by the religious right's influence on the government.

Jacobsen: #MeToo led to #ChurchToo, #MeccaToo, #MosqueToo, #SynagogueToo, and so on; these have been replicated in consequences and call-outs of poor behavior by men in the non-religious communities. What are the main concerns of North American non-religious women as regarding the behavior of the men?

Lennex-McCool: That this behavior has consequences, that it is not just a temporary hiatus or vacation from the spotlight before they try to return like nothing happened. But, and more importantly, that it is not just celebrities who face any consequences for these allegations. Perhaps even worse are the perpetual defenders of these men who defend the perpetrators no matter how much evidence or credible the allegations are, and that alone causes many women/non-men in the secular movement to either stay silent or leave it. Part of the reason we left religion was to get away from that mindset, but many seemingly have not left it behind.

Jacobsen: More men dominate the non-religious conversation, globally. What are your thoughts on this? Should it be changed? If so, how?

Lennex-McCool: I just spoke at a convention that had eight women speakers, an all-women lineup. This convention booked it that way in response to the previous year's lineup being all white men. Other voices in the community are often attacked, harassed,

silenced, or bullied out of the movement, and when platforms are often given preferential treatment to white men, it can make it discourage. Marginalized communities need to be given the opportunity to speak and given the chance to speak on more than just the experience of being marginalized. Women of color can speak on more than race issues. Queer and trans people can speak on more than being queer and trans. The frustration comes from not having the chance to speak, but also being pigeon-holed as to only being invited to speak on your identity. I have three degrees from an Ivy League school. None of those three are degrees in Being Trans, Being Queer, Being a Woman, etc.

Jacobsen: Are there some things non-religious women simply only talk about with other non-religious women that non-religious men just do not hear? If so, what are these experiences? If so, what are these things? If so, why only the discussions like those happening woman-to-woman rather than woman-to-man?

McCool: I belong to a women's-only facebook group, because often the regular ones are intolerable. Women are harassed and spoken down to, queer and trans women are bullied, mocked, doxxed, and virtually treated like the religious communities treat them, but science and logic are the words of defense rather than God and Jesus. Often, we discuss things in those places because we are sick of being ignored, spoken over, or having to stop every six seconds and educate someone who might just be JAQing off (Just Asking Questions.) Often that comes from someone not actually interested in learning, but just disrupting, and it is hard to tell the difference. We do not owe anyone an education.

Jacobsen: What can the non-religious communities do to include more women, people of color, and people from a wider variety of nations in the global non-religious community? What can we do to include more women's voices in the mainstream dialogues, discourses, and discussions? What are the ways in which the non-religious community and men can help these efforts? What have been historic failures of the non-religious, and of men, to include women in the talks, the community, the literature, the media, and the important philosophical, scientific, and ethical discussions of the non-religious community?

Lennex-McCool: Give more than just the white men a chance to speak and be heard and give them a chance to speak on more than just their identity. Book more women, women of color, queer women, trans people, non-binary folx, indigenous activists... People who are not given a certain level of privilege have perspectives, experience, and opinions that were not formed in a place that men, especially white men, can understand and empathize with. The experience is not the same for everyone, and we need to stop pretending the perspective of a white man is universal or speaks for everyone. Men can turn down opportunities to speak if others are not being represented, and some have made it a practice to do so. If they are given the most credence within a community, they also have the power to change it. There are plenty of secular women of color, queer people, trans people, and others who are not religious, but many actively avoid the community because they are sick of seeing only white men represent them. The white men of the movement have the power to change that by advocating for others, and not just

checking off a list (see: have the person of color talk about being a person of color; a trans person talk about being trans, etc.) The secular movement is as diverse and complicated as the population itself; the experience of being an atheist goes beyond just white men speaking about it.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Marissa.

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False Start

Silent Dreams

Voice in the Dark

Passing Cars: The Internal Monologue of a Neurodivergent Trans Girl

Once Unspoken: A Series of Monologues From The Previously Unheard

The PC Lie: Can We Stop Giving Him A Chance Yet?

[8] Interview with Mandisa Thomas:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Women have been increasingly assertive about their concerns about the social, political, and economic conditions within their own part of a country, in their respective nations, and, indeed, regions of the world and on the international scene. How? Why is this important?

Mandisa Thomas: Women are being more assertive by creating organizations that address relevant issues, organizing protests, marches, as well as getting more involved in the political process by voting and running for office. This is important because while being a woman does not necessarily equal effective change, it does show that women are more likely to consider factors that will benefit the masses as opposed to special interests, especially when working together.

Jacobsen: In each of those domains – social, political, and economic conditions, in the non-religious communities, what are the concerns of American women? What about women in North America? Please give examples or reasoning.

Thomas: Concerns include access to birth control, equal consideration in the workplace and policy making, complete objectification by men, and subjection to harassment.

Jacobsen: #MeToo led to #ChurchToo, #MeccaToo, #MosqueToo, #SynagogueToo, and so on; these have been replicated in consequences and call-outs of poor behavior by men in the non-religious communities. What are the main concerns of North American non-religious women as regarding the behavior of the men?

Thomas: The main concern IMO is the entitlement that men feel to say and do whatever they want without consequences, which has been the case for many years. Such entitlement and power have kept women silent and enduring harsh treatment, and now that more are speaking up, there is a concern that there will be more backlash by men AND other women.

Jacobsen: More men dominate the non-religious conversation, globally. What are your thoughts on this? Should it be changed? If so, how?

Thomas: This is a product of historical male domination, and the thought that men are the final authority. It absolutely should be changed, which can be done by everyone reconsidering what has been done previously, what has worked and what has not, and then work towards reform.

Jacobsen: Are there some things non-religious women simply only talk about with other non-religious women that non-religious men just do not hear? If so, what are these experiences? If so, what are these things? If so, why only the discussions like those happening woman-to-woman rather than woman-to-man?

Thomas: Nonreligious women are discussing their concerns with the men. Discussing and debating. The responses range from many men being supportive and changing their actions, to many others becoming combative and remaining obstinate. But they are hearing our concerns for sure.

Jacobsen: What can the non-religious communities do to include more women, people of color, and people from a wider variety of nations in the global non-religious community? What can we do to include more women's voices in the mainstream dialogues, discourses, and discussions? What are the ways in which the non-religious community and men can help these efforts? What have been historic failures of the non-religious, and of men, to include women in the talks, the community, the literature, the media, and the important philosophical, scientific, and ethical discussions of the non-religious community?

Thomas: First and foremost – LISTEN. Do not just hear what we are saying, listen. Do not be dismissive or reactionary when we bring up legitimate concerns. Do include more of us in discussions, events policy making, etc, and it should be consistent. Not one-time

initiatives, or when issues fade from the spotlight. Support the organizations that are working on these efforts, financially and with resources. And work with them too.

That is where the difference is made, and where it counts.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Mandisa.

[9] Interview with Yasmine Mohammed:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Women have been increasingly assertive about their concerns about the social, political and economic conditions within their own part of a country, in their respective nations, and, indeed, regions of the world and on the international scene. How? Why is this important?

Yasmine Mohammed: It is important because there seems to be this prevailing fallacy that the work of feminism is done—that we have achieved equality. Unfortunately, this is an untrue statement. To varying degrees, there is still a lot more work to be done.

In the West, women have fought and succeeded in achieving equality in many ways, but social changes do not occur at the flip of a switch. Just like in the fight against racism, winning civil rights battles did not ensure that there is no longer racism. Of course, there is. Though those battles that have been fought and admirably won have undoubtedly made huge strides in our Western societies, there are other societies, like in the Middle East and North Africa, where those strides are virtually unheard of. Women in Saudi Arabia have recently won limited permission to drive cars (they still need their male guardians' permission to obtain the license, purchase a car, or even leave the house).

It is important for people to understand that not only is the battle not over, in some places the battle has not even begun.

Jacobsen: In each of those domains – social, political and economic conditions, in the non-religious communities, what are the concerns of Canadian women? What about women in North America? Please give examples or reasoning.

Mohammed: In a general sense, for Canadian women, and for all women in North America, the fight is for equality with our male counterparts. For a social example, as a female, I am attacked on social media far more and far more viciously than my male peers. A specific example would be when I was a cohost on Secular Jihadists podcast. In that podcast, one of my male peers made a controversial statement “Islam is worse than Nazism”. My other male peer agreed and added “I think all religions are worse than Nazism”. Although I was present, and agreed with my co-hosts, I said nothing. However, even though I never said a word, the resounding backlash on social media was entirely in my direction. It is easier for men and women to attack a woman for her views than it is to attack a man. We are still perceived as weaker – even by our non-religious community which purports to know better.

For an economic example, as a female, I am quite often not offered any speaking fee at all or I am offered significantly less than my male counterparts. As well, when I had a talk scheduled with two other female speakers that unfortunately had to be postponed, the

three of us were so disrespected and summarily ignored in a way that would never happen if we were male.

Jacobsen: #MeToo led to #ChurchToo, #MeccaToo, and so on; these have been replicated in consequences and call-outs of poor behavior by men in the non-religious communities. What are the main concerns of Canadian non-religious women as regarding the behavior of the men?

Mohammed: I think all women, religious or not, have the same concerns. We just want to be regarded as equal human beings. We would love for people to treat men and women with equal respect.

Jacobsen: More men dominate the non-religious conversation, globally. What are your thoughts on this? Should it be changed? If so, how?

Mohammed: Yes, this is true. It is historically easier for men to be atheists as it is considered a confrontational or at least controversial stance by most people. Women are generally expected to be the caregivers and the social/community support of a religious group aids in family cohesion. There are many reasons why men far outnumber women in our community.

And that is exactly why more women need to be given the opportunity to speak publicly. “You cannot be what you cannot see”. If all our atheist talks are all male speakers, how will that encourage more women to see themselves as having the courage to be open about their atheism? They need to see examples of women, of mothers, successfully making that transition. Then they will be inspired and will then they will know that it is possible.

Jacobsen: Are there some things non-religious women simply only talk about with other non-religious women that non-religious men just do not hear? If so, what are these experiences? If so, what are these things?

Mohammed: Yes, I think we talk about our experiences with religious patriarchy. Our experiences with women policing other women in religious contexts-and worse, women oppressing other women. Because religions are made by men for men, it is obvious that women would have very different experiences under religion. It is not just an intellectual epiphany for us. As a woman, you have been bred to see yourself as lesser-than. The modesty and shame culture thrust upon you from an early age – all those poisons need to be cleansed from our bodies. Our experiences are more like that of LGBT people who have left their faiths. We were raised to think that we are dirty sinners and that our existence provokes more sin.

Jacobsen: What can the non-religious communities do to include more women, people of color, and people from a wider variety of nations in the global non-religious community? What can we do to include more women's voices in the mainstream dialogues, discourses, and discussions? What are the ways in which the non-religious community and men can help these efforts? What have been historic failures of the non-religious, and of men, to include women in the talks, the community, the literature, the media, and the

important philosophical, scientific, and ethical discussions of the non-religious community?

Mohammed: I think the failures and the uphill battle is no different than that of any other male-dominated industry. And the solutions are the same. We are stuck in a vicious cycle where people only know of the dominant male speakers/writers, so they only want to hear from the dominant male speakers/writers. Women need to fight for our seat at that table. Make ourselves heard. Make ourselves known. It is a battle we are accustomed to. We just should not be lulled into thinking that, as atheists, we are immune to the same social ills as all other human beings. Of course, our issues are nowhere near to the same extent, and I am very grateful for that, but if we are unaware of the fact that women are fighting tooth and nail in our community, then we will not be sensitive to reaching out a hand. Knowledge is key. I think if more men understood that it is a problem, then they would be more than willing to do what they can to change the landscape.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Yasmine.

[10] Interview with Sikivu Hutchinson:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Scott Douglas Jacobsen: More men dominate the non-religious conversation, globally. What are your thoughts on this? Should it be changed? If so, how?

Sikivu Hutchinson: More men, specifically, white men, dominate secular conversation because women have historically been marginalized in secular/atheist/humanist power circles and organizations. Non-religious contexts share the same sexist, misogynist conventions, ideologies and hierarchies as religious contexts. Although recent sexual abuse “scandals” involving high-powered white male secular leaders are the most egregious examples of this, these hierarchies have always existed in the non-religious sphere. Simply removing god-belief from the equation does not eliminate hierarchies based on the sexual objectification, commodification and occupation of women’s bodies and the devaluation of women’s work. And it certainly does not disrupt white supremacist, colonialist notions of the liberated secular West versus “backward” “third world” cultures steeped in superstition and tribalism. Moreover, women of color have traditionally been under-represented in non-religious discourse and leadership due to the ways Black and Latinx female morality/respectability is tethered to religiosity and god. In addition, women of color are more likely to be connected to religious institutions because of the social, economic and political resources that they provide in capitalist nations with minimal social safety nets.

See my comments below on how this could be changed.

Jacobsen: What can the non-religious communities do to include more women, people of color, and people from a wider variety of nations in the global non-religious community? What can we do to include more women’s voices in the mainstream dialogues, discourses, and discussions? What are the ways in which the non-religious community and men can help these efforts? What have been historic failures of the non-religious, and of men, to

include women in the talks, the community, the literature, the media, and the important philosophical, scientific, and ethical discussions of the non-religious community?

Hutchinson: Part of the global success of New Atheism has been best-selling white atheist rock star authors and the popularization of cults of personality like the Four Horsemen. Unfortunately, this kind of idolatry has eclipsed recognition of and attention to the ground work being laid by grassroots humanist organizations in their local communities. Progressive atheists organize around issues that go far beyond the usual church/state separation and “science and reason” agenda. You cannot fight for economic justice in communities of color without advocating for reproductive justice, unrestricted abortion rights and access to universal health care. You cannot preach “equality” of genders without redressing the heterosexist lack of representation of queer and trans people of color in K-12 curricula. You cannot advocate for LGBTQQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning) enfranchisement without confronting all the mechanisms that criminalize queer and trans youth of color and make them at greater risk for being incarcerated, placed in foster care and/or becoming homeless. Coalitions that form around these intersectional issues should be actively promoted—especially those that cultivate ties with progressive believers and non-atheist secular community-based organizations. Further, non-believers who write about and organize around these issues should be tapped for leadership positions in humanist and atheist organizations. There are currently little to no people of color in executive management positions in the major secular/humanist/atheist organizations (i.e., CFI, American Atheists, American Humanist Association, etc.). As a result, it is precisely because of the lack of culturally responsive humanist organizations and institutions that most non-believers of color do not feel comfortable openly identifying as atheist. Where are the humanist institutions that support the realities of our lived experiences in a “Christian nation” based on capitalist, racist, sexist, heterosexist class power? When atheism is primarily associated with academic elites patronizingly condemning believers as primitive and backward—while systematically profiting from racial segregation and straight white male privilege—then many people of color will see no compelling reason to ally with atheist causes and organizations by coughing up hundreds of dollars to attend navel-gazing conferences.

[11] Interview for Bridgett “Bree” Crutchfield:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Women have been increasingly assertive about their concerns about the social, political, and economic conditions within their own part of a country, in their respective nations, and, indeed, regions of the world and on the international scene. How? Why is this important?

Bridgett “Bree” Crutch: ‘Sooner or later when oppression can no longer be tolerated a voice or chorus of voices will rise up. This has ALWAYS been important. I cannot think of greater advocates for women other than...women. Men have subjugated, oppressed, judged, demeaned, humiliated women since the dawn of time. Why would we as women expect men to have a long awaited, well overdue, epiphany and do right by women?’

Women have ALWAYS been vocal. We gain strength by watching others share similar truths as ourselves. We are no longer ‘alone.’

In each of those domains – social, political, and economic conditions, in the non-religious communities, what are the concerns of American women? What about women in North America? Please give examples or reasoning.

‘FREEDOM AND FAIRNESS.

In 2018, women are still awaiting their “Mr. Maybe Right.” They are still led to believe they are incomplete if their child-free and/or manless. Our womb, our reproductive rights continue to be put to a vote. We’re still fighting for equal pay and nonreligious women are tired of our womanhood being judged if we don’t attend church.’

Jacobsen: #MeToo led to #ChurchToo, #MeccaToo, #MosqueToo, #SynagogueToo, and so on; these have been replicated in consequences and call-outs of poor behavior by men in the non-religious communities. What are the main concerns of North American non-religious women as regarding the behavior of the men?

Crutch: ‘The concerns are the same as religious women. Misogyny, sexual predators and rape apologists have been the subjects of many a think piece. Initially, I was embarrassed as I assumed secular men were...different. I have learned since then; it could not be further from the truth.

‘We want to survive romantic relationships. We want to NOT be victims of domestic violence. We want to NOT fear for our lives when we turn down the advances of men. We want to not fear for our daughters and not force them to live a life in hopes of not getting raped. We WANT LAWS that protect women and PUNISH MEN and their brutality REGARDLESS of their socioeconomic status. Is that too much to ask?’

Jacobsen: More men dominate the non-religious conversation, globally. What are your thoughts on this? Should it be changed? If so, how?

Crutch: ‘I have no thoughts regarding the male dominated conversations, as my focus is on the women-centered conversations.’

Jacobsen: Are there some things non-religious women simply only talk about with other non-religious women that non-religious men just do not hear? If so, what are these experiences? If so, what are these things? If so, why only the discussions like those happening woman-to-woman rather than woman-to-man?

Crutch: ‘These conversations parallel those of religious women. Like most oppressed groups, women require safe spaces. A space where we can discuss our interactions with men and not have our statements second guessed or worse explained to us by men.

Jacobsen: What can the non-religious communities do to include more women, people of color, and people from a wider variety of nations in the global non-religious community? What can we do to include more women’s voices in the mainstream dialogues, discourses, and discussions? What are the ways in which the non-religious community and men can

help these efforts? What have been historic failures of the non-religious, and of men, to include women in the talks, the community, the literature, the media, and the important philosophical, scientific, and ethical discussions of the non-religious community?

Crutch: The secular community is slow to change. While there are a couple of organizations that are progressive, the community is not. The treatment or rather the mistreatment of oppressed groups, women and people of color within the secular community is well documented. Suggestions, ideas and proposals have been presented in doses and the disenfranchised are STILL disenfranchised. The secular community is not as open and freethinking as it purports to be to the religious. The community is disproportionately white male, conservative and I do not see that changing anytime soon especially in the roles of major leadership.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Bree.

[12] Interview with Marquita Tucker, M.B.A.:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Women have been increasingly assertive about their concerns about the social, political, and economic conditions within their own part of a country, in their respective nations, and, indeed, regions of the world and on the international scene. How? Why is this important?

Marquita Tucker: Women are half of this planet's population. We have been hushed and dismissed for so long and look how things have turned out. It is important and it is time for us to be more assertive and vocal about our ideas on social, political and economic concerns. Our input should be valued and taken seriously. You cannot run a nation let alone any part of the world with just one half of the population's view and say on everything.

Jacobsen: In each of those domains – social, political, and economic conditions, in the non-religious communities, what are the concerns of American women? What about women in North America? Please give examples or reasoning.

Tucker: Two words: reproductive rights. This one issue is an amalgam of social, political, and economic conditions concerns. Socially, we still have the religious right attacking a woman's right to choose what to do with her body. Politically, conservative politicians are still confusing birth control pills with actual abortions. Economically, if a woman does need an abortion, that woman has several barriers in place from transportation to paying for the procedure. A woman's right to choose sometimes makes the difference between her and her child(ren) living a life of poverty and poor education with little upward mobility or her being able to make moves that will improve her life and thus the life of her future children.

Jacobsen: #MeToo led to #ChurchToo, #MeccaToo, #MosqueToo, #SynagogueToo, and so on; these have been replicated in consequences and call-outs of poor behavior by men in the non-religious communities. What are the main concerns of North American non-religious women as regarding the behavior of the men?

Tucker: Isn't it the same issue across any and all countries, religions, races, politics, etc.? One consistent thing: men think they know everything; and I do not think it is a nature thing, I think it is a nurture thing. Men often take up more space, men often talk over women when, men disregard women when they have an idea or suggestion. Its conditioning. That does not change no matter where you are from or what you believe or do not believe.

Jacobsen: More men dominate the non-religious conversation, globally. What are your thoughts on this? Should it be changed? If so, how?

Tucker: I think that more men dominate the non-religious conversation because it is more acceptable for men to do what they want. Men are perceived as the thinkers, philosophers of the sexes (funny, because there have been female thinkers and philosophers, but they have been dismissed or disregarded because they were... female). I know in the black community, when you go to a black church, you will see the church filled with mostly women. When you think about it, there are a lot more rules and conditions when it comes to be a woman in religion than there are for men. So, I guess rules are socialized into women from birth and not so much into men, giving men more of a chance to freely think outside of the box and express their disagreements with sects or religion and act upon those disagreements than women. I mean, how many female religious sect founders or cult leaders can you think of?

Jacobsen: Are there some things non-religious women simply only talk about with other non-religious women that non-religious men just do not hear? If so, what are these experiences? If so, what are these things? If so, why only the discussions like those happening woman-to-woman rather than woman-to-man?

Tucker: Of course, there are! I cannot tell you about it because then you will know our secrets. Just kidding. As a non-believing black woman, I talk all the time about how my family treats me differently because I do not believe in Jesus. In the black community, we cannot wash our hands without thanking god. So, for a black woman to not rely on a blond haired, blue eyed white male for everything... I am a bit of an outcast. And this is a common situation with other non-believing black women I have conversed with. I have come across many black male non-believers who state that they simply just never believed. That they were never really forced to go to church or required to pray or anything like that. So, when I bring it up, black male non-believers kinda say things like, "well, I just wouldn't have done it. I just wouldn't have gone." Like, you do not get it. Girls are not given the level of autonomy that boys are most of the time. I've yet to meet an American black woman who was not conditioned to have to believe in god.

Jacobsen: What can the non-religious communities do to include more women, people of color, and people from a wider variety of nations in the global non-religious community? What can we do to include more women's voices in the mainstream dialogues, discourses, and discussions? What are the ways in which the non-religious community and men can help these efforts? What have been historic failures of the non-religious, and of men, to

include women in the talks, the community, the literature, the media, and the important philosophical, scientific, and ethical discussions of the non-religious community?

Tucker: I think that an openness to want to learn about people different from yourself without judging is a good start to more inclusion in the global non-religious community. If we do that, then we are open to hearing what they have to say in various discussions. It has funny how the non-religious proclaim to be the opposite of those “closed minded religious people” when there are parts of the non-religious community who are just as closed minded in different areas. Non-religious men can start by having a seat sometimes and not always having something to say about everything. Sometimes you learn more by listening to others. We have missed so many opportunities to hear great perspectives and vast knowledge from non-believers simply because they were female and thus never given a chance to be heard. It is time that that stops.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Marquita Tucker.

[13] Interview with Samantha A. Christian:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Women have been increasingly assertive about their concerns about the social, political, and economic conditions within their own part of a country, in their respective nations, and, indeed, regions of the world and on the international scene. How? Why is this important?

Samantha A. Christian: I think more women are feeling empowered and have become apologetically honest and confident. Which I think is amazing, especially in countries where sexism/gender roles are so suffocating. It takes even greater courage to do that! This also means that more women are finally realizing they deserve to be treated better and with respect for a change. So, when I see someone not allowing themselves to be “mansplained away”, bullied and taken advantage of, it gives me hope for humanity. ^^

Jacobsen: In each of those domains – social, political, and economic conditions, in the non-religious communities, what are the concerns of American women? What about women in North America? Please give examples or reasoning.

Christian: I honestly have no idea and can only speak for myself. I purposely do not join non-religious communities or any community for that matter. The things I am worried about is the creepy attempts to normalize rape here and other parts of the world. Then trying to make people as ignorant and fearful as possible. Making them hate truth, facts, research, knowledge and education. That is extremely scary. The psychological community is doing nothing about this while simultaneously enabling toxic majorities (religious people, god gullibles, bigots of all kinds) and ignoring the toxic influences that make them that way in the first place. There is this idea that if a lot of people say or believe something it must be true or even respected. I do not want a democracy I want a meritocracy. In the last question it was mentioned that women are becoming more empowered all over the world. I have noticed that there is one group of women that seem to feel less empowered as time goes on: white women. They even voted for their abusive husbands and candidates in the election recently. I think we need to do something about

that. Have a place where white women can feel safe, supported and empowered, especially since their husbands (white men) are the ones who commit the most domestic terrorism in the USA and yet still are in positions of power.

Jacobsen: #MeToo led to #ChurchToo, #MeccaToo, #MosqueToo, #SynagogueToo, and so on; these have been replicated in consequences and call-outs of poor behavior by men in the non-religious communities. What are the main concerns of North American non-religious women as regarding the behavior of the men?

Christian: I was not aware that these other movements existed. Again, I can only speak for myself but sexism towards women and men is a fundamental problem. I think the sexism against men can be more suffocating which leads so many guys to fear being honest or being themselves. This means that, whether it is in cult communities or non-religious ones, you will have the same toxic behaviors. The thing that worries me from what I have observed in non-religious communities is how many men have a deep hatred and distrust of women. So, much so that when a woman reports being raped or abused, they do not believe her, and victim blame her. I get a lot, "Well, people shouldn't blindly believe gods are real, so why should I believe women when they talk about rape?" This is ridiculous. People are supposed to recognize gods are fictional. If you do not believe, then the consequences are minor. You can easily pretend that you do as a survival tactic if you must. In terms of rape and abuse it is so important to believe the victim. If you do not, then horrid acts of humanity go unpunished. There is no justice. So, many people's lives are literally destroyed while it enables the rapist/abuser to keep raping/abusing other people, because they were not properly punished and held accountable. People do not really lie about rape/abuse. Maybe 4% tops. So, they should be taken seriously. When someone comes to you saying they are bullied, abused, or raped, the moral and humanitarian thing to do is to believe them and support them. The consequences if you do not are far worse than anything religious or god belief related.

Jacobsen: More men dominate the non-religious conversation, globally. What are your thoughts on this? Should it be changed? If so, how?

Christian: I do not think it is a problem, but it depends on the guys speaking. Have they internalized sexism on such a deep level? Do they feel they can be themselves 100%? Or do they feel they must act a certain role to survive in society? That is the problem. Whether the community is religious or not, we need to do something about this. Help educate people that there is no such thing as an "opposite sex" because women and men have far more in common than differences. Any differences between these 2 common sexes (female and male) are minor at best. Even our genitals are homologous. If we have a lot of men abused by sexism in society representing the atheist community, that is not good. If we have men who have overcome it and feel empowered enough to be their authentic selves, then it would not matter if there are a lot of men talking or a lot of women talking. People like Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris make the non-religious community look bad while people like Daniel Dennett, Neil Carter and Darrel Ray do so much to help the non-religious and anti-religious communities. Once again, I go back to

how white women seem to be the one woman in the world who feel less empowered. It is the same in the non-religious community too. Which is also dominated by white men. It would be great if we had more people as a face of atheism. It would humanize us more in the world. See more black men, Latin men, white women, black women, Asian women. All of us. That there is no one demographic that is dominant in our communities.

Jacobsen: Are there some things non-religious women simply only talk about with other non-religious women that non-religious men just do not hear? If so, what are these experiences? If so, what are these things? If so, why only the discussions like those happening woman-to-woman rather than woman-to-man?

Christian: In my case, nope. I am upfront with everyone no matter their sex or if they are a cult addict (religious) or not. I cannot think of anytime when I was not upfront or honest about a subject, especially online. I am really the only non-religious, anti-religious, atheist person in my family, friends and daily life. My mom and BGF (boy-girlfriend, my lover was born intersexed. We use this nickname to protect her identity online.) are not into religion but have not called themselves “non-religious” or “atheist” officially. My point being, I really do not have many in person conversations about religion. My online ones, I have with everyone and am upfront/honest with everyone regardless of their sex. The funny thing in my case more men reach out to me than women do. About sexist expectations on men, their sexual orientation, desires and identity. Religion usually comes up because that is what is pushing those sexist ideas and destroying their lives to begin with. As mentioned earlier, a lot of women (except white women) feel empowered but the sexism against men is still very strong (at least in the USA). It is still on the same level. It is so important to help people realize that women are men are the same (with only minor differences). Thus, we should be treated the same way. There should be age expectations/roles not gender expectations/roles. If people feel uncomfortable about being honest with someone because of their sex, I am more inclined to wonder why that is. I get the same thing from the guys I have spoken to saying they feel they cannot be honest or open with the women in their lives. Why the disconnect when we (women and men) have so much in common? Feel free to read about the gender similarities hypothesis and the persistent disconnect with the elevated level of sexism in society. <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/amp-606581.pdf>

Jacobsen: What can the non-religious communities do to include more women, people of color, and people from a wider variety of nations in the global non-religious community? What can we do to include more women’s voices in the mainstream dialogues, discourses, and discussions? What are the ways in which the non-religious community and men can help these efforts? What have been historic failures of the non-religious, and of men, to include women in the talks, the community, the literature, the media, and the important philosophical, scientific, and ethical discussions of the non-religious community?

Christian: That’s easy, the divisive labels. It is all right to label yourself in a way, but it is also important to educate yourself about each of our demographics. Research over time keeps showing we have vastly more in common and that any differences are minor and

insignificant. Same mentioned above about biological sex. The 2 common ones (female and male) have so much in common that it is beyond ridiculous for sexism to exist or for anyone to think there is an “opposite sex.” homosexuality and heterosexuality (monosexuality) are both the same thing. Gay men = straight women. They are both androsexual, the proper term to describe those attracted to men. Lesbians = straight guys. They are both gynosexual, those attracted to women. Same thing. Another thing people obsess about and cause trouble over when the reality is, they are the same. Even more research shows that monosexuality is a myth and that humans are either part of the bisexual spectrum or asexual spectrum. What is my point? The quick spread of misinformation about race, sex, human sexuality and humanity in general is what is preventing a more inclusive system or community. Not just for non-religious groups but ALL groups. Don’t focus on getting more POC or women into the fold. Focus on getting more non-religious people, humanist, agnostics, atheists into the fold and naturally people will unite. The bigger problem is the misinformation going around. That is what we need to focus on. Putting an end to all the lies we are forced fed since birth, not just the religion/god lies but the ones about race and sex. Create more educational opportunities. Stop shaming people for being a demographic, this will allow them to feel more comfortable being themselves. The biggest danger that poses a threat to all of humanity is the need to fit in or be accepted. That is why people join religions, create toxic group, do not stand up to bullies, bigots, etc. Therefore, we get the bystander effect, why so many men (especially white men) are just brutal to women and each other. To fit in, to be accepted. If humanity evolved past the need for such things, we would be more moral, happier, healthier and better friends to each other.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Samantha.

[14] Interview with Judy Saint:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Women have been increasingly assertive about their concerns about the social, political, and economic conditions within their own part of a country, in their respective nations, and, indeed, regions of the world and on the international scene. How? Why is this important?

Judy Saint: How: Women are more assertive by talking with each other, as women did in the USA when fighting for the right to vote. That died down as women focused on resembling men, in clothing, competition and executive function. They stopped talking with each other until sexual harassment took center stage. Women again found each other as mutual combatants. Why it is important: I cannot imagine a woman ever asking why asserting women’s rights is important.

Jacobsen: In each of those domains – social, political, and economic conditions, in the non-religious communities, what are the concerns of American women? What about women in North America? Please give examples or reasoning.

Saint: American women are not all concerned with their rights in any of these domains. We only see a portion of women out there advocating in these spheres. The concerns of

those not fighting for rights seems to be to “fit in” and fulfil society’s mandate of being a quiet servant to men. As for those who are out there fighting for women’s rights, their concerns are that women have all the advantages men are routinely given, and the ability to change society to a more cooperative world, away from the testosterone-laden competitive world men created for us. One example, a survey of women who voted against women’s rights (and for Trump) said they voted in ways that supported their husbands’ needs. Another example, Bill and Melinda Gates sponsor helping women start local businesses because they found that when men succeed, they take all the money with them away to larger cities so they can make more, but when women succeed they invest in their local communities and in each other.

Jacobsen: #MeToo led to #ChurchToo, #MeccaToo, #MosqueToo, #SynagogueToo, and so on; these have been replicated in consequences and call-outs of poor behavior by men in the non-religious communities. What are the main concerns of North American non-religious women as regarding the behavior of the men?

Saint: Secular women want responsibility to be placed on perpetrators of aggression toward women, rather than abusing women’s rights as a cover for poor behavior. Responsibility and early training of little boys are the main concerns.

Jacobsen: More men dominate the non-religious conversation, globally. What are your thoughts on this? Should it be changed? If so, how?

Saint: Atheism is a non-issue unless the religious community becomes a threat. In that case, it is men who rise to combat and protect, which is reflected in the makeup of out and vocal atheists. Being out and vocal is combative, more natural to men.

Jacobsen: Are there some things non-religious women simply only talk about with other non-religious women that non-religious men just do not hear? If so, what are these experiences? If so, what are these things? If so, why only the discussions like those happening woman-to-woman rather than woman-to-man?

Saint: I could say the obvious: we cannot tell you because you are a man. Seriously, being a male asking this question could subliminally influence the answers you get from women. But, let me try, anyway. Mainly it would be about cooperative and supportive efforts that men do not want to help with. “Women’s work” like providing food for a meeting or gathering clothing for disaster survivors or helping other women leave abusive husbands who are religious. Women are cooperative; men are competitive. That has why men are not included in women’s discussions – it is not about competing or winning, and therefore of little interest.

Jacobsen: What can the non-religious communities do to include more women, people of color, and people from a wider variety of nations in the global non-religious community? What can we do to include more women’s voices in the mainstream dialogues, discourses, and discussions? What are the ways in which the non-religious community and men can help these efforts? What have been historic failures of the non-religious, and of men, to

include women in the talks, the community, the literature, the media, and the important philosophical, scientific, and ethical discussions of the non-religious community?

Saint: We have in Sacramento a Black Humanist Group. They want their own secular organization because their discussions and concerns are not addressed in groups where they are in the minority. So, supporting more smaller groups that address unique subgroups of interests could give more people a home where they feel understood and listened to. Publicity of their unique problems could keep them energized and supportive of those groups.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Judy.

[15] Interview with Jummai Mohammed:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What was family and personal background regarding geography, culture, religion, and language?

Mohammed: Good evening.

My name is Jummai Mohammed. I am a Hausa lady from the northern part of Nigeria. I was born into a muslim home but in a predominantly Christian society. I was born and bread in the southern part of Nigeria which is mostly dominated by Christians.

Jacobsen: How did this impact early life? What was early education like for you? Was religion a part of that education?

Mohammed: I will say being born in a Muslim home in a Christian dominated society tend to shape my being an atheist this day. As a young girl, I was practically confused on the contradictions in both religions, yet they both claim to serve the supreme God. I never love Islam schools since the ustaz in those schools always look and act mean. The way in which children are beaten up, young boys tied into poles while being flogged mercilessly in the name of punishment made me hate going to Islamic schools; on the other hand, whenever I have the opportunity of following my Christian friends to church, I tend to enjoy the less tensed environment, the songs, the dance and everyone smiling faces and that paved my way into converting to Christianity in the later years. So, I have practised and experienced the two most popular Abrahamic religion.

Early education for me was fun. I attended a private nursery and primary school. Yes, religion was part of the education. I later proceed to a church owned private high school for secondary education. I converted to Christianity while in secondary school, but a closet one.

Jacobsen: When did you first start to begin questioning religion, or were you always an atheist?

Mohammed: I have always question religion right from primary school, I always question bible/Quran stories right from time, because the stories don't add up. I ask questions like why did God created us, why placing an apple tree in the garden when he does not want humans eating from it.

Jacobsen: Are women treated differently than men and religions? How is this difference manifested in Nigeria?

Mohammed: However, joining a popular Nigeria online forum known as nairaland influenced and fasting my decision of becoming an atheist.

Jacobsen: What has been your experience as an adult atheist in Nigeria?

Mohammed: Yes, it is a glaring fact that religion preaches subjugation of women and it is very evident in the Nigeria society. Women are being treated more like a semi human or should I say slaves in Nigeria, most especially in the northern part of the country which I come from.

Jacobsen: Who are some prominent male atheists in Nigeria? Who are some prominent women atheists in Nigeria?

Mohammed: My experience as adult atheist is just religious fanatics unwillingness to get close, make friends or do business with me. I do not live in the north where most atheist are likely to face death threat; I reside in Lagos.

Jacobsen: Can you recommend any books on atheism that are popular within Nigeria? Those that are written by non-Nigerians. Also, those that are written by Nigerians, or a Nigerian.

Mohammed: Prominent female atheist:

Jummai pearl, Neshama, Dorris etc

Mubarak Balah, Azaya, Calistus, Juwon, Dr Leo. Etc

No.

Jacobsen: What are the main forms of discrimination against atheists, especially open ones, in Nigeria?

Mohammed: Discriminations varies, depending on the atheist environment. In the southern and eastern parts, the discriminations are; family and friends rejecting one, people not wanting to make friends or involve in any sort of business with one, relationship/marriage breakups. etc..

Jacobsen: How can people become involved in the atheist movement or community in Nigeria? If outside Nigeria, how can people support those that are atheists inside of Nigeria?

Mohammed: In the northern part which is predominant by Muslims, atheist faces death threats, lynching and co, together with what I listed up there faces by southern atheist.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Pearl.

[16] Interview with Marissa Torres Langseth:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Women have been increasingly assertive about their concerns about the social, political and economic conditions within their own part of a country, in their respective nations, and, indeed, regions of the world and on the international scene. How? Why is this important?

In each of those domains – social, political and economic conditions, in the non-religious communities, what are the concerns of Filipina women? What about women in Southeast Asia? Please give examples or reasoning.

*Marissa Torres Langseth: ***It is important that women be partners and equal in any societal norm, be it economic, political or social, because women population is about half of the population in this world. [Population, female \(% of total\) | Data](#).*

Population, female (% of total) | Data

Population, female (% of total) from The World Bank: Data

Population, female (% of total) | Data

Population, female (% of total) from The World Bank: Data

Misogyny is common in the Philippines because of patriarchal orientation, and upbringing. We were brought up thinking that a male is more dominant in any household and women should just stay home and take care of the children. Women are treated like baby factories in the Phils with the RH or Planned Parenthood on hold due to the religious nature of the Philippines, these women succumb to high morbidity and mortality rates. : [Maternal Mortality in the Philippines – The Borgen Project](#)

Maternal Mortality in the Philippines – The Borgen Project

For the Philippines, improving maternal health was an extremely important MDG since the maternal mortality rate

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SEA women like Indonesia has the biggest Muslim population, therefore, women are subjected to being the lowest in the totem pole and Sharia law.[*http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/indonesia-population/*](http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/indonesia-population/)

Women in Islamic nations are subject to honor killings and gender discrimination, arranged marriages and mutilation of sex organs. Equality is a far cry due to religious implications, whereby death is the punishment to apostasy (Gender Discrimination in Southeast Asia – BORGGEN

Gender Discrimination in Southeast Asia – BORGGEN

Gender Discrimination in Southeast Asia impacts women's health, psychologically and physically

Gender Discrimination in Southeast Asia – BORGGEN

Gender Discrimination in Southeast Asia impacts women's health, psychologically and physically

Women from SEA who go to other countries as service personnel or house cleaners are at risk of being raped and abused due to the belief of others that women in the third world countries will do anything to put food on their table including prostitution. Unfortunately, a lot of these uneducated women end up as prostitutes and taken advantaged of. Even the most careful women end up raped and dead. I have read a lot of horror stories about this. Maid in Saudi Arabia 'died of rape'

Maid in Saudi Arabia 'died of rape'

*Woman reportedly pointed at employer when asked who abused
her*

Maid in Saudi Arabia 'died of rape'

*Woman reportedly pointed at employer
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Arrests made in Kuwait murder of Filipina house cleaner

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*Both two main suspects in case of house cleaner whose body was
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Jacobsen: #MeToo led to #ChurchToo, #MeccaToo, #MosqueToo, #SynagogueToo, and so on; these have been replicated in consequences and call-outs of poor behavior by men in the non-religious communities. What are the main concerns of Southeast Asian non-religious women as regarding the behavior of the men?

***This Me Too movement became an international outcry, however, I have not seen it in SEA quite frankly.*

The nonreligious women in SEA will not resist to whatever men would do to them due to fear and early indoctrination. (I cannot comment more regarding this Me Too movement in SEA)

More men dominate the non-religious conversation, globally. What are your thoughts on this? Should it be changed? If so, how

Langseth: increased women nowadays are empowered and unafraid of coming out as nonreligious. The stigma is waning and fading away.

My take is that, if they can see us women as successful without gods, we can be notable examples of how to live decently and practice clean living with high ethical values. Documentation and the advent of social media are just examples of how we can show to the religious world that we are equal to those who profess “good moral compass”.

Jacobsen: Are there some things non-religious women simply only talk about with other non-religious women that non-religious men just do not hear? If so, what are these experiences? If so, what are these things? If so, why only the discussions like those happening woman-to-woman rather than woman-to-man?

Langseth: am not afraid to divulge to anyone that I am nonreligious. I even said that to the church members where my husband and I go to occasionally.

I have even said that to my husband’s male friends who are Italian, and Jewish. I did not care what their opinions and who cares anyway about their opinions. I know who I am.

If my husband values me and sees me as an equal, that is enough for me. My husband is even ready to leave his church, if the church members will ostracize me, truth be told. He is a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP).

Jacobsen: What can the non-religious communities do to include more women, people of color, and people from a wider variety of nations in the global non-religious community? What can we do to include more women's voices in the mainstream dialogues, discourses, and discussions? What are the ways in which the non-religious community and men can help these efforts? What have been historic failures of the non-religious, and of men, to include women in the talks, the community, the literature, the media, and the important philosophical, scientific, and ethical discussions of the non-religious community?

*Langseth: **More awareness and more education about equality. More social media coverage, more inputs from women old and young alike.*

***Maybe less men to be at the spot light and emphasize more women leaders to hold higher and better positions in nonreligious societies.*

Failures are the usual backstabbing from groups, infighting and trying to outsmart the others due to immaturity and vanity and self-aggrandizement.

Some men also back stab women due to their insecurities and low self-esteem.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Marissa.

Langseth: Thank you for this opportunity, Scott.

[17] Interview with Alexus Jean Black – Philippines:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Women have been increasingly assertive about their concerns about the social, political and economic conditions within their own part of a country, in their respective nations, and, indeed, regions of the world and on the international scene. How? Why is this important? In each of those domains – social, political and economic conditions, in the non-religious communities, what are the concerns of Filipina women? What about women in Southeast Asia? Please give examples or reasoning. #MeToo led to #ChurchToo, #MeccaToo, #MosqueToo, #SynagogueToo, and so on; these have been replicated in consequences and call-outs of poor behavior by men in the non-religious communities. What are the main concerns of Southeast Asian non-religious women as regarding the behavior of the men? More men dominate the non-religious conversation, globally. What are your thoughts on this? Should it be changed? If so, how? Are there some things non-religious women simply only talk about with other non-religious women that non-religious men just do not hear? If so, what are these experiences? If so, what are these things? If so, why only the discussions like those happening woman-to-woman rather than woman-to-man? What can the non-religious communities do to include more women, people of color, and people from a wider variety of nations in the global non-religious community? What can we do to include more women's voices in the mainstream dialogues, discourses, and discussions? What are the ways in which the non-religious community and men can help these efforts? What have been historic failures of the non-

religious, and of men, to include women in the talks, the community, the literature, the media, and the important philosophical, scientific, and ethical discussions of the non-religious community?

Alexus Jean Black: I think that women especially now a days have been very vocal about those subjects it is because we have more freedom than what we used to have. Although, in some parts of Asia, middle east for example have still some kind of discrimination towards the women. It is important for women to be included in all sort as we also are a part of the nation. I do not really know a lot of ppl who are non religious in my country as Philippines is one of the most religious countries in the world. But there are some concerns I want to address like «christian subjects» are mandatory in elementary schools, some laws are based on religion, ex: divorce is still illegal.

Having men dominate the non religious community does not mean there are more non religious men but shows that mostly women are very conservative about their thoughts which I will explain in a bit. I do not talk a lot about religion or being a non-religious in the Philippines. As I said they are very religious, and I do not want to disrespect them, so I just do not simply talk about it. Although there are lots of people who would ask me about being an atheist , most of them are men. I think that the non religious community, to engage the women more, is to just let them. I do not think we should oppress anyone about topics that are sensitive for them.

[18] Interview with Alisha Ann:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Women have been increasingly assertive about their concerns about the social, political, and economic conditions within their own part of a country, in their respective nations, and, indeed, regions of the world and on the international scene. How? Why is this important?

Alisha Ann: Because we feel safe enough to. We are no where near as safe as we should be. We have fought long and hard for the right to vote, earn a living outside the home and control our own reproduction. Those rights are not secure and are constantly threatened. As usual, we stand on the shoulders of the giants before us. We have the bravery of the feminist activists in generations prior and feminist voices today to build on. We are stronger together. And when one stands up, we tend to stand with them. Their fight is our fight.

And that is just here. Many women in other countries are still heavily oppressed. We help them by progressing. Progressive countries serve as a contrast to regressive ones.

Jacobsen: In each of those domains – social, political, and economic conditions, in the non-religious communities, what are the concerns of American women? What about women in North America? Please give examples or reasoning. #MeToo led to #ChurchToo, #MeccaToo, #MosqueToo, #SynagogueToo, and so on; these have been replicated in consequences and call-outs of poor behavior by men in the non-religious communities. What are the main concerns of North American non-religious women as regarding the behavior of the men?

Ann: Social – life. I am concerned about male violence against non-males. From clergy raping children, to intimate partner violence, to attacks against the transgender community. Men have a problem. And only men can fix it. So, far, we have stuck Band-Aids on a mortal wound by asking women and children to take steps to not get raped and killed. Which is to say, “Make sure he rapes them instead of you.” Because we have not solved the root issue: male violence. Political – rights. The patriarchy lives on in the old white men who run our government. And they are so afraid of being treated the way they’ve historically treated women and minorities, that they resist progress. Or worse, are blind to injustice all together. Equality feels like oppression to the privileged. So, they resist everything women and minorities do to level the playing field. From denying reproductive freedom, to voter suppression, to poverty wages. Economic – poverty. We have consolidated power to a few, which disenfranchises us all. The economic system we have in place will fail. And the people who will suffer the most are not the 1%, they will just be the loudest.

That they will not be better in my lifetime. That the standard bearer of meaningful change will not be retired with my generation and will require passage to my children to complete. If we cannot convince men to be better, we not only pass the responsibilities of progress to them, but the dangers of our failings.

Jacobsen: More men dominate the non-religious conversation, globally. What are your thoughts on this? Should it be changed? If so, how?

Ann: It absolutely must change. Diversity of opinion has always been better. We can only speak to our own experiences. Unless we only care about improving the experiences of white men, then we must include women and minorities. The way we do that is by checking ourselves and our privilege. We actively overlook an ethnic sounding name when hiring. We do not assume a woman cannot speak on a topic. We seek out and value the opinions of those not like us. We listen to each other and validate.

Jacobsen: Are there some things non-religious women simply only talk about with other non-religious women that non-religious men just do not hear? If so, what are these experiences? If so, what are these things? If so, why only the discussions like those happening woman-to-woman rather than woman-to-man?

Ann: Not necessarily whisper networks, but things women are more comfortable discussing amongst and between themselves rather than with men. Anything involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, abuse, violence and inequality. Because, as a block, they do not see it or believe it happens. Those that do, are still routinely shocked by the extent of it. And all of them tend to default to victim blaming and responsibility shifting. It is why we have whisper networks. We cannot depend on men to protect us from themselves or believe our stories. So, we warn each other about repeat or egregious offenders behind the scenes to protect ourselves.

Jacobsen: What can the non-religious communities do to include more women, people of color, and people from a wider variety of nations in the global non-religious community?

What can we do to include more women's voices in the mainstream dialogues, discourses, and discussions? What are the ways in which the non-religious community and men can help these efforts? What have been historic failures of the non-religious, and of men, to include women in the talks, the community, the literature, the media, and the important philosophical, scientific, and ethical discussions of the non-religious community?

Ann: The failures have been the same overall social failures we see on a larger scale. Appointing men to leadership and overlooking women/minorities. Assuming women are less knowledgeable on certain topics and overlooking them for speaking gigs or as resources. Assuming a man is better able and tasking him with more high-profile gigs – like public speaking or media events. Assuming women and minorities just do not want to be in certain fields, like science or philosophy, and therefore not seeking out those candidates. However, the secular community suffers from a lack of diversity for a unique reason in my opinion. It is been an older white man's club because older white has historically retained their social, political, economic, and religious privileges regardless of their allegiances. Their survival does not depend on their adherences to certain groups.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Alisha.

[19] Interview with Susan Nambejja:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Women have been increasingly assertive about their concerns about the social, political, and economic conditions within their own part of a country, in their respective nations, and, indeed, regions of the world and on the international scene. How? Why is this important?

Susan Nambejja: Women have been more assertive by getting involved into different activities, socially women have struggled to act independently or combine efforts with men for those who are married, and single mothers have more determined to bring up their children meeting all needs alone. Politically women have engaged into leadership positions, at various levels, they are now community leaders, presidents, ministers and so on, for example our Kampala capital city authority Director is a woman. (Jennifer Musisi) Economically: women are now entrepreneurs nationally and internationally; they now operate big businesses worldwide. Importance of this is that: the time when women were considered as domestic slaves is now over; women are now enjoying liberty than in accent days hence boosting their esteem and lack of respect. Jacobsen: In each of those domains – social, political, and economic conditions, in the non-religious communities, what are the concerns of Ugandan women? What about women in Africa? Please give examples or reasoning. Susan: much as I have explained in different domains, non religious women in Uganda are still facing a lot of challenges. Being non religious in Uganda is considered evil, immoral, inhuman, that may hinder a woman's chance to become a minister, community leader and so on, people may not cast a vote for such a person. Leadership is highly based on religion.

Socially marriage may not be a success for a non religious woman, and, but economically if a non religious woman sets up for example a business, most strict religions may find it hard to support such a business for example the Muslims have a tendency of supporting fellow Moslems on a belief that any thing from a non Moslem is considered unclean (haraam). This makes it difficult for operate well businesses. All this means there is a lot of segregation in Uganda between the religious and non religious, this is because Uganda is a highly religious populated country. Non religious are still very few.

Jacobsen: #MeToo led to #ChurchToo, #MeccaToo, #MosqueToo, #SynagogueToo, and so on; these have been replicated in consequences and call-outs of poor behavior by men in the non-religious communities. What are the main concerns of African non-religious women as regarding the behavior of the men?

Nambejja: Men in Africa are still cherishing African cultural practices, and some put a woman as inferior, much as many are educated, they still consider them selves as (kings). Most cultures men are still dominating, leadership is still for men in most cultures in African traditions. Women are still lacking self esteem due to the fear of how the society will interpret their actions, few women have come up to speak for others in our countries.

Jacobsen: More men dominate the non-religious conversation, globally. What are your thoughts on this? Should it be changed? If so, how?

Nambejja: Yes, it is because men are more open towards different issues, they have no fear to speak out who they are and what they stand for, women tend to protect themselves silently thinking more of the out comes of the effects. For example, speaking about being non religious in Uganda is not safe unless if you have enough ways to protect your self. Men have no fear for segregation, women mind about it a lot. This should be changed, by giving more chance to women more than men, by supporting their causes, invite women as speakers at conferences, those who get a chance to speak will end up becoming more confident of their non religious beliefs. And hence others will get inspired and do the same way.

Jacobsen: Are there some things non-religious women simply only talk about with other nonreligious women that non-religious men just do not hear? If so, what are these experiences? If so, what are these things? If so, why only the discussions like those happening woman-to-woman rather than woman-to-man?

Nambejja: I will put this more on social setting, for example if a woman is married to a religious man, she will talk about this with a non religious woman probably facing same challenge than talking about it with a man. Why? Due to fear of judgement she speaks to fellow woman. If it is an initiative, like projects on girl child, menstrual education, a non religious woman will feel more speak to person non religious woman more comfortably than woman to man. We have a tendency of thinking that this should be told to fellow

woman. Yet, in a non religious way, I think this should stop. That is according to my thinking please it is just according to my assumption.

Jacobsen: What can the non-religious communities do to include more women, people of color, and people from a wider variety of nations in the global non-religious community? What can we do to include more women's voices in the mainstream dialogues, discourses, and discussions? What are the ways in which the non-religious community and men can help these efforts? What have been historic failures of the non-religious, and of men, to include women in the talks, the community, the literature, the media, and the important philosophical, scientific, and ethical discussions of the nonreligious community?

Nambejja: I think women should be given more audience, for example, if it is an event try to balance the number according to sex of speakers, empower women by supporting their causes. Women feel inferior if their initiative s are not supported hence loose hope. Our non religious communities still lack a spirit of togetherness, if we can't support ourselves, invite women by showing them the benefits of public talks, include them in media discussions, if a mistake is made by a woman, correct her silently, don't criticize, educate women in different areas, for example NGO management, business, leadership among others. In our non religious communities encourage women to get involved and aspire for or stand for leadership positions. Our non religious communities have failed to work as sisters and brothers of same spirit, we should have gatherings that can transform us into more useful citizens, we should support those who are seriously in great danger, an earnest heart of humanism means acting not t

Our non religious communities have failed to initiate universities for non religious, have failed to have institutions which support the non religious in different areas for example banks for non religious where people can acquire loans and so on, scholarships for non religious, among others just to mention but a few.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Susan.

Nambejja: Thanks for giving me a chance to be interviewed.

Susan Nambejja

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[Saving little lives](#)

Paragraph 130(b)-(c) of the Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women

How does looking at the root and external factors of violence against women help deal with it?

April 14, 2019

Strategic objective D.3.

Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking
Actions to be taken

130. By Governments of countries of origin, transit and destination, regional and international organizations, as appropriate:

- b. Take appropriate measures to address the root factors, including external factors, that encourage trafficking in women and girls for prostitution and other forms of commercialized sex, forced marriages and forced labour in order to eliminate trafficking in women, including by strengthening existing legislation with a view to providing better protection of the rights of women and girls and to punishing the perpetrators, through both criminal and civil measures;*
- c. Step up cooperation and concerted action by all relevant law enforcement authorities and institutions with a view to dismantling national, regional and international networks in trafficking;*

Beijing Declaration (1995)

When we examine the ways in which discrimination expands into the world of sex and sexuality, the differences between the treatment of the sexes and the genders become more stark and clear. In fact, when we examine the ways that the dynamics seem to work in the world of sex trafficking, sex work, prostitution, and the like, women tend to become an exaggerated form as before.

Women not only as objects of pleasure, but also objectified in a number of ways – probably for the most part. The questions arise around the actions that can be taken by governments. In a modern context, one of the things that can be done is the work to provide some institutional support for women subject to prostitution and sex trafficking, or trafficking in general.

Noting, of course, some nuances exist around the margins of the discussion with legal and consented-to sex work with safety protocols in place. However, if we take a moment to reflect, we may note the general context of the violation of women's rights as the central issue of concern for now.

When actionables are brought forward, the main points of contact here are the governments relative to the victims' status, the transit and ultimate destination, and then the regional and international organizations capable of providing some support.

To take those adequate measures for dealing with the root factors as well as the external correlates of the problem of trafficking of girls and women, one is dealing, at once, with future derivatives and the current issues of the problem of trafficking when dealing with the root issues.

The emphases in the second paragraph are sex for pay and forced marriages. In dealing with the elimination of the trafficking of women, we are dealing with these concerns, internationally as well.

The rights of girls and women are violated globally when these trafficking issues are not dealt with. Part of this requires proportional punishment of perpetrators of the trafficking of girls and women. The scales emphasized are criminal/legal and civil measures.

In order to do this, there will need to be an international effort based on mutual trust and cooperation between the parties of the world, including the aforementioned governments & and the regional and international organizations focused on dealing with these issues.

Paragraph 130(d) of the Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women

How does a proper allocation of resources for women help with the victims of trafficking?

April 15, 2019

Strategic objective D.3.

Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking

Actions to be taken

130. By Governments of countries of origin, transit and destination, regional and international organizations, as appropriate:

d. Allocate resources to provide comprehensive programmes designed to heal and rehabilitate into society victims of trafficking, including through job training, legal assistance and confidential health care, and take measures to cooperate with non-governmental organizations to provide for the social, medical and psychological care of the victims of trafficking;

Beijing Declaration (1995)

For the Beijing Declaration and the work for the advancement of human rights of women, sex trafficking remains a particularly egregious case as a crime against women. Sexual trafficking is one of the most rapidly growing crimes in the world. *Bustle* provided a decent rundown of some basic statistics.

That is to say, enslavement and rape, and sexual assault, are continuing to rise as a collective set of human rights violations. It becomes an international form of entrapment. When looking at those who are trapped in this form of sexual slavery, we see 24.9 million are in it, are trapped in it, based on 2017 data from the International Labor Organization.

71% of the victims of this massive human rights violation are women and girls. Over half are sexually exploited, because this is the nature of the violation of the rights here. Of those trafficked, by implication, or placed into this forced ‘labour,’ the vast majority are women and girls

By implication, the traffickers in the non-vast majority, or the super-minority, are women who traffick other girls and women, and some boys and men. In accordance with stipulation (d), the ways in which to help the women and girls is to allocate “comprehensive programmes” in order to “heal and rehabilitate” those who have been subject to these crimes.

And the recommendations are specific and concrete action items. They reference job training, legal assistance, and confidential health care. In job training, a girl or a woman took out of the job market for a long time because of being forced into sex trafficking can become a serious issue.

Reintegration and development of job skills become a significant hurdle or barrier for these women who may have not too long ago been girls. Another recommendation is legal assistance.

This is a common recommendation. For those women who do not have the experience or legal expertise, or know-how, this assistance can be indispensable for the entry into a new life.

Confidential health care is important too. As with the fight for the abortion rights of women and girls, a level of confidentiality can be important, as a qualitative analysis, for the dignity respect of women and girls.

For women coming out of sexual trafficking, for example, this level of dignity and respect can be part of the healing process as they may not have been given much for the period in which their fundamental human rights and dignity were trampled upon as sex slaves.

The cooperation at the levels of analysis provided before become increasingly relevant, too. For example, if we look at the measures for cooperation between the non-governmental organizations and the aforementioned “regional and international organizations,” then the medical, psychological, and social care can be given in a more robust manner to those most in need of it.

These are serious human rights violations and, therefore, deserve the seriousness and due action that they deserve, internationally.

Paragraph 130(e) of the Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV. D. Violence Against Women

How can we work regionally and international through education and training to eliminate the trafficking of women?

April 16, 2019

Strategic objective D.3.

Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking
Actions to be taken

130. By Governments of countries of origin, transit and destination, regional and international organizations, as appropriate:

e. Develop educational and training programmes and policies and consider enacting legislation aimed at preventing sex tourism and trafficking, giving special emphasis to the protection of young women and children.

Beijing Declaration (1995)

Among the more pervasive and historically prevalent forms of violence against women is in the act of trafficking, the ways in which can be objectified in ultra-conservative or ultra-permissible societies reflect other facets of our societies.

The ways in which women can live, essentially, slave lives while trafficked. It comes from a larger qualitative analysis of the complete covering of women based on the demands of the patriarchal structures and culture, or become in many ways coerced into the opposite based on other cultures.

In either case, the pressures on women to perform and behave, and dress, in specific ways becomes immense, far more than the men. Regardless, the elimination of trafficking in women and the assistance of the victims of victims due to prostitution and trafficking is of utmost importance.

When we look into the actions rather than simply the talk around the international issue and human rights violation of trafficking and prostitution, the development of “educational and training programmes” becomes a central piece of the arsenal in combatting trafficking of girls and women.

The world of politics and policymaking cannot be ignored, as the governments require enforcement of the policies and the legislation if passed.

When targeted at sex tourism and trafficking, in particular, there should be protections, as mentioned in the previous articles around the ways women and girls can undergo trauma and will require protection, e.g., the aforementioned privacy in healthcare can be one means by which to do it.

At the same time, we come into the situation requiring the top-down and bottom-up problem-solving methodology known as activism. If we look at the grassroots movements, there needs to be a sacrifice, a willingness to work across ideological lines, and form coalitions targeting specific and concrete aspects of the problem: of sexual trafficking and prostitution.

This, among many international issues, is not a complicated issue. The facts remain in front of us; the right violations should remain apparent to most with a conscience, and the next question becomes the best means to reach the solutions.

In the grassroots activism, this can be the basis, and has been, for the influence on the public for pressuring those in power, or those with the political and policymaking power to implement change on the books with further pressure for enacting said changes.

From the top-down, of course, it can come from the government itself; probably, the more reliable alternative is the international and regional institutions and organizations, including the UN, to pressure the governments of a region or the world to recognize and acknowledge a problem and then begin to act on it.

Within this, there can be work for the rights of women and girls, and some boys and men, in these arenas. Even in my own country, trafficking and sex trafficking can be an issue. Something that creates horrible sub-cultures of abuse and slavery for the women and the girls who happen to be caught in them.

The cultural shrug, in some regards, may reflect the larger international need to recognize this massive problem inflicted on millions.

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Author Biography



Scott Douglas Jacobsen is a Canadian author, interviewer, and publisher, and a board member and executive on numerous boards whose contributions to secularism, humanism, and human-rights discourse are distinguished by their rigour and accessibility. He established In-Sight Publishing in 2014 to produce freely available or low-cost e-books and periodicals under a Creative Commons license, thereby ensuring broad dissemination while safeguarding intellectual property.

As editor-in-chief of *In-Sight: Interviews* (ISSN 2369-6885), launched in 2012, Jacobsen curates and presents meticulously prepared, long-form dialogues with a wide range of interlocutors. These

interviews include scientists and philosophers, activists and public intellectuals, addressing themes such as secular ethics, freedom of expression, evidence-based policymaking, and the global defence of human rights. His work appears regularly in peer-recognized outlets, including *The Good Men Project*, *International Policy Digest* (ISSN: 2332-9416), *The Humanist* (Print: ISSN 0018-7399; Online: ISSN 2163-3576), Basic Income Earth Network (UK Registered Charity 1177066), *A Further Inquiry*, Canadian Humanist Publications (CA Registered Charity 118833284 RR 0001), *Uncommon Ground Media* (UK Registration 11836548), The New Enlightenment Project, *News Intervention*, *Canadian Atheist*, Trusted Clothes (CN: 9562184; BN: 791402928RC0001), among dozens of others.

Jacobsen engages globally and interdisciplinarily with issues of social justice, belief plurality, and economic equity. Jacobsen has held the Tobis Fellowship in Research at the University of California, Irvine, on multiple occasions, contributing to empirical and normative studies on ethics and public discourse. He maintains active membership in numerous professional media organizations, fostering adherence to editorial standards and facilitating ongoing intellectual exchange.

His editorial leadership and commitment to open-access formats have generated a substantial, publicly accessible archive—known as the Jacobsen Bank—that documents contemporary secular and humanist thought. Based in British Columbia, he continues to expand the reach of his platforms, amplifying diverse perspectives and promoting evidence-based dialogue across cultural and disciplinary boundaries.

