

**WOMEN
DO
COUNT**

3,750,000,000

women in the world

700,000

women in Scotland afraid to go out alone

Thanks to . . .

When we set out to write this booklet, the aim was to tell individual stories. It very soon became apparent that this was asking a great deal and was putting some women in incredibly vulnerable positions.

Hence, we have tried to identify the issues and to explain the vulnerability of women. Many women have allowed us to use their research and where possible we have added the individual stories.

Often it has been very hard to hold such pain in our hearts. We ask you to read the following with sensitivity and to excuse our inadequacy at expressing the depth of the misogyny and suffering.

We owe a great debt to the many who have contributed their time and work.

Who is it written for? To give who an insight into women's suffering? Their everyday life of not being able to spread their wings fully.

This booklet was produced for the group concerned with gender-based violence within Quakers in West Scotland. 2021

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*The image on the back cover is by Ruth Goodheir from her book The Light Shines in
Darkness, 2003, Nevisprint Ltd.*

Introduction

As we gather for COP26, we think of climate change, its causes and consequences.

Some may be fixed on physical issues such as carbon dioxide and methane, and strategies to lower these in the atmosphere.

Some will look at deeper strands such as consumerism and waste, the demands of feeding and servicing more and larger populations.

All will consider how we use the Earth's limited resources. Some may even think of the effects on the world's animals, the biosphere that goes beyond humans and shudder at the term 'the blue economy' that governs greater exploration of the oceans' untapped resources.

Few will challenge more deeply our assumption that the Earth is there for the human species to use for its own purposes.

Few will challenge the underlying ethos of/ relationship to exploitation.

HOW DOES SUCH AN ASSUMPTION ARISE?

WHAT ARE THE DRIVING FORCES?

HOW DO WE UNPICK THE UNDERLYING CAUSES?

Is it simply our use of limited resources?

Digital technology and the green revolution address one aspect that seems to look at a cleaner, safer world. Does it? There is a lie here in that 'modern' western cultures may be simply transferring the consequences of our lifestyle to poorer countries that suffer the toxic pollution from mining rare metals needed to create digital technology, or may be destroying natural ecosystems to grow oil palm rather than forest.

The fundamental issue may be the difference between need and want.

Gathering excess produces wealth. Wealth creates hierarchy as some have more than others and wealth is power. Power is the ability to make choices and monopolise decision-making. When we talk of a growth economy, gathering more profit and value, we are talking of greater use of limited resources and thus greater division between those who have and those who have not.

HOW CAN THIS LEAD TO MISOGYNY AND THE ABUSE OF WOMEN?

On the one hand it is the control of valuable resources. Historically there is only a short time period since women's health and life span was greatly reduced by multiple childbirths, childbirth itself opening them to injury and infection. Freedom from child bearing is a very recent phenomenon that is still not available to the majority of the 3,750,000,000 women in the world.

Although not all women are weak and powerless, women are generally of lower status. And they are different, powerless yet powerful in control of re-generation through giving birth. How can the patriarchy control this? Within different cultures there are different strategies. The unknown, the uncontrollable gives rise to FEAR. Is this too simple to explain the abuse of women? Perhaps. Try living in a community, even of just 14 Quakers, as I did, and regard the reaction of the men to the setting up of a women's group. Frustration and violence go hand in hand.

Does this relate to climate emergency?

The answer is in our relationship to the Earth, the feminine Nature, and to each other. Take away greed and the need for more and you may have a simple lifestyle valuing the Other and working within the rhythms of the local ecosystem, putting life itself as the greatest wealth. Valuing community.

COP26 has 4 SECTIONS

- SECURE GLOBAL NET ZERO BY MID-CENTURY AND KEEP 1.5 DEGREES WITHIN REACH
- ADAPT TO PROTECT COMMUNITIES AND NATURAL HABITATS
- MOBILISE FINANCE
- WORK TOGETHER TO DELIVER

WOMEN HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN ALL OF THESE! WHAT MIGHT IT BE?

Of the 169 targets in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, how do these affect women? How do women fit into a patriarchal economic system? How unjust and unequal is the system for women? Changing women's lives may be a key to changing our society fundamentally.

Part One looks at theory and statistics.

Part Two looks at women around the world.

Part Three looks at some of the ways that women are disadvantaged by culture.

Part Four looks at today and the pressures of modern life.

Part Five gives examples of how community can be inclusive.

Part One

Universal Declaration of Human Rights : Article 1 All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

The Theology of Oppression

THE CRY OF THE EARTH IS THE CRY OF WOMEN: ECOFEMINISM IN CRITICAL DIALOGUE WITH *LAUDATO SI'* *Nontando Hadebe*

These are some extracts from Dr Hadebe's paper of that name.

*Using the 'see, judge and act' method of social analysis, the article explores the key themes of *Laudato Si'*, (an encyclical from the Vatican). These are 'the cry of the earth is the cry of the poor' representing the connection between ecology and social injustice; the values of interconnectedness, relatedness and intrinsic value of creation; and ecological conversion. . . .*

Introduction

Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor (LS 49).

The ecological crisis according to Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* (LS) disproportionately affects the poor and therefore is a human problem that can be solved by humanity working together to eradicate systems of injustice and consumerist lifestyles responsible for the exploitation of the environment and the poor. Hence in *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis departs from the tradition of addressing encyclicals to bishops in the Catholic Church and extends his appeal to all of humanity: '*In this encyclical I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home*' (LS 3). Dialogue is central to the solutions proposed in *Laudato Si'* and is rooted in values that

include relatedness, interconnectedness and justice based on theological themes such as Christology and the Trinity. Similarly ecofeminism argues that the root of the ecological crisis is social injustice but that the group most affected are women so that the 'cry of the earth is the cry of women.' Women and nature are exploited by patriarchal social systems that intersect with racism, classism and sexism. While *Laudato Si'* refers to the poor as homogeneous 'men and women', ecofeminists recognize the diversity of women's experiences that emerges from different contexts and intersecting systems of oppression. Hence for ecofeminists, relatedness and interconnectedness constitute unity in diversity that is non-hierarchical. Despite these fundamental differences both *Laudato Si'* and ecofeminists share a common commitment to praxis that challenges injustice. An

example from the African context that reflects these common ideals is the *Green Belt Movement* in Kenya pioneered by the late Nobel peace prize winner Wangari Maathai which started as a tree planting project and evolved into a movement for peace, justice and democracy. However, *Laudato Si'* does not make any reference to the contributions of ecofeminism, raising questions on the claim made in the encyclical of engaging with 'everyone'. It is precisely the exclusion of ecofeminism from *Laudato Si'* that this paper seeks to address through a mutually critical dialogue that will contribute to global responses to the ecological crisis. The rest of the article will discuss these issues beginning with an overview of the key themes in *Laudato Si'* and ecofeminism followed by a critical dialogue between the two and a conclusion.

***Laudato Si'*: Overview and Key Themes**

According to a BBC report, 'Pope Francis is more popular than any political world leader!'¹ 'Consequently, the release of *Laudato Si'* in 2015 received widespread media coverage culminating in public and scholarly commentaries and debates. Given the extensive coverage of the encyclical this section will present a brief introduction using the framework of the 'see, judge and act' methodology

¹ BBC News. 24 March 2016. Pope Francis 'world's most popular leader.' Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-35892917/pope-francis-world-s-most-popular-leader>, accessed 2 May 2017.

from liberation theologies and then proceed to discuss three themes that provide context for dialogue with ecofeminists namely: the 'cry of the earth is the cry of the poor'; core values of interconnectedness, relatedness and justice with related theologies, and ecological conversion that includes dialogue.

. . . . The 'dominion' anthropocentric theologies justified the exploitation of the environment particularly of poorer countries by richer countries which imposes an 'ecological debt' on the latter: 'A true 'ecological debt' exists, particularly between the global north and south, connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time' (LS 51). Therefore a revised theology rooted in scripture, Christology and Trinitarian theology with a different emphasis on stewardship, the dignity of all persons and the intrinsic value of nature is proposed as an alternative to anthropocentric theologies that produced oppressive relationships between humanity and nature to the detriment of the poor and poorer nations. These liberating theological themes form the basis of the proposed integral ecology in Chapter Four that covers a range of themes including the common good and ethics: When we speak of the 'environment' what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it... Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded and at the same time

protecting nature' (LS 139). Therefore both chapters argue that just relationships among human beings and between humanity and nature are critical in addressing the dual ecological and social crises. . . .

Three Themes: 'The Cry of the Earth is the Cry of the Poor', Key Values and Ecological Conversion

First . . . the central argument of *Laudato Si'* is **that ecology and social injustice are inseparable**: 'Concern for the environment needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society'

Second, **the interconnectedness and relatedness of all creation** as well as their intrinsic value constitute some of the underlying values that support the social justice orientated holistic vision of *Laudato Si'*: 'Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of His creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth' (LS 92). All of creation has intrinsic value because each reflects God in a unique way'.

Lastly, **the call for ecological conversion is a message of hope and confidence in the capacity of humanity to change and transform the ecological and social crisis which they have caused**: 'Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is

good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning' (LS 205). The lifestyle, economic, political, global, ecclesiastical and structural changes as well as spiritual practices constitute ecological conversion that addresses the challenges of the ecological and social crisis.

Ecofeminism: Introduction and Basic Principles

Ecofeminism is founded on the basic intuition that there is a fundamental connection in Western culture, and in patriarchal cultures generally, between the domination of women and the domination of nature (Ruether 1998:28)

Hence the foundational premise held by all ecofeminists albeit their diversity is that patriarchy simultaneously exploits and oppresses both women and nature; the 'cry of the earth is the cry of women' – the two oppressions cannot be separated. Thus the common thread that runs through ecofeminist scholarship is that the domination of women and the domination of nature are 'intimately connected and mutually reinforcing' (Warren and Cheney 2003:294).

Feminist theories therefore are critical to ecofeminism. Similarly, ecofeminists argue that feminism must integrate ecology in its analysis if it is to reflect all dimensions of women's experiences of oppression and that ecological theories must integrate feminist analysis. King argues that '*without a thorough feminist analysis of social domination that reveals the*

interconnected roots of misogyny and hatred of nature, ecology remains an abstraction (1995:155). . . .

While in continuity with feminism, ecofeminism recognizes multiple intersecting oppressions that create diversity of experiences among women. According to Statham, ecofeminism provides a framework for seeing the interlocking system of oppression of gender, race, class, and environmental degradation as tightly woven into our societal fabric in an integrated way (2000:90). Warren further argues that intersectionality takes ‘*seriously the social construction of knowledge and epistemology that takes the felt experiences of women*’ in the various contexts as the starting point for theory (1995:118). In this regard ecofeminists critique the western bias, individualism and homogenizing of women in western feminism which has also been the subject of contention raised by non-western women. In Africa, for example, responses to feminism are varied ranging from rejection to acceptance and different views in between. For example Oyěwùmi questions the relevancy of western feminism for Africa: ‘On what basis are feminist concepts, developed from western social categories, transferable or exportable to other cultures that display a different social organization and cultural logic and what are the implications’ (2003:13). Kanyoro and Dosekum disagree and affirm the relevance of feminism in African contexts. Kanyoro argues that gender is a universal phenomenon present in every culture and that feminist

analysis of gender provides tools to analyse culture specific instances of oppression: *the subordination of women as a gender is a worldwide phenomenon defying the confines of race, class, creed or nationality*’ (2002:27). Dosekum challenges the claim that feminism is ‘unAfrican’, in the following quotation:

...the argument that feminism is not African is used to dismiss it and to equate its theoretical and political development in Africa with colonialism or imperialism. It says that those who declare themselves to be feminist in Africa are not really African or are suffering from mental colonisation, upholding views which do not belong on African soil and which have no worth for African cultures or peoples, women or men (2007:41)

Further she states that the rejection of feminism is based on an uncritical acceptance of culture that fails to acknowledge that the ‘*the dominant shape or meaning of any given culture is inextricably linked to power and inequality within the society or cultural tradition in question (2007:41).*

The contestation around feminism is also reflected in projects addressing the impact of the ecological crisis on women in Africa as will be discussed later in the case study of Maathai’s *Greenbelt Movement*. While this is not an explicitly ecofeminist project, its evolution from a tree planting initiative aimed at addressing women’s experiences of the ecological crisis on their livelihood to confronting systemic injustice and advocating for democracy, peace and justice makes explicit the links between the

oppression of women and exploitation of nature.

Ecofeminists, as noted earlier challenge ecological theories to integrate feminist theories and be attentive and cognisant of the different contexts and intersecting oppressions experienced by women. Ecology is a science that *'concerns itself with the interrelationships among all forms of life. It aims to harmonize nature, human and nonhuman'* (King 1989:18). It is not only a descriptive science but also engages in critical analysis of society: *'It is a critical science which grounds and necessitates a critique of existing society'* (:19). There are two different perspectives on the value of nature in ecological scholarship, namely instrumental and non-instrumental perspectives. Palmer explains the differences as follows: *'Instrumental value is the value assigned to something because of its usefulness as a means to an end'* (2003:16). This is the utilitarian view which is responsible for anthropocentric ecological ethics that give priority to human needs as evident in both the negative practices such as exploitation of nature and positive aspects like preservation (:18). In contrast, a non-instrumental view of nature upholds the intrinsic value of nature apart from human needs. While acknowledging the contribution of these discourses in understanding the different approaches to the ecological crisis, ecofeminists critique the underlying universal, acontextual and value-free claims of these theories and argue that

'there is no such value-neutral, universally applicable, unbiased point of view. Rather, all ethical views, however presented, are products of particular worldviews, contexts and locations' (:31).

In summary, Ruether reinforces the connection between the 'cry of the earth and the cry of women' by arguing that the liberation of either is incomplete without the liberation of the other:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socio-economic relations and the underlying values of this modern industrial society (1975:204).

Like any other movement, ecofeminism has its critics who accuse it of essentializing women's experiences and equating women with nature which according to Gaard was a major misrepresentation because it reduced it to 'an exclusively essentialist equation of women with nature, discrediting ecofeminism's diversity of arguments and standpoints to such an extent that, by 2010, it was nearly impossible to find a single essay, much less a section, devoted to issues of feminism and ecology' (2011:31). However the issues that ecofeminism raises have stood the test of time and efforts to marginalize the

movement. This attests to its relevance and applicability as is evident in global grassroots women's resistance to the ecological crisis. In Africa, Maathai's *Green Belt*

Movement embodies the vision and principles of ecofeminism irrespective of whether or not the movement identifies itself as ecofeminist.

Case Study: Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement

The discussion on the case study will not be biographical but will be limited to highlighting the evolution of the *Green Belt Movement* from a grassroots response to the life threatening impact of the ecological crisis on the lives of rural women in Kenya to a resistance movement championing human rights, peace and democracy for which Maathai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. In her acceptance speech of the prize, she narrated the history and evolution of the Green Belt Movement:

The Green Belt Movement in Kenya started in 1977, when women from rural areas and urban centers, reflecting on their needs at organised forums, spoke about environmental degradation. They did not have firewood. They needed fruits to cure malnutrition in their children. They needed clean drinking water, but the pesticides and herbicides used on farms to grow cash crops polluted the water.

So, together, we have planted over 30 million trees that provide fuel, food, shelter, and income to support their children's education and household needs. The activity also creates employment and improves soils and watersheds. Through their involvement, women gain some degree of power over their lives, especially their social and economic position and relevance in the family. This work continues (Maathai 2004).

A striking feature about the origin of the movement is that it was a grassroots response to the life threatening effects of degradation and exploitation of the environment on the lives of women and their families. The solution was not only practical, doable and effective but empowering to women who regained their agency and economic independence. The principles of ecofeminism evolved organically in this project as women, through their experiences, were able to understand how their suffering was connecting with the suffering and exploitation of nature. However, it became apparent that there were other issues, primarily social, that were also responsible for the dual suffering and oppression of the women and nature. Maathai described the process of conscientization that took place to bring awareness of these issues to the women:

In order to assist communities to understand these linkages, we developed a citizen education program, during which people identify their problems, the causes and possible solutions. They then make connections between their own personal actions and the problems they witness in the environment and in society. They learn that our world is confronted with a litany of woes: corruption, violence against women and children, disruption and breakdown of families, and disintegration of cultures and communities (Maathai 2004).

As the communities became aware of the intersections of oppression they began to widen their analysis to include democracy, peace and good governance which led to protests against government policies and advocacy for human rights that brought the movement into conflict with the government. Maathai and some members were beaten, imprisoned and tortured for their views and their actions but they continued undeterred.

Although initially the Green Belt Movement's tree planting activities did not address issues of democracy and peace, it soon became clear that responsible governance of the environment was impossible without democratic space. Therefore, the tree became a symbol for the democratic struggle in Kenya. Citizens were mobilised to challenge widespread abuses of power, corruption and environmental mismanagement (Maathai 2002 and 2004).

The evolution that took place in the Green Belt Movement demonstrates the vision and ideals of ecofeminism and also to some extent *Laudato Si'*. The organic connection between the 'cry of the earth' and the 'cry of the poor' as mentioned in *Laudato Si'* is clearly demonstrated as well as the 'cry of the earth' and 'the cry of women' by ecofeminism. The next section will discuss the dialogue between the two perspectives.

Conclusion

The integration of social justice into the ecological crisis is a critical contribution from both *Laudato Si'* and ecofeminism. . . . The contributions of *Laudato Si'* and ecofeminism offer critical contributions not only to the global discourse on the ecological crisis but to each other.

Dr Nontano Hadebe will be speaking at the conference on 3rd November.

You hear great things of people. You go and you are disappointed. This woman is so refreshing as a speaker. She speaks the language of the soul but so down to Earth. We are called to restore the relationship with the Earth which is none other than the relationship with each other. Today's crisis is of human relationships. Distraction is no longer an option.

Dr. Nantando Hadebe is International Co-ordinator of Side-by-Side for Gender Justice

Women, the Environment and the Need to Change the Economic Mind-set

Clare Phillips

Feminist and Oxford University economist Kate Raworth, known for her theory of 'do-nut economics' is reasserting the need to change monetary systems at a world level as illustrated in this link to one of her recent talks

https://vimeo.com/embed/redirect/443360208?embedded=true&source=video_title&owner=19457232

Currently locked into an expansionist mind-set, Raworth argues that economies need reform even more urgently post-Covid if we are to have any chance of meeting the needs of all people within the means of the living planet.

The concept of GDP, though it contains the word 'domestic', currently discounts what most of the world's women are concerned with – health, children's care and education, elderly care, housing and food production - unless these activities can be bought and sold for a profit. Marilyn Waring, New Zealand Economist and author of *Counting for Nothing 'What Men Value and What Women are Worth'* terms this the 'feast of commodification' and argues that it endangers and disempowers the lives of ordinary people everywhere.

Despite shifts away from traditional gender roles, the burden of poor health and education still tends to fall disproportionately on women who, worldwide, are the mothers, unpaid

carers and/or holders of low paid jobs. In many places they are also the subsistence farmers and factory workers.

One of the biggest environmental challenges arising from the competitive, profit –driven view of economic value is the reality of waste. As well as being an important contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, including methane emissions from organic waste, black carbon from burning, and the CO₂ embedded in the goods we consume, the rise of digital systems in which 'currency' is further divorced in people's minds from actual 'things', creates opportunities to hide and export both the waste itself and the cost of dealing with it. And of course, activities like greenwashing and off-shoring by states, as well as tax evasion by global companies, don't just increase tangible waste products such as plastics but 'lay to waste' vital eco-systems such as rain forest and peatland which have taken millions of years to develop and are the planet's natural life support systems.

Even here in Scotland, Galloway farmer and writer, Patrick Laurie in his 2020 bestseller *Native: Life in a Vanishing Landscape* spoke this week at a Book Festival about the way both forestry and farming exploits land in the south west for short term gains at the expense of bird species and sustainable food production. Ticking 'a

green box' for the number of conifer trees planted by overseas firms who will cut them down in twenty years, or allowing grass monocultures to increase dairy industry competitiveness are at odds with the supposed ambition for a carbon zero future.

Fast food may seem to give busy women more time and freedom but if the cheap foodstuffs e.g. palm oil from which the food has been fashioned require unsustainable levels of deforestation the cost to all of us, including women, is too high. To return to Raworth, in the do-nut economy everything gets counted and there is no option to disguise inconvenient and undesirable waste by exporting it to another country or laying land to waste in poorer countries that are now even poorer post-Covid. In the traditional economic model where large companies with a global reach dominate, the destruction of human eco-systems increases the availability of cheap labour, often by women, who have no other choice if they are to feed their families. There are vested interests involved.

The use of modern technology may seem a less wasteful option e.g. zooming instead of driving to a central meeting place and carrying personal phones can increase women's safety and interconnectedness but the environmental impact of both the manufacture and recycling of digital hardware and telecoms systems are being 'greenwashed' away by the global IT giants with annual profits

larger than the GDP of some medium sized countries.

Finally, I'll touch on the matter of hierarchies and patriarchy itself. In *The Double X Economy: The Epic Potential of Women's Empowerment* published in 2020, Linda Scott, also a senior academic at Oxford University and founder of the Global Business Coalition for Women's Economic Empowerment reminds readers that

'In the UK women have been educated equally to men for decades. There are currently 31 percent more women than men in higher education – and that is not breaking news. British women take more university places, make better grades, graduate at higher rates and go on to postgraduate work more often than men. Despite these credentials, the government, the press, and businesses persistently suggest that women should have more training so they can get the big jobs.'

Scott goes on to suggest

'The western countries have had equal pay laws since the 1970s. If, in the aggregate, women are more qualified but are not getting promoted then widespread sex discrimination must be happening and happening consistently'.

Reading this book (which I'll admit I have only just started to work through) turned my mind to COP26 and the fact that the UK government has no women in its team. I think this is still the case.

And, as with business and economics, despite Margaret Thatcher, Nicola Sturgeon, Theresa May and Jacinda

Ahern, women are still a minority in politics and expected to field routine, gender-based disrespect and even abuse or, for a mix of reasons, to be overlooked, discounted and by-passed.

I've said very little about ethnicity, but the impact of Covid on black women and those from middle-eastern cultures given their greater risk of contracting the virus as well as being expected to service and care for others in their families and communities has been well covered in mainstream media.

For all women living in crowded cities or on floodplains the need to consider the impact of climate injustice and live a more sustainable lifestyle must feel like climbing Everest. As COP26 gets underway, we all share the duty to call out this challenge and offer both ideas and practical ways forward. To quote Advices & Queries 34:

Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand.



An old holy woman of the Wintu tribe of California speaks:

The White people never cared for land or deer or bear. When we Indians kill meat we eat it all up. When we dig roots we make little holes. When we build houses, we make little holes. When we burn grass for grasshoppers, we don't ruin things. We shake down acorns

and pinenuts. We don't chop down trees. We use only dead wood. But the White people plow up the ground, pull down the trees, kill everything. The tree says, "Don't. I am sore. Don't hurt me." But they chop it down and cut it up. The spirit of the land hates them. They blast out trees and stir it up to its depths. They saw up the trees. That hurts them. The Indians never hurt anything, but the White people destroy all. They blast rocks and scatter them on the ground. The rock says, "Don't. you are hurting me." But the White people pay no attention, When the Indians use rocks, they take little round ones for their cooking . . . How can the spirit of the earth like the White man? . . . Everywhere the White man has touched it, it is sore.

Taken from Touch the Earth. Compiled by T.C.McLuhan 1973 Abacus.

Controlling Women's Fertility

Issues around a woman's fertility may involve her access to contraception, abortion and control over the size of her family especially when the last is associated with poverty, career and access to education for her and her children. We cannot assume that the conditions or attitudes are the same throughout Europe. Indeed they are different. For example, when 35% of pregnancies in Europe are considered as unplanned – *'There remains a disconnect between the preferred method of contraception for certain categories of women, their financial ability to access these methods and public authorities' funding priorities'*, said Neil Datta, EPF Secretary.

- **Poland remains at the bottom of the list for being the only European country to reduce access to contraception in the past four years – now only 35.1% .**
- UK, France, Belgium hold joint top place with around 90%

So what is European activity on reproduction and childcare ? What factors can be considered?

Research carried out by Peter McDonald in 2006 identified criteria to assess expectation and type of support available to women in raising children, i.e. by financial and social/workplace changes. Two groups can be created.

Group 1 above 1.5 TFR (Total Fertility Rate, i.e. total number of live children a woman gives birth to in her lifetime).

- accepted women into the workforce - **work-life balance**
- provided financial support and childcare to varying degrees
- considered women having careers/being financially independent
- more flexible/maternity/paternity leave

Group 2 below 1.5 TFR

- expected women to live as before, i.e. stay home with children
- little childcare/financial help
- no help with work – life balance for women and families
- traditional views: not much flexibility/paternity leave

Countries falling into Group 1 were

- all Nordic countries
- all English speaking countries (high income industrialised)
- all French and Dutch speaking Western European countries

Those in Group 2 were`

- all advanced East Asian countries
- all southern European countries

- all German speaking western European countries
- all East European countries

UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women states in *Article 16*

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

- (a) The same right to enter into marriage;
- (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;
- (d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;
- (e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;

UN Human Rights Committee Asserts that Access to Abortion and Prevention of Maternal Mortality are Human Rights - 31st October 2020

[UN HRC's General Comment on the Right to Life](#) affirms that abortion is a human right, that preventable maternal deaths are a violation of the right to life, and that the right to life begins at birth.

“Comprehensive reproductive health services, including abortion, are necessary to guarantee the right to life, health, privacy, and non-discrimination for women and girls”

This critical advance puts women’s health and bodily autonomy first by requiring states to provide safe, legal, and effective access to abortion, including when pregnancy presents a threat to the woman’s health or will cause her substantial pain or suffering, particularly in pregnancies resulting from rape or incest.

Additionally, states are required to remove existing policy and structural barriers that prevent women and girls’ effective access to abortion, including those barriers created due to conscientious objection.

<https://reproductiverights.org/press-room/un-human-rights-committee-asserts-access-abortion-and-prevention-maternal-mortality-are>

Treating women having miscarriages differently from those having abortions was meant to damage and humiliate women having abortions.

Whilst there are religious reasons to push women to have more children, "There's a new weapon in the war on women in Europe. It's called 'demography.'" Some countries are putting pressure on women to have more children.

Reasons given to push for/enable higher TFR

- the country's pop. going down
- dependency ratio increasing (is it?)
- don't want immigration
- family being undermined
- need more people to care for the old
- running out of money for pensions/health care,
- need to repopulate rural areas

Is this what it is coming to?



The Earth Charter International www.EarthCharter.org

Principles 1.

Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.

- a. Recognize that all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings.
- b. Affirm faith in the inherent dignity of all human beings and in the intellectual, artistic, ethical, and spiritual potential of humanity

Part Two

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 3 Everyone had the right to life, liberty and security of person

Quaker United Nations Office Geneva Named its New Director as Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge

Excerpt from her Salter Lecture to British Yearly Meeting 2021

Growing up in South Africa and the Values that Shaped my Activism



I was raised on the African values of ubuntu – a person is a person through others. In ‘Guns and Gandhi in Africa’, by Bill Sutherland and Matt Meyer, Archbishop Desmond Tutu writes in the Foreword about ubuntu as the essence of what it means to be human as a source for compassion and that idea that “my humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be truly human together.” This is the fundamental principle for non-violent struggle.

The value of ubuntu aligns with the Quaker value of seeing that of God in the other. When Africans were converted to Christianity, some of these values were lost, together with a whole lot of other precious attributes that defined what it means to be an African. Despite this, great African leaders like Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere developed education for their newly independent countries based on philosophy as represented by Ujamaa (Swahili for familyhood).

Education in this context is designed to make all citizens of Africa self-reliant. Self-reliance is portrayed in economics, politics, and social cultures. A self-reliant person does not exploit other people and at the same time they are not exploitable. Ujamaa is about African socialism, a belief in sharing economic resources in a traditional African way, as distinct from classical socialism.

The Black Consciousness (BC) Movement slogan: ‘People Shall Share’ was an attempt to entrench and promote African Socialism while also addressing internalised racism and restoring a positive image of what it means to be black.

I was introduced to black consciousness as a student when I attended a Youth Camp organised by Steve Biko and others at the Mahatma Gandhi Settlement in Phoenix, just outside Durban.

They had chosen one of Gandhi ashrams for raising the awareness of young people like me about the importance of social awareness and non-violence. Gandhi developed the philosophy of Satyagraha, which influenced the national liberation struggle in South Africa, India and beyond.

During the Camp, we visited the local village, to conduct a community survey and learn about people's living conditions and basic needs. These Black Consciousness ideas of self-reliance are built into the Gandhian philosophy of Satyagraha or "soul force."

The thread which ties spiritual and social liberation together as inseparable forces is tightly and colourfully woven through Ubuntu and Ujamaa, from Black Consciousness to Satyagraha, from letting one's life speak to the work of Ada Salter to my childhood to our virtual togetherness here today.

Growing up as a child in an African village, I was taught to greet everyone, including strangers. In isiZulu, when two people meet, they stop and say "Sanibona" meaning, "We see you." Often followed by "Ninjani?" – How are you?". Greetings are in plural form to indicate we are not meeting as individuals but as representatives of our families and communities. My family greets your family, my community greets your community.

I saw a re-awakening of this tradition in Philadelphia during the COVID 19 lockdown, when strangers started to greet one another. Previously I had seen people walking past, wearing headphones, and not bothering to greet.

A senior citizen in the community where I grew up often reminds me, with a broad smile, of how much she appreciated the gesture when I used to take her tea, when she was tilling her fields in the village. I am sure this would have been on instruction from my grandmother. We probably got paid back in kindness and madumbes (yams).

And as the cry that Black Lives Matter went up around the US and the world considering the murder of George Floyd, the echoes brought me back to Sanibona: We can be certain that our lives matter when we are able to truly see one another.

Raised as a Christian, I realised I made my grandmother uncomfortable when I asked why she had abandoned African spiritual beliefs. I now know that she too was struggling with these questions, even though she was grateful for the education she had received from the missionaries.

In my adulthood, I am grateful to my grandmother, my mother, my teachers, the women in the Natal Organisation of Women and fellow activists in the struggle for

freedom, who taught me resilience and the values of ubuntu – we are human because of others.

When I was in solitary confinement, I often had vivid dreams of my grandmother who had died a few months before. I believe her spirit was present in my mind, at that difficult time. I drew immense strength from the power of struggle songs. Often sung in rallies and protest marches, they had the power to instill amazing courage and fearlessness. Even though I was alone I felt a sense of being connected to my comrades through singing struggle songs.

I was attracted to Quakers through my interaction with a small Quaker community in Durban in the early eighties. In 1983 I had been part of establishing the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW), which joined the United Democratic Front (UDF). The UDF was formed as a broad coalition of civic organisations established in August 1983 to oppose the Whites-only referendum for a new constitution that created a tri-cameral parliament for Whites, Indians and Coloureds, while excluding the black African majority.

NOW worked closely with the youth and we were concerned that the youth were getting militarised in their response to state violence. Our own strategy was to organise marches, peaceful protests, and night vigils. . . .

It was through this work that I met Jeremy Routledge and I found love across the colour line, following our detention without trial. Jeremy was detained for a month during the national state of emergency in 1986. I was detained for just under a year in 1987, under the Internal Security Act, which gave the apartheid state powers to detain activists indefinitely without trial. We were married in January 1989 in a blended African traditional, Christian and Quaker ceremony, attended by friends, relatives, comrades and the local community.

The wedding took place in the rural village where I was born, and the African traditional part of the ceremony included ilobolo, an exchange of gifts that united our two families and our peoples. To this day, Jeremy is loved and regarded as umkhwenyana or son-in-law by the whole village. Our children are their children.

The backdrop to this was that the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, which prohibited marriage or a sexual relationship between White people and people of other race groups had been repealed (1985) while the Group Areas Act was still in place, and we were not allowed to live under one roof in a white designated area.

Despite our different racial backgrounds, Jeremy and I had found we had much in common. We both had a parent who was a teacher, and we had both studied science; had grown up in rural KwaZulu Natal and we shared a concern to end racial injustice. We had become activists, mobilizing our communities and reaching across the artificial boundaries created by apartheid.

Quakers believe we should let our work speak for us. These Friends, who were mostly white, connected their spiritual lives with political action, their connection to

humanity and the God in all people, with their opposition to violence in the form of racist policy and militarized defence.

They recognized that for them to be free, they needed to give up white privilege and join the struggle for a non-racial, democratic and equal society. All these actions connected with the African Values at the heart of my upbringing.

You will find the whole text of the lecture at:

[Video and Text: Salter Lecture 2021: Quaker values in South Africa's Struggle](https://quakersocialists.org.uk/2021/06/20/salter-lecture-2021-quaker-values-in-south-africa...)

quakersocialists.org.uk/2021/06/20/salter-lecture-2021-quaker-values-in-south-africa...

Quaker Socialist Society annual Salter Lecture is named after pioneering Quaker Socialists Ada and Alfred **Salter**, and takes place as part of the programme of Britain Yearly Meeting.

<https://quakersocialists.org.uk/salter-lectures>



Forgiveness

Does it make you nauseous when women say they forgive the perpetrator? How can they forgive? To forgive and forget and to move on frequently means to bury the pain and hurt. What happens when it festers beneath? How can we forgive when the injustice is unanswered? What does healing need? The truth and reconciliation system in South Africa sets a standard and elucidates a process. 'Reconciliation rests on accountability'.

When is apology not enough? Valarie Kaur explains the process in 4 stages: recognition of the wrong; imagining the pain of the victim; admitting the wrong; working for reparation.

He was willing to wonder about himself, his psyche, family, and conditioning, and to investigate the reasons he committed harm; he was willing to wonder about me and imagine how I felt when he hurt me and all the suffering that followed; he admitted what he had done. . . and took full responsibility for his actions, regardless of his intent; he did the work of reparation.

Her most intriguing insight was that after forgiveness of the perpetrator, the victim's ownership of her own forgiveness.

Impact of Climate Change on Women of Sundarbans or 'Beautiful Forest'

I believe meeting Saira was not a coincidence but may be Divine plan. What attracted me most was Saira's dark expressive twinkling eyes, smile on her face and beautiful colourful patch work quilt which she displayed hung on a tree in the footpath for sale. Saira is a homeless who migrated from Sundarbans and lived on the footpath just opposite Sudder Street Church in Kolkata City, in India, where I sometimes went to preached on Sundays. Saira's story transformed me into a climate justice activist.

Sundarbans

Saira shared with me that she is a '**Tiger Widow**' from Sundarbans. 'Sundarbans' in Bengali means 'Beautiful Forest'. Sundarbans is the world's biggest delta at 10,000 sq km (6,213 sq miles). It is situated in India's eastern coastline and western Bangladesh, opening into the Bay of Bengal. It has world's largest tidal mangrove forest. Crisscrossed by rivers Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna. It has 102 islands out of which 54 are inhabited so is home to nearly 4.5 million people on the Indian side. The majority of people in this region are subsistence farmers, dependent on fishing, paddy and betel leaf cultivation, and honey collection.

Climate Change & Sundarbans

Due to climate change the Sundarbans is facing severe challenges. With rising sea levels and frequent mega cyclones many islands are disappearing. The increasing salinity in the water and soil has severely threatened the health of mangrove forests as well as the quality of soil and crops. Women in this region are engaged in farming and fishing as their means of livelihood. Gender discrimination is common throughout the region. Though women contribute to the economy of Sundarbans in agriculture and fishing, they are not recognized as farmers or fisherwomen. More than 50% of fisherwomen or women involved in drying fish in Sundarbans belong to families living in abject poverty and from indigenous and other vulnerable castes. Farming as an occupation is failing due to salinity of the soil so the people of Sundarbans have to depend more on fishing, crab collection and honey collection from the forest which exposes them to conflicts with tigers, crocodiles and sharks. Women are forced to go crab hunting when paddy crops fail but reduction in catch has pushed people to venture into the restricted areas of Sundarbans where the threat is higher.

Tiger Widows

Thousands of women every year have become widows as husbands are killed by Royal Bengal Tigers or crocodiles. These widows are called 'Tiger Widow of Sundarbans'. Saira is a 'Tiger Widow' whose husband was killed by a tiger when he

went to collect honey, then she was abandoned by her relatives. Out of sheer poverty she came to Kolkata City with a few other villagers to look for a job. Unable to find a proper job she settled on the footpath in Kolkata and initially she became a beggar for survival. “I hate begging and one day when I was praying I realized I have a talent, I know how to make quilts with rags and old saris” stated Saira. She started collecting small pieces of left over fabrics discarded by tailors in New Market area in Kolkata and started making beautiful quilts and patch work table cloths which she sold to earn her living. Saira teaches some other homeless women who live on the footpath to make quilts. Saira’s life story not only empowered me to understand the impact of climate change on women but also its nexus with increasing violence on women in Sundarbans.



I had the opportunity to invite Saira as a resource person to a workshop on ‘International World Peace Day’ organized by the Women’s Fellowship of my Diocese. The reason why I invited her was to create awareness and intrigue church leaders to understand the urgency for proactive ministry in the church to engage in creating awareness, advocacy and the need of policy implementation to promote climate justice and support displaced women like Saira.

Plight of Women in Sundarbans:

Women like Saira in the Sundarbans have to work harder to secure food and livelihood. They bear the disproportionate burden because of the impact of natural disasters induced by climate change. Climate change has resulted in frequent devastating cyclones like Aila, Fani, Amphan, Nargis etc in the Bay of Bengal region affecting the delta. In the wake of the destruction wreaked by cyclones, the male population is migrating to cities to work as laborers, leaving a majority of the women alone to shoulder the entire burden of running the household and deal with the disastrous effects of the cyclone.

Climate Change & Increase of Human Trafficking & Child Marriage in Sundarbans

Climate change in Sundarbans has increased human trafficking & girl child marriage. The younger generation of women & girls who are migrating to Kolkata or urban areas to seek jobs as domestic helpers and caregivers are falling into booby traps of agents or human traffickers and are sold into prostitution or as bonded laborers. Environmental stresses and disasters due to climate change disrupt livelihood security and can contribute to economic hardships which have the worst impact on women and children. In 2020, Amphan cyclone hit West Bengal state, and the Sundarbans region was worst affected and devastated. “Most of the Sundari trees of

the mangrove were uprooted by the cyclone Amphan, which is the habitat for the crabs,” shared Basanti a migrant worker who was forced to migrate a few years back to Kolkata city and now works as domestic helper in my home. *“Saline sea water has entered our lands so we cannot grow crops. We have lost our house and belongings; there is no drinking water my grand children and children in our villages are thirsty, hungry and suffering from water borne diseases ... In this pandemic where shall we go... What will we eat ... Oh what shall we do...”* cried Basanti.

Food Speaks Herstory of Love & Hope Network:

During the Covid 19 Pandemic, South Asian women ecumenical and women church leaders have started networking to support one another as gender based violence has become another pandemic in South Asia. A Facebook Group known as **‘Food Speaks Herstory of Love and Hope’** has been created to create awareness about various gender justice issues in south Asia during this pandemic. The aim of this networking & a facebook group was to share women’s stories to amplify their voices, share resources and pray together, and reflect it in action. When prayer requests & photographs of devastation caused by climate change & the Amphan cyclone were shared in this group the **‘International Committee of Fellowship of Least Coin Prayer (ICFLC) Movement’** immediately responded and wanted to send some grants for immediate relief work. This networking helped ICFLC Executive Director Liza Lamis to connect with ‘Churches Auxiliary for Social Action’ (CASA) engaged in relief work in some villages in Sundarbans. CASA is also engaged in planting ‘Sundari trees’ which facilitates in creating the habitat for crabs and many other fish in order to protect the livelihood of people. Young women leaders from the Student Christian Movement, under the leadership of Jessica Borgoary also went to Sundarbans, even during this pandemic, to provide immediate relief to prevent hunger and starvation



By : **Revd Moumita Biswas** an ordained Minister of ‘Church of North India’. Executive Committee Member of ‘World Day of Prayer International Committee’ and ‘Steering Group Member of International Anglican Women’s Network’. She accompanies women of gender based violence, such as human trafficking and domestic violence, in the journey of healing. *Photo of Moumita, centre left and Saira, centre right, with Saira and two church members.*

We are the Amazon

The Association of Indigenous Women of the Upper Rio Negro is a 30 year old organisation in the city of Manaus, in which associates are mostly indigenous women from ten different ethnicities. Manaus is the capital of the State of Amazonas that lies in the centre of the Amazon forest. Isabel from the Kuewano people manages the organisation and she told me that the first associates were women who in the 1970s and 1980s were brought to the city from indigenous communities to work in family homes many by military personnel and missionaries.



In the late 1960s the military government, with the objective of occupying the less populated regions of the country, created an industrial pole in Manaus and declared it a free zone. This attracted a large number of migrants from the interior of the state and from other Brazilian states who went seeking for work opportunities. This also attracted the missionaries to the region.

Nowadays those women and others are artisans, their income comes from selling jewellery, baskets and other handcrafts. They also grow vegetables in small gardens to support their livelihood. The raw material like seeds and fibres comes from indigenous communities in the forest, which are changing their ways of working to better preserve the forest. Indigenous people were always the guardians of the forest but with the increase of the deforestation, for example, for some purposes instead of taking the whole tree down they use only branches.

The same way the women then and today are exploited with no regards to their culture, their relationships, their spirituality, the mother earth has been exploited. In the Amazon region we can see, not always visible at ground level, but certainly from above, signs of deterioration, destruction, devastation, dispossession of the forest,



mainly through the agribusiness, the mining and the timber exploitation putting in danger the life of indigenous, quilombolas (they are the descendants and remnants of communities formed by runaway enslaved) and other local communities.

According to official data from the National Institute for Space Research (Inpe), by 2020, 700,000 Km² has been already deforested, the equivalent of 23 Belgiums or 17 Netherlands. The Amazon has been subjected to increasing environmental pressures in recent decades, both direct pressures arising from deforestation and forest fires, as well as pressures resulting

from global warming. Despite all that, the legal and illegal advances in the forest continues. The stimulus of consumerism, and the greed of the industrial and financial sectors, puts pressure to exploit the wealth, producing soil impoverishment and loss of biodiversity and also contributes to global warming. This is the global warming circle. There is no distinction of gender, race or religion, we and all living beings are suffering the effects of global warming, but also we are contributing to it.

We need to ask ourselves how and how much we are contributing to global warming individually or collectively. Do we see the world as a gift from God to selfishly enjoy or do we see that God created us as part of this world and in relationship with every living being?

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time”(Roman 8,22). Are we able to listen to their call? How do we live a life with respect to the environment? Can we support means for fair trade and conscientious consumption?

A lesson I learned from Isabel is that for those women it is not only the profit with their work that matters, they seek to create an economy that is aware of the needs of others and be in solidarity with others.

Are we able to dialogue with our indigenous sisters, quilombolas sisters, and all women in the world regardless of their religious background? How can we be in solidarity with other women especially the ones that are being exploited?

^{Mark 21} Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²² At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. ²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” (Mark 10, 21-23)

The accumulation and concentration of wealth produces poverty and inequality and Jesus is calling for radical action. In the Amazon and in all around the world there is a need for a radical change aiming at social, economic and climate justice. Each one of us is capable to make changes in our household and together we can make changes in our church, in the neighbourhood, in our city, we can call our public and private leaders accountable and we can bit by bit change the world because we are God’s people.

Christina Takatsu Winnischofer

World Day of Prayer Brazil

Amazon deforestation in Brazil alone has increased by 57% this year, 2021, and UK high street banks are fanning the flames by financing deforestation for soy plantations.

The Taliban Swore To Kill An Afghan Doctor For Giving Birth Control To A Child Bride



With the current humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, several questions arise. The first may well be the rejection of Western society's culture of democracy and an economic system based on profit and accumulation of wealth that has led to the exploitation of earth's resources and the creation of vast pollution including the imbalance of carbon in the atmosphere. Such a system leads to a hierarchy of have and have nots, some starving, some with excess. There have been several revolutions to address this imbalance whilst one alternative system, Marxism, is greatly feared by many. One of the keys to understanding how this has got out of hand is usury which can be described in modern parlance as interest for investment. This theme is so ingrained in our western society that it is difficult to understand that it is condemned by the Old Testament and by Islam.

What would a future world imbued by Islamic principles look like? What is economic growth? Something worthwhile analyzing!

The other great contention that has come out of the recent upheaval regards the position of women. We tend to forget that the equality of women is a recent position in Western society.

What does the Koran say about women. Very little but here it is, from a modern English translation by Dr S.M.Bleher:

2.221 Do not marry idolatresses till they believe . . . give not your daughters in marriage to idolators till they believe

2.222 . . . concerning menstruation Say: It is an illness, so let women alone at such times and do not go into them until they are cleansed.

4.15 As for those of your women who are guilty of lewdness, call to witness four of you against them. And if they testify (to the truth of the allegation) then confine them to the houses until death take them or (until) Allah appoint for them a way (through new legislation).

4.16 And as for the two of you who are guilty of it, punish them both. And if they repent and improve, then let them be, Allah is ever relenting, Merciful.

4.34 Men are in charge of women because Allah has made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend their property (for the support of women). So good women are obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah has guarded. As for those from whom you fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and chastise them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them.

24.31 And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their chests, and not to reveal their adornment except to their own husbands or fathers, or husbands' fathers, or their sons or their husbands' sons, or their brothers or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves, or their male attendants who lack vigour, or children who know nothing of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment.

Surah 65.1,2; 65.6; 66.5 deal with divorce

Now in my 70s, I only just escaped the need for my father to act as guarantor for my house mortgage and the HP on my car! It has been a long battle in the 'West' that is still going on in some quarters. Now here we are expecting the same rights of equality to be extended to women in Afghanistan, to allow girls to go to school, to be able to work as teachers, doctors, etc, to be able to go out of the home without being accompanied by a male relative, to dress as we choose.

They say the position of women is based on Sharia law. Islam is divided into roughly two types, the Sunni and the more fundamentalist Shi-ite. Originally this was a disagreement as to who would succeed the prophet Mohammed.

What is the reality of this in Afghanistan? Ayda Pourasad a researcher for National Public Radio spoke of a female doctor in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif who received a call that made her drop everything and flee. She had given a birth control shot to a 13-year-old girl who it turned out was the second wife of a man

who was a member of the Taliban. This man had been threatening her from afar for months but as his unit moved closer to the city he could reach her physically. Yet with her medical training the situation was clear: *"She is a child. It's risky for any child to get pregnant. And this girl was also physically very weak. What's more, the girl did not want to get pregnant". "She begged me for help."* ‘

Then when the husband called saying he and his men were at the point of conquering the city, she decided to flee. She did not even go home for a change of clothes. Once on the flight, she was shocked to see it was almost entirely filled with other women traveling alone, a rare sight in Afghanistan.

Although she has nothing now, and mourns the loss of everything she has left behind, returning is not an option. She has heard from relatives in Afghanistan that the girl's husband is still calling, demanding to know her whereabouts.

And even if she could relocate to a different part of Afghanistan, she says, it would be impossible to practice medicine.

Whilst Taliban leaders have promised to moderate the harsh restrictions that they imposed the last time they ruled Afghanistan, this time, they say, they'll allow women to be involved in government and work in sectors such as health care. But women on the ground say the reality is more complicated. What is the position for Afghan women? What might happened next?

A Brown Woman in USA.

The information here is taken from Valerie Kaur's book, See no stranger, Aster 2020.

What does racial prejudice look like?

'Another day at recess, I was sitting in the bathroom stall at school when I heard the words "Let's break down the door!" I froze. A group of girls who were white started to beat my door down. *Thud. Thud, THUD.* The door swung open, and my body came into view – small, brown, skinny, hair in two long braids, , sitting on the toilet, clutching my dress, underwear at knees, wide-eyed and terrified. They looked at me for a long time and walked away. Power was their's to exercise, and the choice to abandon the mission was a sign of absolute power. My face was flushed so I rushed out of the bathroom, but I did not say a word. I was not angry at the girls. They had seen my nakedness and smallness and brownness, and that made me ashamed.'

Valerie is a Sikh, third generation born into an extended family farming land in Clovis, California. Her Papa Ji taught her to see no stranger. *'You are a part of me I do not yet know'*. She became gradually aware of her brownness so that, for her college project she set out to interview other brown people, Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, and Arabs who were victimised after 9/11. That victimisation was ill-reported. All were often classed as Muslim and terrorist! Later she would make her interviews into a film. What makes her work different is her attempt to understand the white supremacy and her discovery of revolutionary love. As a Sikh she was brought up to be a warrior, not to turn away in surrender. In very moving language she explores fear and pain.

' . . . I felt different in my body. The journey into the whirlwind, listening to all those stories, had expanded my sense of self. It was as if all those stories lived inside me now. I could access them as if they were memories or dreams. I felt their pain but also their wisdom. They were lessons in resilience, the human capacity to overcome unimaginable loss and go on.'

It was not an easy journey. *'When you love someone, you fight to protect them when they are in harm's way. If you "see no stranger" and choose to love all people, then you must fight for anyone who is suffering from the harm of injustice. This was the path of the warrior-sage: the warrior fights, the sage loves.'* Revolutionary love. She studied divinity. She trained as a lawyer to be an observer at demonstrations. Arrested and in jail after one such action she contemplated the following:

'When I tore up these men with my fangs, I was not destroying them. My mind had turned them into monsters – bad guys with infinite power over me. But there is no such things as monsters in this world. There are only human beings who are wounded. These men had hurt me out of their own suffering. It was common, it was banal. When we cannot see that evil is driven by a person's wounds, not their innate

nature, we become terrified of each other. But the moment we see their wounds, they no longer have absolute power over us. I could not see the wound in them until I tended to the wound inside me. And that required me to access my rage.' She had been brutally treated by police.

As a legal observer from Harvard, she went to Guantánamo Bay where she was severely challenged in her thinking. One of her key thoughts is: *'we need to support reforms, but we could reform endlessly and still not get the world we wanted. It was time to imagine more boldly and bravely than ever before.'* And *'This is our moment to declare what is obsolete, what can be reformed and what must be re-imagined.'* It was such thoughts that enabled her to redefine her rage as a tool of revolutionary love. IMAGINE THE WORLD WE WANT.

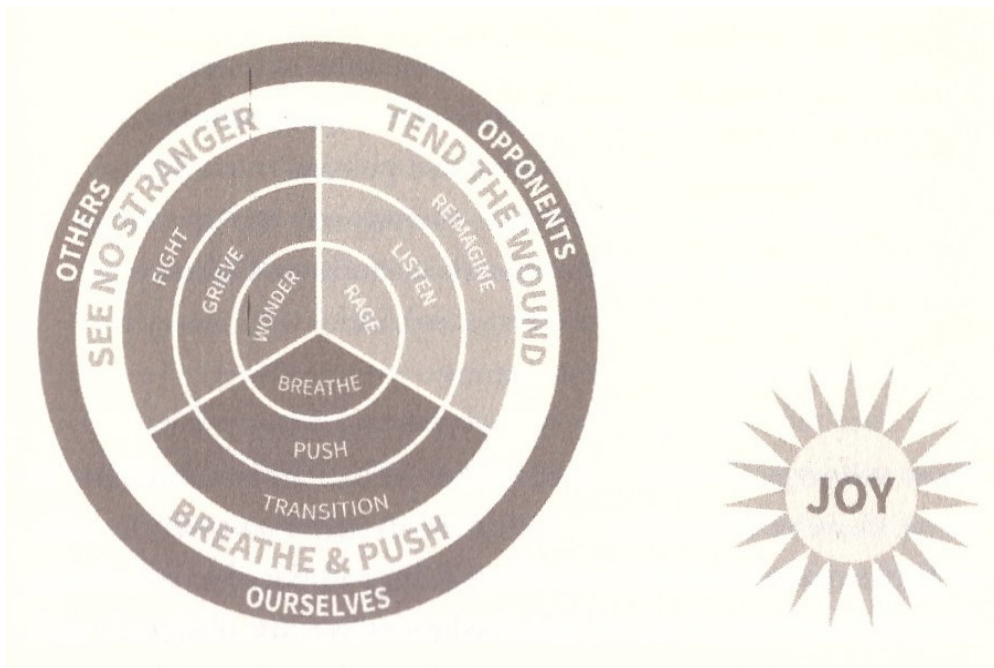
At the Old Creek gurdwara, the killing of six Sikhs was so ill-reported as not to feature although comparable as a hate crime to the Birmingham church bombing that killed four little girls. Sikhs were *invisible victims* of hate crime as few in America knew who they were. The turbaned heads made them visible so drew much of the victimisation after 9/11 as they were the same colour as many Muslims. She set out to explain their peace loving ways, but . . . it took its toll on her physical and mental health.

'The frenzy of our activism neutralises our work for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful' – Thomas Merton

The journey inward is painful but she used the metaphor of giving birth: *'when I was finally ready to love myself, I had to learn to breathe and push through my grief, rage and trauma. On the other side, I found what seemed utterly impossible before: healing, forgiveness. And even reconciliation.'* Her breakthrough is learning to love herself:

'Loving ourselves is a feminine intervention: it is choosing to care for our own bodies and lives as a priority. In all of our various labours – making a life, raising a family, or building a movement – we can care for ourselves by remembering the wisdom of the midwife: breathe and push. We can breathe to draw energy into our bodies and let joy in. We can push through fear and pain to become our best selves, including through healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. And in the most convulsive moments of our lives, we can summon our deepest wisdom and find the bravery to transition, undertaking the fiery and life-giving labour of moving from one reality into another. Labouring in love is how we birth the world to come.'

So she created a diagram to demonstrate the process, finding words to connect to the feelings.



She envisaged revolutionary love as a compass. *‘Point the compass at whoever you want to practice loving . . .the name of the practice is the outermost ring; the actions for that practice are within it.’* With this she gives us a tool with which to tackle the places in our life that do not flow but cause us pain. Her metaphor of giving birth is a woman’s approach to creating the world we want to see. Once the baby is born, it is joy we experience. Her vision is to imagine the world we want.

Her Definitions

‘Love is a form of sweet labour: fierce, bloody, imperfect and life-giving – a choice we make over and over again. Love can be taught, modelled and practised. It engages all our emotions: Joy is the gift of love. Grief is the price of love. Anger protects that which is loved. And when we think we have reached our limit, wonder is the act that returns us to love.’

‘ “Revolutionary love” is the choice to enter into labour for others, for opponents, and for ourselves in order to transform the world around us. It is not a formal code or prescription but an orientation to life that is personal and political, rooted in joy. Loving only ourselves is escapism; loving only our opponents is self-loathing; loving only others is ineffective. All three practices together make love revolutionary, and revolutionary love can only be practiced in community.’

WE have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community. Dorothy Day.

Reclaiming Women's Voices

Margery Allan Bray

I was born Margery Allan into a family of traditional musicians and singers who hail from the Highland village of Ballater on Upper Deeside. My paternal grandfather, a ghillie who saw active service in the First World War as a Lovat Scout.

He carried his music, fiddle under his arm, with him throughout the duration of the war, in the battlefields of Gallipoli, Egypt and France.

Scottish songs, tunes and stories came to me with the breast milk. My mother, a poet author and singer, sang to me every day, in the womb and on the breast and I am forever grateful for the gift of her transmission of our oral tradition to me as it has sustained my life ever since.

When I was about 4 years old, I was a victim of an incident of sexual violence, which took place outside of my family, perpetrated by two adolescent boys . In retrospect, this experience and the many personal physical and emotional challenges it brought, was to change the course of my life .

Life took me into an international career in pioneering approaches to childhood trauma. My professional practice developed the use of play in assessment and healing .I taught extensively on the subject , wrote books, made TV documentaries, and was called as an expert witness in many children's lives.

I found myself highly attuned to the sounds emotionally devastated children were making in the playroom and could hear how a discernible harmonization process took place as they began to heal. Sound and vibration appeared central to the process of healing.

The Republic of Georgia is commonly regarded as the 'Cradle of Harmony ' and its polyphonic harmonies are seen by UNESCO as a "Masterpiece of the intangible heritage of humanity." Ancient traditional harmony songs are used to heal sick children. Wishing to explore harmonization more deeply, I went to live and travel extensively in the High Caucasus Georgian mountains, learning repertoire from traditional songmasters and mistresses, often seen as spiritual teachers, and helping them to disseminate the music with authenticity.

During that period of my life, I experienced "ZARI " - indigenous musical funeral rites, designed both to celebrate the dead, enable the uncried tears, and assist the process of soul transition. Funeral ritual chants are indigenous to many traditional cultures and are an intrinsic part of trauma resolution in the human landscape, serving to enable societies to process grief in a way that mitigates stored

intergenerational distress , thus maintaining balance and stability not only within our lives as men and women but also in our relationship with Nature.

Returning home, pledged to explore the richness of our own ancient indigenous Scottish songlines, I began to research keening funeral traditions, still just about within living memory in the remotest corners of Scotland. The sacred traditional women's role of keening and grief tending had, it seemed, over centuries, been displaced, even perhaps usurped, via patriarchal influences through the bagpipes into what it has become today - epitomized by the iconic masculine " kilted piper on the battlements " pibroch lament - essentially, I would suggest, a noble part of a broken whole which, devoid of the feminine , contains only half the picture.

Unravelling the knots in this ancient songline tapestry, and helping to restore the musical tension of opposites, in order to promote human harmony and balance is where my life has now taken me. In this endeavor, I am indebted to my friend Allan Macdonald, virtuoso scholar and piper who so graciously taught me from the richness of his own life's work.

One of the critical challenges of our generation is in acknowledging and helping to heal the wounded masculine which drives our collective oblivion and which sews the seeds of our destruction in relation to Mother Earth.

I have learned that rhythm heals the physical, melody the emotions, harmony stills the soul and silence allows transcendence. And in its wholeness, music is a quintessential container for all that is.

As a woman I have been invited to share some of these journeyings, through song, and story. Allan will join me on the bagpipes and voice. We work together.

AT OUR CONFERENCE ON 3RD NOVEMBER 2021, MARGERY WILL LEAD US IN A CREATIVE AFTERNOON EXPLORING HER THEME.



Anthem for the Earth

Gloaming time noo, An the still earth is sleepin ,
Sweet the dreams, Dream Angus is keeping
“Neath the moon- Far the wee seeds are breathin ‘
An the bairns are a ‘Haud frae greetin”
In the cauld earth where ancestors are lyin ‘
Lochan pools, full o tears fowk were cryin ‘
There’s a web that the faeries were weavin’
Life awaits ‘an a tune thread is stirrin’
Far the tunes bide-sounds o birdies startin ‘singin,
Frae the inside o’ the rocks and the corries,
Cam the sounds kind-where the gorse meets the heather,
Far the bees hide the geither- cam’s the tune.
It’s a heart tune fur a bairnie in a manger,
Fireside hearth tune, far a hand ‘ greets the stranger,
It’s a wild tune for a Nature that’s dyin’
Tumblin’ fae the Pipe Chanter-
Searin ‘ doon! – cries the scream . !

Its dusk and the still earth is sleeping; Sweet the dreams Dream Angus
is keeping, beneath the moon where little seeds are breathing and the
children have quietened down from crying.

In the cold earth were ancestors are lying, small loch pools, of the tears
people were crying , there’s a web that the faeries were weaving , life
awaits and a tune thread is stirring.

Where the tunes live, sounds of little birds beginning to sing, from the
inside of the rocks and the corries, come the sounds kind, where the
gorse meets the heather where the bees hide together – comes the tune.

It’s a heart tune for a child in a manger, fireside hearth tune, where a
hand greets the stranger, it’s a wild tune, for a Nature that’s dying ,
tumbling from the pipe chanter, searing down – cries the scream !

Part Three

Universal Declaration of Human Right from the Preamble: the peoples of the United Nations have in the charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom

What is the Reality of Domestic Violence Kate Arnot

Violence against woman is worldwide. It is in every community, within every grouping within every society. It is a consequence of attitudes, expectations and laws which accept and re-inforce that women are inferior to men and that women's role is to be obedient and supportive of men. Women's lives are more limited, our opportunities more restricted and women's work is seen as less important than men's work.

Violence against women takes many forms and is amazingly adaptable. It is based on power and control, coercive control. It has been known of for millenia but only since the 1970s have women, in large numbers, in some countries been able to speak out and describe their lived experiences. In almost all countries in the world there are now organisations seeking to prevent and end violence against women. This has been enabled by men in positions of power who have provided funding to ensure such groups can function and provide support, legal information and, sometimes, accommodation to women seeking to flee and escape from abuse and violence. And to ensure such services are suited to the diversity of women in every grouping in society. But women also fundraise and many people donate generously because this experience is so wide spread. It is estimated that 1 in 3 women will experience some form of violence in their life time and that can be seen in the outpouring of support and women telling of their own experiences e.g. in the #MeToo Movement and the support for Reclaim the Night Marches.

The United Nations at a global level has responded to the voices of many women and some men by seeking to eliminate violence against women by recognising that this is a denial of their human rights. The UN also sponsors the worldwide 16 Days of Action to end Violence Against Women, which takes place every year in a growing number of countries, from 25th November to 10th December.

Violence against women has huge costs for individual women, their children and families and communities. For governments, also, both local and national, there are huge costs as the impact of such violence, although very often hidden and unreported, results in significant use of state provided services:

- Health: physical, mental health, reproductive services, dentistry
- Criminal and civil justice systems, including religious courts

- Where there is a welfare benefits system, substantial payments to support women and children who have separated from the abuser or who have had to stop paid work because of injury or mental health issues
- There is the possibility of state intervention when a woman flees abuse to prioritise the rights of the father over the rights of the mother and to ensure the child lives with the father. Until recently fear of losing their children was a significant barrier to women leaving.
- There are significant effects of women's ability to obtain and sustain paid employment. Trade Unions are now at a global level recognising this as an issue and are seeking to provide support. Employers also can be sympathetic and flexible if a woman feels able to say what has happened or is happening in her life.

Since women's work is undervalued as it is work generally done by women, women are poorer and often in less secure employment. Significant numbers of women are self employed, often with precarious income. They have much less access to capital, or inherited wealth. For these and other reasons, climate change is likely to impact much more severely on women. We know that one of the effects of the COVID19 pandemic is that women living with domestic abuse were experiencing more severe control, less ability to seek external help and support and much more difficulty in leaving. Safe accommodation, refuge and local authority, was difficult to access, services were not face to face but phone only, and more limited opening times. Other services, e.g. access to benefits, medical care, police, lawyers, were similarly restricted. Women's ability to seek medical care was limited by the constant presence of the abuser.

This is the [WHO commentary on violence against women](#). The statistics are stark:

Violence against women – particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence – is a major public health problem and a violation of women's human rights.

Estimates published by WHO indicate that globally about 1 in 3 (30%) of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Most of this violence is intimate partner violence.

Worldwide, almost one third (27%) of women aged 15-49 years who have been in a relationship report that they have been subjected to some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.

Violence can negatively affect women's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health, and may increase the risk of acquiring HIV in some settings.

In Scotland, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) issued the following statistics on charges of domestic abuse and stated a 9% increase over five years from 2015/16.

2020/2021	33,425	with 3,300 during June and July – lockdown started 29 th May
2019/2020	30,718	

Myths about rape

MYTH: *Women are raped because of how they behave or dress.*

Rape happens because men choose to rape. Men who rape make excuses about how you behave or however you are dressed which such men make to excuse their crime and to shift blame away from themselves onto the woman. There are no excuses for rape and sexual abuse; it is always the choice of the abuser.

MYTH: *Rape is most often perpetrated by strangers.*

Unfortunately, you are more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted by someone you know, someone you are close to and rape and sexual assault can take place anywhere. After years of campaigning, rape by your husband/partner is now a crime, after centuries of it not being a crime.

MYTH: *Women who don't scream or fight or aren't injured, aren't raped.*

This is a male view of how men react to violence with violence or by running away. Fight or flee. But many women freeze and seek to prevent further physical violence as well as the sexual violence by freezing.

MYTH: *Rape only happens to young attractive women.*

Women of every age including girl children and babies are raped. Rape is used as a weapon of war. Rape happens in every culture and has an extremely long dishonourable history. Rape and sexual assault are about power and control over women. Rape is the weapon.

MYTH: *Men cannot control themselves, a loss of control.*

See above. This goes against prevailing norms which assume that men are logical, plan and aren't swayed by their emotions. Again, blaming the woman for their criminal behaviour and seeking to minimise their actions.

Are Modern Medicines Suitable for Women?

Large gender gaps in research limit how much we know about the difference between women's health and men's. *Much of the information below is thanks to an article in the Guardian.*

Women tend to be excluded from medical research because they have a hormone cycle that causes changes throughout the month and even throughout their life – menarche, menopause and pregnancy. Thus any results may vary depending on where she is in her cycle. And/or, sometimes women do not know they are pregnant. As far as medical research goes these are too many variables.

Also, where women still do most of the cleaning in the home, they are using chemicals that might have adverse effects. This is an interesting subject in itself.

An example:

Two recent studies on cholesterol-reducing drugs included women but there was no information published about how the women did on the drug as opposed to the men. This is important because women have different side effects – because of the role of oestrogen, women's fat metabolism differs from that of men - so whilst it might be a good drug for women, we don't know. Fat is also used by the body to store some toxic materials.

Amy Westervelt writing in the Guardian ([@amywestervelt](#) Thu 30 Apr 2015 20.32 BST) states:

'According to the Institute of Medicine, [every cell in our bodies has a sex](#), which means men and women are different at a cellular level. That also means that diseases, treatments, and chemicals might affect the sexes differently. And yet there's a long and storied tradition of ignoring gender when it comes to health research.

'For [several reasons](#), female subjects have [historically been excluded](#) from toxicology or biomedical research, says Tamarra James-Todd, an epidemiologist at Harvard Medical School. While progress has been made since 1993, when the National Institutes of Health mandated that women and minorities be included in any government-funded health research, there's still a long way to go.'

She adds, 'In a 2014 report, researchers at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston chronicled the exclusion of women from health research and its impact on women's health:

The science that informs medicine – including the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disease – routinely fails to consider the crucial impact of sex and gender. This happens in the earliest stages of research, when females are excluded from animal and human studies or the sex of the animals isn't stated in the published results. Once clinical trials begin, researchers frequently do not enroll

adequate numbers of women or, when they do, fail to analyze or report data separately by sex. This hampers our ability to identify important differences that could benefit the health of all.

In her paper on the use of anti-biotics, Christine Sloan writes:

‘Analysis demonstrated that women were 27% more likely than men to receive antibiotic prescriptions in their lifetime. Demographic data demonstrated that this gap increased with age in the younger and middle age brackets: 36% higher in women 16- 34, 40% higher in women 35-54. However; the gender difference was negligible in those above 55 years and above. Macrolides and cephalosporins were the most prescribed medicines.’

As she goes on to tackle the reasons, she speaks of different attitudes to female health and some deeply entrenched stereotypes:

‘A recent BBC Future investigation, showed that women are more likely to have ailments written off as psychological; often leading to misdiagnosis. The common historical assumption is that women are more emotional, have a lower pain threshold and are quicker to complain about medical ailments. This narrative has been encouraged by gender norms even going as far back as Aristotle who mooted the distinction between the superior male and the inferior “leaky female” (presumably in reference to menstruation). Indeed, the Victorian’s solution to the anxious woman was marriage and the 1950’s saw the advent of the prescribed cigarette via the friendly General Practitioner.’

Do these stereotypes still exist today?

DRM Smith et al (2018) states ‘Women consult vastly more than men but do not present with more severe or frequent infection than men, it is therefore plausible that a higher rate of consultation in women, a milder, average clinical presentation and an overly precautionous GP will prescribe even when antibiotics are not clinically necessary’. *And of course more women go to see the doctor because of pregnancy!*

Back to the Guardian article:

How the research gap plays out in real life

Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of US women, and it affects men and women differently at every level, including symptoms, risk factors and outcomes. But only one third of cardiovascular clinical trial subjects are female and only 31% of cardiovascular clinical trials that include women report results by sex, according to the report.

Major endocrine changes throughout a woman’s life, including puberty, pregnancy, and menopause, have been directly linked to increased risk for depression. [Women](#) also metabolize drugs differently than men. Yet fewer than 45% of animal studies on anxiety and depression use female lab animals.

Two thirds of the 5.1 million people currently suffering from Alzheimer’s are women, and an American woman’s overall lifetime risk of developing Alzheimer’s is

almost twice that of a man. The prevailing thinking in the field is that this is simply because women live longer. But Alzheimer’s researchers have just begun looking past the assumption, and early discoveries indicate that the impact of hormonal changes at menopause and sex differences in gene expression may be involved as well.

Finally, lung cancer, which kills more women every year than breast, ovarian, and uterine cancers combined, is strikingly prevalent in young, non-smoking females, and researchers have found that sex hormones, particularly oestrogen, influence lung cancer development and mortality. The inclusion of more women in clinical trials has resulted in evidence that some lung cancer treatments work better for women than men.

However while more women are participating in lung cancer clinical trials than before, they remain less likely to enrol in trials than men, a fact that holds particularly true for minority women. Even when studies do include women, they often fail to stratify data by sex or include information about hormone status or any other gender-specific factors.

One of the report’s authors, Dr Paula Johnson, executive director of the Mary Horrigan Connors Center for Women’s Health and Gender Biology at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston, says these are only a few of the gaps, with the same trends playing out across the spectrum of health research.

“We’re in the thick of sex and gender difference research from a basic level all the way to applying that research, in terms of translating clinical findings into care models and how we measure outcomes,” she says. “What we’re really missing is the fact that this is an approach and a lens through which it’s critical to not only do science writ large but also one through which we need to look at drug research, toxicology research, and so forth. It’s a critically important lens.”

Some researchers don’t want to acknowledge differences between men and women, James-Todd says.

“It’s taboo in some circles to suggest that we’re genetically different from each other, and yet we are,” she says. “Sex is a biological construct. There are sex differences between men and women, and how those differences manifest and what happens, from a genetic level to how the body operates, is different.”

Why is it more women than men suffer from Rheumatoid Arthritis, Crohn’s Disease, ME, and long COVID?



We Need More Doulas. Mary Kennedy

Doulas are an old phenomena in a modern age (in Western culture). In a world where pregnancy and childbirth have been increasingly medicalised, the modern trend is for women to write a birth plan which gives their midwives and doctors an indication of how they want to give birth. and the choices they want to make should the need arise. In the West it has become more common for the woman's partner to attend the birth but perhaps the most important person, other than the midwife, is the doula. She is the experienced friend who will advocate for the woman when she is in the vulnerable situation of labour. Traditionally doulas are women who have given birth themselves but modern doulas, like modern midwives, may not have had given birth themselves.

I am one of the Amma mentors working closely with our doulas to ensure that they are supported in the work they do. Their work is complex and demanding. Our doulas are all volunteers, many have demanding careers and families of their own to care for. I have great respect for them and the work they do.

Amma is a charity that trains Birth Companions, our name for doulas, to accompany women asylum seekers. Their training prepares them to attend antenatal visits as well as the birth. She helps each woman prepare for the arrival of her new baby in practical ways as well as emotionally. For about 50% of Amma mothers English is not their first language, so the skill of using interpreters sensitively and effectively by phone, Zoom and face to face are also part of Amma training. One of the key roles of our Mother Companions is to help the mothers understand their choices and make informed decisions during their pregnancies and births. The interpreters Amma provides to help them are available to work by phone or on Zoom or face to face. NHS have their own interpreters too and also offer access to them face to face or by phone. However at times interpreters may not be easily available, particularly late at night. At times Google Translate has been used but this is far from ideal.

Amma are now recruiting and training more mothers who have themselves been through the Asylum system, some are working as interpreters as well as their voluntary work with our charity.

During Covid our Birth Companions have been subject to many restrictions but have continued to be present at antenatal visits and births. They often bring mother and baby home from hospital and continue to support them for as long as is needed after the birth. Because of the additional stresses of Covid and our early recognition that the individualised care we can offer after birth is valuable to mothers and babies, we have set up a Mother Companion service to continue care and offer more postnatal and feeding support. This dovetails with our Birth Companions to provide continued support for mothers who are the most in need of this ongoing care. Our Birth and Mother Companions also help to link the pregnant and new mothers to community support systems, for example Food Pantries, other Community Food initiatives, parent and baby groups and libraries etc.

I have been leading Bookbug online for the mothers, their babies and children. Local parents are able to join these groups too with their babies and children. This is an initiative that prior to Covid was mostly based in Libraries. The idea is to support parents with young babies and toddlers with early learning and to help parents learn some parenting skills mainly using nursery rhymes and storytelling. Now we have moved outside to meet in parks, mothers, babies and pregnant women have fun together and share their own songs and stories, chat, and now even dance together!

Amma set up a Peer Support group online for our English speaking mothers and babies at the beginning of the pandemic. This has expanded to interpret for a second group. Both groups are now beginning to meet in community venues too.

Amma mothers come from areas of conflict and/or extreme poverty. They may have been raped and abused in war zones. They may have left their country of origin on a promise of work in Europe that will support their families at home. Once here, the work may be in nailbars, domestic servitude or even prostitution. Their passports may be taken, they may receive no pay or pay reduced to pay for 'expenses' involved in trafficking. They may be unable to leave the abuse situation so are virtual prisoners, or they may be thrown out when they become pregnant. Amma volunteers don't ask women about their story. This is not only out of respect for their privacy but also to establish a relationship around the coming birth, and not invoke the looming spectres of possible deportation and the 'substantive interview' by Home Office interviewer that will happen in the future for each of them. These interviews lasting several hours explore every fine detail of the asylum claim and are extremely traumatic for the women.

Some issues do affect childbirth however including FGM which may necessitate reconstructive surgery or caesarean birth. Our Birth Companion training helps us to understand how to support mothers in these situations in a trauma-informed way, to advocate for them during pregnancy, birth and in the early days with their babies.

Asylum seekers get very little financial assistance. Including a supplement for the pregnant woman or her baby, they currently receive £39.63 providing they accept the offer of accommodation made to them.

At the time I began volunteering with Amma two years ago, shortly after the charity began, most of the women were housed in flats in different parts of Glasgow. However since the housing provider Mears took over from the previous Home Office appointed housing provider many have been moved to a hostel which had been closed. deemed unsuitable for single homeless men as the rooms were below the legal standard for accommodation space. Now our mothers are in these single rooms, during the pandemic, with babies or young children. Each room has en suite shower and toilet, kitchen facilities and a single bed. There is barely space for the cot which Mears provides once the baby is born. There is very little space for personal possessions either. The windows do not open fully so the fire alarms are often triggered which means a complete evacuation of the building. The cramped design of the rooms is totally unsafe for active crawling or walking babies while cooking is happening. There is no space either for children to play.

<https://ammabirthcompanions.com>

'**Patriarchy Incarnate**' is a term I first used in the context of FGM (female genital mutilation) almost a [decade ago](#). I saw it then, and I still see it, as the literal imposition of some men's will on women's bodies. But since that time I have begun to understand how the term can also be applied to other aspects of patriarchal imposition, both physical and psychological. In the end little distinguishes soma and psyche; harm to either is harm to both, especially when the harm is inflicted knowingly by fellow human beings.

Looking back, I probably first employed the specific concept of Patriarchy incarnate on my website on 15 January 2013: [What Is Female Genital Mutilation? Why Does It Occur? What Are Its Health And Wellbeing Impacts?](#) Initially I saw this idea in the context only of FGM, but over time my understanding has extended to include a much wider range of harms inflicted by (some) men on women and girls. Indeed, it can be argued that in certain circumstances patriarchy incarnate is imposed also on other men and boys.

Why Patriarchy?

It's important to recognise that Patriarchy is not just one 'thing' The Costa Rican feminist jurist [Alda Facio Montejo](#) puts it [this way](#):

In any given Patriarchy all men will not enjoy the same privileges or have the same power. Indeed, the experience of domination of men over women historically served for some men to extend that domination over other groups of men, installing a hierarchy among men that is more or less the same in every culture or region today. The male at the top of the patriarchal hierarchy has great economic power; is an adult and almost always able-bodied; possesses a well-defined, masculine gender identity and a well-defined heterosexual identity, adding a few more features by region. For example, in Latin America, for a man to be at the top of the patriarchal hierarchy, that man has to be white and Christian, in addition to the other characteristics shared with Patriarchy's counterparts across regions.

Across Patriarchy's different models, women are exposed to different degrees and types of violence, some common to all and others specific to each cultural, religious or economic model adopted by the Patriarchy.

Patriarchy was the first structure of domination, subordination and exclusion which is recognized as such by History with a capital H (recognized patriarchal history) and still remains a basic system of domination. Ironically, while being the most powerful and enduring system of inequality, it is hardly ever perceived as such even by women themselves. In fact, precisely because the invisibilization of Patriarchy is one of its institutions, even some feminists deny its existence

Facio Montejo's final point here is important. Even today, let alone a decade ago, there is and was pushback against the proposition that FGM is underpinned by Patriarchy. 'How can that be?' I am asked, 'when FGM is very often done by women, with not a man in sight?'

The point is well made, but the reality is that FGM is performed because it indicates '**purity**' in respect of **marriage and bride price**, or it 'ensures' that a woman is **faithful to her husband**, or it (allegedly) prevents 'dangerous' levels of sexual arousal and **promiscuity**. All these claims are factually nonsense, but they are **powerful beliefs** which demonstrate the concerns men have around securing their **economic position** and their control of female members of their family or community.

FGM is also closely **associated with child, early and forced marriage** (CEFM), another way in which patriarchal systems and economics place women and girls at risk.

It is hardly surprising that many mothers in societies where marriage is in effect essential for female adult status, or even survival, are as concerned as the men about the reputational and matrimonial prospects for their daughters. If FGM is deemed critical for an acceptable bride price and a 'good' marriage, FGM will be done, and often by a female relative or a (probably paid) doula of some sort, or more recently **by a clinician** 'more safely', for a professional fee. (NB The **medicalization of FGM** is a growing, contentious and very serious threat to global eradication.)

The physical harm that FGM can inflict on a girl or woman is well recognised and has been rehearsed in detail by the **World Health Organisation** (WHO), the **United Nations Population Fund** (UNFPA) and many **others**. There can be no doubt at all that FGM has **no health benefits**. It is harmful both to general health and, also critically, to **mothers and their children**.

And the same applies to FGM and mental health. Studies show that FGM can give rise to both immediate and longer-term conditions (shock, feelings of isolation, anxiety, hyper-sensitivity, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc) [see e.g. **GWU / Milken Institute FGM Toolkit** (nd) and **Abdalla and Galea** (2019)].

Not 'just genital' mutilation

The outcomes listed above show that FGM is not the 'only' sort of harm comprising patriarchy incarnate. Harmful practices, whether 'traditional' or contemporary come in many guises and include **numerous acts and types of harm**, both physical and psychological / emotional. It includes child and early marriage, breast ironing, 'beading', domestic violence, teeth-pulling, bride kidnap, 'honour' stoning / killing, war-time rape and much else. It should also be noted that by no means all harmful

practices are ‘traditional’. Child marriage occurs in several USA states, patriarchal control of a woman’s fertility is common in many parts of the world, domestic abuse is global, and has increased everywhere during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

The United Nations defines violence against women as

“any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

[United Nations. Declaration on the elimination of violence against women. New York : UN, 1993.]

Impacts can be enduring, even life-long, affecting every aspect of the victim’s experience – for she is a ‘victim’ in the sense of in some way harmed, even if she is also a ‘survivor’ and in fact survives well by dint of commendable personal determination. The consequences of such patriarchal impositions also reach beyond the individual: they may harm lives of her children, her wider family and her community. FGM, as one example, adds to the risks to both mother and baby of childbirth, leaves children vulnerable, reduces the capacity of women to look after their families and livelihoods and is generally damaging to personal and family well-being and to community finances and economics.

Ultimately, patriarchy becomes a negative at every level of society; and in its impacts it is usually (maybe always?) also economically damaging at even national level.

Contextualising patriarchy incarnate

There is still no recognised and generally acknowledged academic / research-based discipline around FGM or related Violence Against Women and Girls. Different fields such as anthropology, medicine / health and law, and child protection etc all address these pressing issues from their own perspectives as they consider ways to reduce or halt the damage which such practices cause. At some point these approaches will need to coalesce around a paradigm, but this hasn’t happened yet, probably because most of the leading activists are involved directly in programmes in which they have considerably invested their energies and resources. Nonetheless, it is important in the context of Patriarchy that some level of theorisation is in place. Clearly this context will need to be both feminist and economic, in some combination.

Like some other feminists focused on delivering urgently required change, my own position is a combination of liberal feminism and postmodern feminism – and I

would include also some version of **political economy**; but I leave others, if they wish, to take the ensuing debates forward. As things stand, I favour **praxis**, the bringing together of whatever elements of 'fact' and understanding (both always also contestable) are required to make progress on the ground; but that concept, praxis, too is readily open to interpretation and sometimes dispute.

To summarise:

Patriarchy incarnate

is a method of imposing intimately the will of (some) men into the bodies and minds of (mostly) women and girls – but boys and men are also in various ways damaged by such acts;

can be directly controlling of sexuality (generally female sexuality, but in some interpretations also male) when it involves e.g. FGM or other VAWG (or MGM), or indirectly when the harm is inflicted economically, culturally or psychologically;

harms everyone involved, including perpetrators directly, when it gives rise in community or wider contexts to consequences such as agricultural, childcare or ecological failures, or war;

is always at base a contest around economics (resources) and/or power – often both;

is always an attack on individual autonomy, and is often employed specifically, as a conscious act, to control and reduce the autonomy of women (and of girls who will grow to be thus controlled women).

In the end, the imposition of patriarchal control is not 'only' about the control by men of women, but in its most overt, consciously or directly and individually applied modes, that control is often the specific intention or traditionally community-ordained outcome.

We may not as things stand be able to eradicate all society-led wars, but we can and must at every opportunity challenge the personally chosen, individually imposed hurt to which Patriarchy and patriarchs give rise. One step at a time, each and every action has value, as does every human being. The lives and well-being of every girl and woman absolutely do matter as much as those of boys and men.

Trafficking

Human Trafficking is happening closer than you think . It is today's slavery and arises mainly out of poverty in the source countries.

Human trafficking is a complex crime which involves adults and children being traded and exploited for personal benefit. It is an abuse of human rights which causes victims lasting physical and psychological damage.

It can involve victims being forced into the role of a servant, being sexually exploited or trapped in forced labour, with nail bars, car washes and fishing amongst the industries where potential cases in Scotland have been reported.

Because much is hidden, figures vary. A report of 2007 of the Church of Scotland Guild mentions, 'In 2003, there were around 4000 victims of trafficking working in prostitution in Britain; there are probably many more today.' The same report states: The UN estimates 700,000 are trafficked each year for sexual exploitation and this industry has a world-wide turnover of £4billion'.

The same report features a story of a girl, 12 years old, from Bangladesh who was sold into sex slavery in India. 'Every night she had to allow herself to be violated by 10 – 12 different men, sexually abusing her as they wished in many unspeakable ways'. It was six years before she could escape.

In Scotland, a campaign has been launched to make people more aware that human trafficking is happening. Its intent is to bring the extent of the hidden crime out in the open. This is TARA.

TARA – Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance (taken from their website)

This organisation works in Glasgow. Established in 2004 and funded by the Scottish Government, it aims to provide support to women who may be trafficked and exploited, as now defined in the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Act (Scot) 2015.

'We work with women to provide trauma informed, practical, and emotional support to recover from their experiences. We can offer:

- Safe Crisis Accommodation if appropriate (single women only)
- Outreach Support
- Referral to the National Referral Mechanism
- Financial assistance for up to 90 days (if eligible)
- Risk assessment and safety planning
- Support to report to Police Scotland
- Individual Recovery Plans
- Support to access Legal Advice
- Support to access Health Services

- Support to access psychological assessment and treatment
- Ongoing advocacy on rights and entitlements as a potential victim of trafficking
- Signposting to other services

‘Our service, which includes a 24/7 crisis response, is available to women recovered from across Scotland. We can provide interpreters and translation services as needed.

‘Trafficking and exploitation are forms of modern slavery, in which persons, most often women and girls, are forced, threatened, coerced or deceived for the purpose of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and domestic servitude.

Scotland has a flourishing sex industry and women are trafficked to meet the demand that it creates.

‘Trafficking is fuelled by demand for goods and services and male demand is a driver for commercial sexual exploitation.

‘TARA understands that commercial sexual exploitation is a form of violence against women, and that it is harmful to women, families and entire communities. We know that women are trafficked into and around Scotland each year and exploited in all aspects of the sex industry, including lap and table dancing, stripping, prostitution, escort services, internet sites and pornography.’

Rev Elizabeth Mackay writes from Glasgow on Trafficking

I am sure everyone has heard/read about people trafficking but you don't really imagine it goes on in your area, and even if it did the lock-down and border controls will have put a stop to it. However, may I suggest the media has had different priorities lately but the people trafficking still goes on.

Just consider, drug abuse and illegal drug distribution has escalated and similarly, in many ways people trafficking has also continued. People involved in illegal and evil practices know their business and are very aware of back roads/ routes etc. to move their goods/human or otherwise, trade depends on it and in some ways lockdown brought higher demands for some "goods".

Have you by any chance thought about the growth of the "home delivery" meals etc.? Have you really looked at the delivery person, had a chat with them and really listened to their answers? And have noticed and thought about the groups of the delivery people waiting for their calls? Certainly some will be students etc, but a great many of them will probably have either been "shipped in" or simply been recycled by their "employer" to keep the supply chain working?

As a United Free Church of Scotland minister, based in the most multi-cultural district of Scotland, I am very aware that there are a great many trafficked people

of all-ages and nationalities, yes some are trafficked from other parts of the UK.

However, may I suggest you take 10-15 minutes and really think just how much our economy depends on these folks. Many hairdressers, (remember many old people were forced to rely on, and were very grateful for, home visits of hairdressers etc. during the lockdown), especially gents hairdressers, have been trafficked, and if they haven't they are probably aware of some who were. (e.g. One business was operating a 24hour service via the back door!).

What about the small shops, the "open all hours" shops, have you thought about the staff? - Family members can sometimes be a flexible term.

As you are aware, internet use was vital for business. Did your church/fellowship conduct worship time during zoom or U tube? Sadly the internet was also a vital tool for the sex-traffickers, they could keep the supply chains moving, they could source where there was a high demand for their services and the types of service required and this is a service that requires workers so the trade flourished as "appointments" were via the internet, Zoom (one could see the client before booking!) and there are no age limits on internet/Zoom.

Also remember, there was no furlough payments for the workers and their "employers"/masters still demanded payment.

Perhaps during the lock-down it appeared that the street beggar numbers were greatly reduced but many of them were "redirected" to work in the food industry – have you ever thought - who and where are "Just eat" meals prepared.

People trafficking still flourishes. Like many other industries, it adapted to the new situation, and that life is "opening up" again - there are new faces appearing, new "workers" being brought in to fill the gaps. Yes, many trafficked people have skills, we really don't know their life stories of how or why they are in the situations.

The trade flourishes in all areas, and sadly, in some ways our economy uses it daily/ maybe even in some ways depends on it! However may I ask that you open your eyes, look, listen and think - no that is not just a road safety slogan for kids but perhaps if we prayerfully look around us, really listen to people, and really think, you will see, become more aware of the extent of people trafficking in your area.

Question to think about- how often had the disciples passed Bartimaeus? But Jesus looked, saw, listened and did something positive.

As Christians, we should remember Jesus' last command to us was to "go out into all the world and spread the gospel" that means we must be aware of what is happening, the world starts at your prayer time, at your door, your street.

Women in the British Justice System

Quakers, the inheritors of Elizabeth Fry's legacy, are today active in restorative justice and the movement away from prison as a method of rectitude and healing.

It is said that prison is a means of controlling male violence. Yet when most crimes committed by women are not violent, the question arises as to whether prison is an effective approach to women 'criminals'. In Scotland, the answer to this was to set up many local community 'houses'. Politics being what it is, only one of these got off the drawing board. The main ethos behind this venture was the recognition that in punishing the women, her children might also be punished and disadvantaged, that putting a woman in prison was much more than it seemed to be.

We ascribe needs and characteristics to the feminine in our society that creates expectations and projects a scenario onto individual women in our society irrespective of their individuality. One of these is the link between a mother and her children. Another may be the need for community and support the mother needs to rear the child. We assume that part of the feminine psyche is about connection and co-operation. After all, Oxytocin, one of the main female hormones, is often called the 'bonding' hormone responsible for that tie between mother and child. In Western society, putting a female in prison may separate her from her children so punishing them all especially where there is no extended family and the children end up in care. Local 'houses' keep the woman within her supporting community and close to her children. Further help can be built up around her, in the community, so she can improve living conditions for her and her family in the future, thus perhaps removing the cause of her crime which is often poverty and lack of opportunity. Well, the intent is a good start.

Re women in the justice system, two other issues come to mind: what is the story behind women's 'crimes', why does she step outside society's mores? One simple answer is poverty and feeding her children. What kind of job can you get that is shaped around the children's needs especially to be there for them setting out and coming home from school, or if they are ill – how much time is she allowed off her work? How child-friendly is our society? Are the grandparents on hand? Communal child rearing is not a tradition of Western societies any more. Many jobs available to women are in the caring professions that are poorly paid.

In her book *Eve was shamed*, Helen Kennedy, QC, explores this in much more detail and she explains the phenomenon of double punishment where a mother may be given an extended sentence or a fine when she fails to turn up for trial or a probation or social worker appointment because she was diverted to stay at the bedside of a sick child, or other parenting situation . . . can she meet society's expectations and that of a mother caring for her child? When do they start to call her a bad mother?

Restorative Justice

This is of increasing consideration where instead of prison an attempt is made to re-integrate the 'offender' back into the community. Sadly, when it is called 'community service' it is often denigrated as 'soft justice' when in fact it could be a tough challenge to reform.

'It is no surprise that many indigenous wisdom practices echo feminine values. Native cultures are generally earth based, and the earth is honoured as our Mother. When there is violence or discord within the collective sphere, certain tribes in Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand (and undoubtedly in many other regions less documented) will gather in a circle, and the members will take turns speaking from the heart about how the incident touched them and what they think might be done to mend the torn fabric of community.'

From Mirabai Starr, Wild Mercy

Secondly, Helena Kennedy also points out the double standards that may be applied to women. That she may be a bad mother is one to be greatly feared as this can result in her children being taken into care. Her appearance can lead to stereotyping: is she a trollop that doesn't care or a tart if she turns up too nicely dressed to her trial? She is stereotyped in a way she has no control over. Does she stay in an abusive situation or leave for her own safety, or does she stay because her children are fed? If she leaves a violent situation to protect herself, is she a bad mother because she left her children behind?

And there are other considerations. In prison and pregnant, what support does she have going through her pregnancy? Can you picture her alone in a cell as her labour starts? Or can you see her chained to her bed as she gives birth? What special needs does she have that are different from men?

Are there other ways of dealing with conflict and social discord?

Here are a number of similar Quaker procedures:

Quaker faith & practice 12.25 Meeting for clearness

. . . Each member of the group should have opportunities to question and explore the background to the matter that is to be clarified. It is important not to be diverted by side-issues but to concentrate on exploring options and understanding underlying difficulties. It will take time to reach clearness and periods of gathered worship will be helpful. . .

12.26 Threshing meetings

This term currently denotes a meeting at which a variety of different, and sometimes controversial, opinions can be openly, and sometimes forcibly, expressed, often in order to defuse a situation before a later meeting for worship for business. Originally the term was used to describe large and noisy meetings for conviction (*to the Quaker way?*) of 'the world's people' in order to 'thresh' them away from the world.

Part Four Challenges of our modern world.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 29: Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the full and free development of (his) personality is possible

Pornography

This page is almost blank.

The subject is hidden.

What do you see behind this page?

What do you consider is pornography?

Our concern: how does it affect young people?

How does pornography affect our behaviour, and our views of sexuality?

Is pornography exploitive? Why? How?

Belonging is not about fitting in; it is about being accepted as self.

Women in the Music Industry

A culture of hypersexuality in the West is invasive. In women's fashion, it leads to clothes your granny would faint to see. And it leads to little girls, even toddlers, dressed in bras. Has paedophilia increased?

The semi-nude on page 3 may have disappeared (don't look on the top shelf of newsagents) but now she is all over the inside pages, even in 'respectable' newspapers). Watching films and TV is a hazard if you are sensitive to sexual abuse and the murder of women. Macho men flaunt their power. Often there is little characterization to explore their position as to be a 'hit' a film or programme is considered to need to stimulate the emotions every 2 minutes. Bang Bang!

Rosemary Schonfeld writes:

As an out-lesbian and feminist musician who began her professional musical life in London in the late 1970s, I hope to provide insight into some of the barriers, prejudices, obstacles, and frustrations facing women musicians who engage with the music industry, by sharing my experiences and observations. Progress has definitely been made since the 1970s, but the areas where the real power still lies, and in a patriarchy will always lie, with men, often shift to ensure that where it is women are not.

I began performing in a band with three men, playing in pubs, performing a mixture of original material and covers. The men were very nice, and I never experienced any outright misogyny from them, but they would take it upon themselves to turn my guitar amplifier down while I was at the microphone. At that time, the mid 1970s, there were very limited roles available for women musicians playing in bands, with notable exceptions of course, such as Christine McVie in Fleetwood Mac or Tina Weymouth in Talking Heads. (To me it seemed to be that in the case of notable exceptions, they always had a male partner/husband/brother in the band). Generally women were allowed to sing or play the flute. For the band I played in to have a women singer who also played the guitar, was unusual. Yes, solo performers like Emmy Lou Harris would have a backing band, but to be an equal member of a band was not common.



When I came out, and my feminism developed, I was playing as part of a duo with another woman musician. We started recording and touring internationally, and co-founded a recording studio/music resource in London to train women and girls in sound engineering, because by the early 1980s it was clear that it was men who had ultimate control of the sound. We were called Ova, and never signed a music

contract with anyone. We were fiercely independent and as feminists also fiercely opposed to the Music Industry, and created our own record label.

We soon connected with other women musicians like ourselves: lesbians and/or feminists who were trying to break the mould by being bass players, lead guitarists, drummers, saxophonists, percussionists. This was not easy. There was often a lot of hostility from male musicians who felt threatened. One professional woman percussionist I knew was threatened by a male drummer that he would break her wrists. In the music industry most doors for opportunities to develop our musical abilities were closed. Thus a thriving women's alternative scene developed in folk, jazz and rock. Women formed all-women bands in order to bypass the misogyny of most male musicians, and as in our case, if possible, included a woman sound engineer as a member. When Ova founded the Ova Music Studio in London to train women and girls in sound engineering (as well as offering a range of music workshops to help empower women to explore their musical potential) I felt it was akin to the time the people got their hands on printing presses, and could start taking control of their own output for their ideas and beliefs, challenging the status quo and power hierarchies of the time.

By the mid-1980s there were a lot more female electric guitarists. The role of the electric guitarist up until then had been exclusively male, and was probably the most powerful role in pop music in terms of status. 'Clapton is God' which was often graffitied, gives an indication of the awe in which many such players were held. Once women started to prove they could do this just as well, rock-pop music which dominated the charts gave way to disco music and synthesisers. Who were the new stars of this genre? Men. Again, women soon got their hands on and heads around turntables and the technology, after which there was another shift in pop music towards Rap and its various sub-genres. A few years down the line and it was clear that women had made their way and were doing well into this scene. Once again, the power shifted, this time to 'The Producer'. As far as I can tell, this is where it currently sits. The Producer has become the star rather than the musicians. Are there many female Producers in the Industry? Virtually none. I certainly don't know of any, although there no doubt has to be the exception. This role is incredibly hard to access. Whereas with instruments and technology, women can, if they have the resources, get their hands on them and find ways to develop their craft, being a Producer is something else entirely. One has to come up through the system, negotiating the recording studio's hierarchy and it is still almost exclusively male terrain with all its embedded sexist attitudes. I heard of a Swedish woman producer who had developed a particular sound, who simply could not break through the music companies' glass ceiling. There is no meritocracy. It is still about who you know and who will open that door.

The music business comprises ever increasing layers of parasites making their livings from the musician, who is at the bottom of the heap. Between the musician and the release of their music into the public are: managers, agents, agencies,

pluggers, music labels, lawyers, each of these can comprise several sub-categories. Each wants a slice of the pie and often makes more than the musician. None is accountable regarding misogyny and sexism, and women will have to negotiate these at every level of their journey. Some are lucky of course, but I doubt you would find many at the top who would admit to escaping these forces. The Music Industry itself is probably the last sphere to progress in terms of women's power and roles. It has absolutely no accountability. The Music Industry does not seem compelled to introduce positive discrimination and to balance up the work force. It does not appear to have to address racism or sexism. So what if within a company there is not a single black face or a single woman? It is the third biggest industry in the world after the Arms and Pharmaceutical industries. It is not there to have a moral conscience, it is there to make money, and research has shown that the pop music industry's biggest market is, and has been for the last sixty years, thirteen year old girls. It is an industry which is perceived as glamorous and as the #MeToo movement has revealed, an environment for predatory men to wield their power and exploit women. They are not going to give this up willingly. For every Adele, who is phenomenally talented and whose success is based on her music, not on baring her flesh, there are a thousand others who still feel they have to, or are pressured into doing that, if they want to get anywhere in the Industry.

I am still working as an independent professional musician. I have, as many women have, carved out my own path. There is not enough space to elaborate in this article, but for more information about what I've been up to please visit my website,

>www.rosemary-schonfeld.co.uk

INTERSECTIONALITY

This term was originated by Kimberlé Crenshaw. In its original form, it showed 'that when multiple forms of oppression meet, they create new oppressions that are experienced acutely by those who belong to certain marginalized groups'. It arose mainly out of the experience of women of colour.

Julie Bindel gives an example: *'It is impossible to understand the system of prostitution without being attentive to the influence of sex, race and economic class; without, in other words, taking an intersectional approach.'*

She also explains it as a political tool *'that formalizes the inclusion of race and difference in feminist theory, in the way that Marxism theorized class'*. However she goes on to show how the term has been high-jacked for other political goals.

See Julie Bindel, *Feminism for Women*, 2021 published by Constable.

Transsexual

I came out at the age of 37. Due to some fortunate genetic factors, I look very feminine and HRT has enhanced that greatly, which I am very glad for. I constantly appreciate this privilege and am eternally grateful for my friends and their help.

Due to how I look and present, I rarely get overt transphobia and can make some great comparisons in how men & women are treated differently. I get a lot of treatment my female friends tell me is often typical of the female experience - misogyny, mansplaining, cat calling, leering etc.

Rather than focus on that, I've chosen to write a bit about the specific experiences as they relate to being transgender.

Medical issues - although I pass well visually, my voice remains a little deep for now. With the Covid pandemic, I've been doing a lot of telephone conversations - I get misgendered a lot over the phone. Most people are okay and at least try when corrected - mistakes are always forgivable.

This has however led to some issues with my GP and healthcare.

I registered with my current GP using my current name and title (Ms) but before I started hormonal treatment. Following my first telephone conversation, in which I was initially misgendered, my GP receptionist unilaterally decided to put a note on my record, assigning me the title of "Mx" as if that was some kind of "catch-all" term for trans people it took me 5 attempts to get them to correspond with me using Ms - my legal title.

During this time, I obtained a formal medical diagnosis of gender incongruence from a medical/psychiatric doctor and a prescription for Hormonal Treatment from an experienced Consultant Endocrinologist. I paid for both out of pocket (at substantial cost) as NHS wait times are scandalous.

The NHS offers a service where they will work with private providers to deliver a prescription for a patient. I applied for this to keep the costs down.

I was turned down, despite indications that they would be happy to do this - my private consultant is an Endocrinology lead and works within the NHS.

I enquired as to why this was and was told "I did not sound sufficiently transgender" as if somehow that was a factor or my diagnosis was not valid. I currently get treatment privately, which is fairly expensive.</div>

More and more children in Western society seem to be entering adulthood with an expansive sense of their own gender identity. I see this expressed in the classrooms where I teach and filling the horizons of every social media platform. These youth approach sexuality with an open heart and a curious mind, ready to love whom they love, without the burden of preconceived gender roles to limit their encounter with the beauty of the other. This spaciousness gives me hope for a more peaceful world, one in which it is the heart that leads the way.

Mirabai Starr in *Wild Mercy, living the fierce and tender wisdom of the women mystics.*

Feminism

‘Many women I knew then, and still others I know now, didn’t or don’t identify with the word, fearing that if they own it, it will make them appear militant or man-hating. Some feel guilty if they use the word, worrying that it excludes men. Some women feel marginalized from the feminist movement and find it’s just another place for them to feel ‘less than’ because of the way they have been treated. Their experience of feminism is what is sometimes called ‘white feminism’ – movements for ‘equality’ within the feminist movement that effectively means that when white, straight, cis, non-disabled women have as much power and privilege as their powerful male counterparts, the job is done. Some women feel ashamed if they don’t call themselves feminists, anxious that they are betraying the sisterhood.’

*Deborah Frances-White
in The Guilty Feminist,
2018, Virago*

Poor White Trash

Margaret Roy

This is/was an American term that referred to poor, usually farming, families of the Deep South, not quite as low as n but almost – think of John Steinbeck's novels. It is not a term often applied to folks in Britain. Working Class had become a badge of honour whilst the more recent 'underclass' is increasingly used to describe poor 'disadvantaged' groups seen as underfunctioning. When we reach out to help, there may be a whiff of 'undeserving scum'. *I'm ducking!*

Well, in my youth, I was one of these, poorly and inadequately dressed, not used to a knife and fork so embarrassed in the school canteen, couldn't afford to eat *and* buy sanitary towels. Did I smell? No one ever said so but, away from my local mining community, in my first years of secondary school, where the kids were so much better off, I had few friends. And so, when I see the interest in 'people of colour' and refugees, I wonder how inequality and injustice affects people today in 'housing estates' that are considered thick with violence, drug use and alcoholism. Near where I live, these are mostly 'white folks'. My emotions were further stirred by the grooming gangs in places like Rotherham abusing mainly poor 'white' girls, often they say from care situations. And when I started to represent (Quaker) General Meeting for Scotland on the Scottish Committee of the Womens' World Day of Prayer, I was amazed to find the word 'women's' had been removed from the title, and even from the (Women's) Guild to allow men to be included. And only a couple of years later there was a man at the head of The Guild. As my Feminism was reawakened I began to see this as the tip of the iceberg. What was wrong?

The UN 16 days of action on Violence against Women had been going for several years yet me and my awakened Friends had not heard of it. As we proceeded to raise consciousness it was, and is, an uphill task to be taken seriously. There were a number of expected blocks – men's fear of women in power, the reluctance of women to speak out as they would be labelled as 'ugly', bolshie, not getting enough sex! Or even lesbians.

The silencing of women is a very real issue, even today. Why are we so surprised? Why are we so blind and just how blind are we? *Is it still PC to use that word 'blind'?* Look around your Quaker Meeting/ Church group. In Scotland, the vast majority are white, older women, often well-educated professionals, with 'Middle Class' values. On the whole their concerns are predictable – disarmament, Palestine, racism, climate change – very commendable of course. Many of these women have learned to play the 'male game' - how many of the women in your meeting wear a dress either physically or metaphorically. Very few. The approach to these concerns is patriarchal. It is head stuff. It considers carbon footfalls rather than looking at the underlying ethos of exploitation of earth's resources, our use of energy and consumerism fueled by want rather than need. More green energy irrespective of the fact that the rare metals used to work it cause disease and pollution elsewhere in the world. And the cost of clean, efficient digital technology . . . We fool ourselves. When we talk of actions as 'of the heart', it is often only emotional. We pay lip-service to such terms as 'what does love require of us?' We speak of 'that of God in every one' but fail to clear the mind-space to listen. A basic skill. Patriarchy is a system of ownership, of individual aggrandisement that introduces hierarchy through wealth, separating the haves from the have-nots. *It is difficult to see it when it is embedded in everything around you.*

Just one step to inequality. And as voices are raised in protest, we get injustice as these are not heard. All is not well when we have created a mindset that is an illusion, e.g. 'scientific' medical research is based on statistical probability rather than mathematical certainty. The truth is warped and fake news reigns. It is not an easy place to question. It is so easy to rest on our laurels that we women have come far. But why have we lost sight of poor whites, especially women? I have puzzled over this separation.

Their morals are different. They may be single mothers with children of different fathers. They may need social support especially financially. They are often 'uneducated'. Their values are different. They may be women who have renounced their dependence on men.

They are vulnerable and often exploited. They may work in low paid jobs in the caring professions or hospitality. They can do the jobs that most of us don't want to dirty our hands on or undervalue yet, care workers, shopworkers, waitresses, these are responsible roles, which can give a lot of job satisfaction, and deserve better remuneration. And one of the things that came out of the recent pandemic is how vital these jobs are for the on-going smooth flow of our communities. We even thought of starting up a National Care Service! Of course they are not all female. But why are they so crucial and yet so invisible, like the untouchables of India?

I have used a lot of inverted commas around words here, a lot of supposition, a lot of unexplored attitudes.

The question of values came to me recently when counselling a young person, work hard at school and get a good job – my values, not his. This really pulled me up to look at the world of our young people, especially the girls. Our over-sexualised society puts enormous pressures on them. Our older world sexual values create a gap of understanding, and often of disdain. They can't join our older world because they have so many very diverse experiences for us to integrate. We can't expect them to rejuvenate our world because they have their own world to make sense of. Especially the women. While we battle consumerism and our use of energy, the hypocrisy of the green revolution supported by digital technology is not their problem. Poverty is lack of choice. They are wrestling with the hollowness of our values. Truth is lost. Can they shake off the patriarchy to bring the feminism back in from the cold? What kind of space do us older Middle Class white women need to create in our hearts to receive their difference and support them in this enormous charge of healing our world?

THE EARTH CHARTER

The Earth Charter is a declaration of fundamental ethical principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It seeks to inspire in all people a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the whole human family, the greater community of life, and future generations. It is a vision of hope and a call to action.

The Earth Charter is centrally concerned with the transition to sustainable ways of living and sustainable human development. Ecological integrity is one major theme. However, the Earth Charter recognizes that the goals of ecological protection, the eradication of poverty, equitable economic development, respect for human rights, democracy, and peace are interdependent and indivisible. It provides, therefore, a new, inclusive, integrated ethical framework to guide the transition to a sustainable future.

The Earth Charter is a product of a decade-long, worldwide, cross cultural dialogue on common goals and shared values. The Earth Charter project began as a United Nations initiative, but it was carried forward and completed by a global civil society initiative.

SHARED GLOBAL VALUES . . . FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

[www,EarthCharter.org](http://www.EarthCharter.org)

A Community Café in Woodlands, Glasgow

Pre-Covid the staff and volunteers ran the Cafe on Monday nights in the Fred Paton Centre on Carrington Street we prepared a three course vegetarian/vegan meal for between 40 and 100 people. The Cafe made use of supermarket surplus food collected from the charity Fairshare as well as donated locally grown vegetables from the Community Gardens nearby. It is part of a network of food pantries, community food projects, food banks and commercial enterprises offering free food across Glasgow to people who are food insecure. The free food map from Urban Roots lists the places free food can be collected across the City. [Glasgow Free Food Map - Urban Roots](#).

Since Covid Cafe staff have worked with other local Community Food providers to provide a meal delivery and veg box service to food insecure people living locally.

Recently the Cafe re-opened on Sundays outdoors on the Terrace on Ashley Street from 1pm and our numbers are keeping to Covid guidelines. We currently serve soup and a dessert with tea or coffee.

When food is left over it may be packed for the diners to take home. There is such a mix of people from students, rough sleepers, Big Issue sellers, unemployed or people dropping in on their way home, elderly people who live alone, children and families. Atmosphere is so important. There is an active music group who bring their instruments to play. We do have some singers too. Many come for the company. There are regulars every week. Some turn up early or stay afterwards to chat with friends in the nearby garden. When we were at the Fred Paton Centre we were able to offer food related talks and workshops to help people learn more about food politics or build their confidence about preparing meals.

Before there was a café, Woodlands Community Development Project took over a piece of waste ground to create a community hub and a garden. The garden has been a godsend during Covid as people could meet in the garden when they were not allowed to mix indoors. This was so important when tragedy struck the community and one of the founders was sexually assaulted and murdered. It was a place for the community to gather safely and mourn. Locals and Community regulars gathered to commemorate her life, lighting candles, sharing stories of her life and music at a vigil there shortly after her death and again on the day of her funeral several weeks later. Since her funeral a Women's Support Group has been set up, which is a place where all women are welcome and where women can work together to make the community a safer place for women and everyone.

Steph's Garden

Quaker Community gardening

Our friend Steph Koepplinger noticed a number of years ago that the neglected public land in his neighbourhood, on the Duncruin St hillside in Maryhill, was crying out for tender loving care. Over the years it had become a real nasty dump, the council seemed to have given up on maintenance. The open site is overlooked by highrise blocks of flats but in between there are wonderful vistas with views to the Campsie hills, which seems another world.

At first, single handedly, Steph set about to tidy up regularly, remove cartloads of horrible litter, cut down overgrown weeds, discover old paths, steps and even a little patio, crumbled remains from the council landscaping many years ago. Occasionally he with his family and a small band of volunteers would lay on a splendid BBQ and a bit of a celebration for all those in the neighbourhood who cared to join in. Amazing how many people came passed for a roll with sausage rather than with a spade and the intention to help !

In 2018 Steph became inspired by labyrinth gardens and the underlying philosophy they offer: just one path, no dead ends, no possibility of getting lost. Just what we needed round here and everywhere in the world . So the plan for the construction of a simple labyrinth on the slopes of the hillside was born: a grassy path with borders of colourful plantings. Easier drawn on a piece of paper than dug into the hillside but, due to lots of backbreaking hard work, donations of plantings and a bit of help from friends, gradually the labyrinth materialised. More local people seemed to notice and one or two began to offer help occasionally. Ambitious ideas for a wee waterfall and fountain arose, and never daunted and with training as a water engineer Steph set about constructing the foundations - it even worked for a while until the water supply was vandalised, but perhaps one day!

So now its spring 2021, the hillside and the garden need to be maintained if we don't want to lose the landscaping and the precious plantings. So what could be better than to get together with friends once a month for a reflective community gardening party? The neighbourhood will be able to rejoice in the colourful planting and the labyrinth path, and the care for this piece of rescued land might inspire others to come to help look after it.

Writing this in August and looking back on 4 successful and joyful get togethers, the invitation to join the party on the hillside on the first Saturday of the month from 11-1 pm for weeding, planting and reflection remains a joyful opportunity to spend time with friends doing a practical job together and inspire each other and those passing to care a bit more for each other and the planet.

WomankIND Clydesdale

WomankIND Clydesdale (WKC) was formed in November 2015, by a group of like-minded women, concerned with the rise in food-bank use and the number of children being pushed into poverty. It is a not-for-profit organisation which is self-funding, with occasional awards of micro-grants.

Relief of poverty through the promotion of equality and diversity is close to our hearts.

WKC devise and deliver projects based upon small acts of kindness which encourage the involvement of our whole community. Cumulatively, small acts of kindness can achieve a great deal and at the same time raise awareness of the (often hidden) problems surrounding us, even in our so-called affluent locality.

We often engage with third sector and other organisations and tie in with their initiatives if asked. We also work closely with local schools and have several projects designed to ease their burden, such as BACK TO SCHOOL UNIFORM BANK, OOT “N” ABOOT and SCHOOL TRIP TOP-UP. We are occasionally asked by schools to help individual pupils who need help with costs of residential trips or maybe just a little TLC, like a visit to the hairdressers. Descriptions of these projects and all of our other initiatives can be found on our website at: www.womankind-clydesdale.weebly.com

Although our current projects ground to a halt during lockdown we found other ways to spread the love. Lockdown was very hard for everyone but especially hard on those vulnerable folk who had to shield. Our area has a higher than average number of elderly residents and many of those live alone.

As part of Biggar Community Action Group, formed at the start of lockdown to aid and protect those who were shielding, WKC realised that there was a big problem with isolation, loneliness and anxiety in the community and so devised a project called “Boxes of Kindness.”

We asked our community to find and decorate shoeboxes; we asked two local stores - an independent fruiterer and our village convenience store for food at cost; we asked for gifts of potted plants; we asked children to draw happy pictures or write poems and we added some toiletries and lastly we asked people to nominate someone they knew was feeling alone or anxious, or had recovered from COVID. The response was overwhelming and emotional. 320 boxes were made and delivered in a very short time. This project perfectly describes our ethos: in difficult times small acts of kindness can achieve amazing results, and it is heart-warming what can be achieved when we all pull together.

The Well

35 VOLUNTEERS 8479 VISITS MADE 1780 PEOPLE HELPED
6578 CONSULTATIONS

The Well is situated in a part of Glasgow that is traditionally quite badly affected by poverty, out of work or low income jobs. 'People really struggle to make ends meet.'

The Well was established on 23 March 1994 by the Church of Scotland, after they carried out a 'Needs Survey' to find out how they could best serve their increasingly multi-cultural neighbours. They found a real need for an advice centre as minority ethnic residents struggled to know 'how things worked' in the UK – 'The Well Asian Advice Centre' was born.

The name 'The Well' is based on the biblical account (in the book of John chapter 4). Jesus crossed cultural, faith, gender and social barriers to connect with the Samaritan woman when she came to draw water from a well. He cared more about helping the woman than he did about anything else.

Over the years, services expanded 'as we have continued to listen to the local community and find the best ways that we can serve them'. The ethnic diversity was recognized in 2011 when The Well became an independent charity and was officially re-named 'The Well Multi-Cultural Resource Centre'.

From March 2019 to March 2020, The Well celebrated its 25th Anniversary of supporting people in the South East of Glasgow. Several events were held including: a 'Chai and Chat' that welcomed over 120 local women for an international lunch, an exhibition as part of 'Black History Month' that featured photographs taken by local people including several of clients and a large celebration event for all.

Today free advice is offered on a one to one basis to help individuals negotiate the form filling. 'The Well covers everything all in one.'

And it offers a programme of activities for ethnic minority women including 'chai and chat', a women's social/craft group, a mother and toddler group, and English classes. These activities are designed to reduce social isolation and build skills and confidence.

The Mission statement would read: ***We are passionate about giving hope to ethnic minority communities in South East Glasgow. Many are faced with poverty, racism, social isolation, limited English language skills, cultural differences, and simply not knowing 'how things work' in the UK. We want to support people to overcome these disadvantages through our one-to-one Advice Consultations and friendship-building activities.***

One woman says:

I have probably used all the services and it's been a massive help. The staff is what I like the most about the Well. It is like having an extended family. For me, it can be quite isolating at times but they have made me feel that I have a place to come to. That is the major thing, There is no judgment so I know that whatever I say is all confidential. They are going to listen to me 100% and they are going to help me get to wherever I need to be. It's not pushy. It has always made me feel confident and I always feel a lot more in place in knowing that I've got support and I'm not alone. I've not come across it in any other places.

CAN WOMEN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

24 August at 07:00 .

Forty years ago, a group of women from Wales set out to change the world. On August 26, 1981, 36 women, with four men and several children in tow, set off from Cardiff to walk 120 miles to Greenham Common in Berkshire to protest against America's plans to store nuclear missiles on British soil. It was only ever meant to be a march but when their journey failed to make the impact they had hoped for, the women set up camp at the airbase. Days of protest stretched into years and the Greenham Common Peace Camp became the world's most famous anti-nuclear campaign. At its height, there were more than 70,000 women there in the biggest female-led protest since women's suffrage. Now, on Thursday, 40 years to the day, a group of women will again leave Cardiff and retrace the original route, calling for the women who started it all to be remembered and respected as much as the suffragettes.

OH DEAR! WHO DID WE MISS OUT?

This arrived from a disabled woman, a Quaker, during feedback. She will be anonymous.

Quote from government statistics, 'Disabled women were more than twice as likely to experience domestic abuse in the last year than non-disabled women'. During the Covid lockdown it rose 3-4 times. As well as physical violence, abuse can take particular forms for disabled women, such as denying medication or personal support (such as help to go to the loo, eat, go out of the house). Disabled women routinely experience intersectionality. Disabled people are one of the few 'protected characteristics' covered by the Equality Act 2010. There has been anti-disability discrimination law in the UK since 1995 and yet they are seldom included in discussions. They are marginalised by the 'power structures' within society, and that makes us more prone to violence. We are disabled by barriers and attitudes in society, not by our impairments or conditions.

There are far more disabled people around than is generally recognized 14 million in the UK. One billion in the world - for one thing many have invisible impairments, such as hearing. Disabled people are not just wheelchair users (only 1%) or long-cane users.

What Can Change?

The dirty smogs that blackened Glasgow's buildings disappeared when coal burning in domestic fires was banned. All the little people. . .

HOW DO WE USE ENERGY?

Do you need to take the car? Is this car the most efficient user of energy?

Walking/cycling is healthy.

Central heating – what temperature?

Cut down at least 2° and *if* you note any difference, put on a jumper. Heat only the room you are using and/or don't sit around so long - moving generates heat, even wiggling your toes! . . . *which also helps circulation.*

GREEN/DIGITAL

Green may be good for your environment but mining/processing rare metals for their construction pollutes elsewhere.

Plus computers use energy. One e mail and attachment use as much energy as one energy light bulb burning for one hour.

In the cloud? No, such data goes to giant warehouses that hold the server computers that consume vast amounts of energy. Someone has to pay the price!

DON'T BE A HYPOCRITE. IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT CARBON.

FASHION

How many clothes do you need?

Are you aware artificial fibres derive from the same source as plastics and are equally poor in degrading?

Buying on line? Returns are often dumped in landfill sites and use energy in transporting.

CLOTHES AGAIN?

Mend and repair. Adapt. There are lots of courses on redesigning or mending – *and working together builds community.*

Wash less often – clothes last longer too.

Iron? Do you need to? *My aunt taught me how to fold clothes away so they need less ironing.*

FOOD

Food miles – how far did it travel? Was it picked before ripe to ripen on the way?

For health (

Vitamins and minerals) eat fresh, unprocessed food.

Buy only what you need. Excess food fills land fill sites, and feeds the rat population! *Sorry rats!*

Join/create a co-op to share ideas, recipes, etc.

Start a local community garden – *all those waste sites around town.*

IT'S A BIG START. Buy less, repair, recycle.

THE PRACTICE OF MOTHERING

Buddhists have a 'practice'. This is a commitment to action, to pray or meditate. It is a commitment that pervades one's life.

To be someone's mother is to die again and again. Die to who you thought you were and who you hoped you would become. Die to your cherished notions of what a child of your's should look like, sound like, behave like. Die to your illusions of control. Control of your own emotions, control of your child's experiences. And in proportion of all your deaths you will be blessed with endless resurrections. You will rise, radiant, from the flames of what you thought was the end of the world. And your child will rise, luminous, from the ashes of your errors.

Miribai Starr, Wild Mercy

