

# WOMEN, RIGHTS, AND LEADERSHIP

By Michael-Ann Cerniglia

Women in the Middle East are as diverse as any other group of individuals in the world. Yet if an average American student is asked to imagine a Middle Eastern woman, chances are she is veiled. While the majority of women in the region are Muslim and many wear **hijab** (a headscarf), this does not give us much information about their beliefs, cultural practices, or the roles they play in their homes and communities. All too often simplistic views about this one convention of dress mold popular opinions of both the women who wear it and the societies in which they live.

Since the inception of Islam in the 7th century, women have played significant roles in advocating for their own rights within its religious tenets and laws. While the movements in the Middle East may bear some similarities to the feminisms of Europe and North America, they bear distinct characteristics and origins. This chapter will note a few of the women heroes of early Islam; describe 20th century leaders of women's movements in Egypt, Iran, and Turkey; and examine a few recent examples of the ways in which women of the region both defend their rights and play leadership roles in the larger society. It is important to

## Chapter Glossary

**Chador/Jilbab/Abaya:** These are three examples of terms used to refer to a full cloak covering (often black) in different contexts/languages/dialects.

**Feminism/s:** In this chapter, is used to refer to a general advocacy for the rights of women. An understanding that many different forms of feminism exist is explicit in our usage of the term.

**Hadith:** The actions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad that were recorded and compiled into complex sources. The hadith, or reports, are utilized by Muslim theologians in combination with the verses of the Qur'an to interpret theology, law, and more.

**Harem:** Derived from the Arabic root for "forbidden," refers to a home in which the sexes are segregated.

**Hijab:** Usually refers to a scarf worn over the hair by women (but does not mean the face is covered).

**Ijtihad:** Meaning "struggle," *ijtihad* refers to the process of consideration and deliberation of theological or legal issues using the Sharia sources of Qur'an and *hadith*.

**Niqab:** Usually made of fabric, refers to a face covering worn by women in addition to *hijab*.

**Qur'an/Koran:** The holy text of Islam, written in Arabic, and delivered orally through the words of the Prophet Muhammad.

**Sharia:** Literally meaning "path" or "way", Sharia refers to the combination of the legal and theoretical sources of the Qur'an and Hadith.

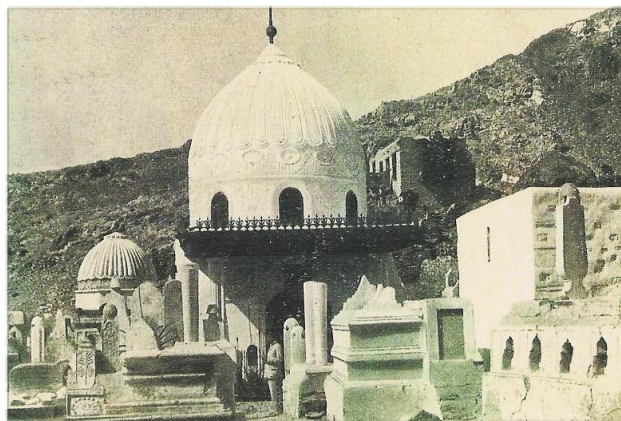
**Surah:** Chapter of the Qur'an. A verse (within a *surah*) is called an *ayah*.

remember, however, that most women live their lives outside of the limelight. Many women (and their advocates) quietly exercise the agency accorded to women through Islam, the state, or their personal relationships within their families. It is important to stretch our imaginations to envision what the average lives of women may look like in Middle Eastern societies.

## Early History

Muslims look to find truth and justice in the words of the **Qur'an**, the holy book of Islam, and the **Hadith**, a collection of sayings and stories about the Prophet Muhammad's life and actions. Together, the Qur'an and Hadith are the most important sources of **Sharia**, or Islamic law. In addition, Muslim theologians apply a concept called **ijtihad**, independent thinking and interpretation of Sharia developed by the early Muslim community. Many religious advocates for women's rights call for ijtihad regarding the issues they view as unfair for women. Often, evidence for new interpretations draws upon the experiences and character of the women of early Islam. The Prophet's first wife, Khadija, is considered to be Islam's first convert. She was an independent businesswoman fifteen years older than Muhammad. She did not wear a headscarf, and she was also literate, while Muhammad was not. Muhammad had daughters by Khadija (there were also sons who died in infancy), and his later **surahs** on inheritance and infanticide advocated for women's rights. Although the majority of Khadija's life was spent as a non-Muslim, by all accounts she was loved and revered by Muhammad.

Scholar Leila Ahmed has argued that because Khadija pre-dated Muhammad's revelation of the Qur'an, his younger wife Aisha stands as a better example of the first Muslim feminist. Aisha was an intellectual, responsible for the reporting and compiling of numerous Hadith. She also was one of the first Muslims to memorize the entire Qur'an. Fatima, Muhammad's daughter by Khadija, also emerges as an example of a strong female role model. Fatima was educated by her father, who valued her intellect. She rode into the Battle of Uhud to tend to his wounds and was an early beneficiary of his **surah** on inheritance, although these inheritance claims remain as disputed today as they were fifteen hundred years ago. Fatima is particularly revered among Shia Muslims, as she married Ali, the fourth Caliph and a close confidant of Muhammad, and was the mother of the martyred heroes Hasan and Hussein. Today's advocates for the rights of women in Muslim communities throughout the world regularly reference these early role models.



**Mecca's Mausoleum of Khadija, Muhammad's first wife and the first convert to Islam, prior to its destruction in the 1920s.**

## Egypt

One of modern Egypt's first advocates for women's rights was Qasim Amin (b. 1863), a male follower of Darwin who believed that it was important for Egypt to allow the role of women to evolve, or the country would cease to thrive. He suggested that women remove their veils, based on his interpretation of the Qur'an that the veil was cultural, not religious. During this same period, the turn of the 19th century, various groups in society rose up to resist their imperial rulers and women's-rights advocates worked alongside Egyptian nationalists. Huda Sha'arawi, born in 1879, took a leading role in bringing attention to the rights of women.



Qasim Amin, (1863-1908)  
one of modern Egypt's  
first advocates for  
women's rights.



Huda Sha'arawi, the founder of the  
Egyptian Feminist Union, with Talaat  
Harb, a leader in nationalizing Egypt's  
economy, among crowds in 1933.

Sha'arawi was raised in a traditional **harem**, a housing arrangement that separates the sexes, and was forced into an early marriage as a second wife. Perhaps in reaction to these early life experiences, she created the Egyptian Philanthropic Society, which provided services to poor women and children. In 1910, she established a school for girls that taught academic subjects rather than vocational training such as midwifery. Perhaps most notably, she founded the influential Egyptian Feminist Union, which published *L'Egyptienne* (1925-1940), the country's first magazine published by and for women.

Sha'arawi served as an elected official, organized a 1919 protest by women, one of the largest anti-British street protests in Egyptian history, and in 1923 publicly removed her **niqab**, (face covering), a bold action during her time.

Durriyya Shafiq (Doria Shafik), the "Rebellious Daughter of the Nile," is another important Egyptian feminist. She is credited with launching the women's suffrage movement in the 1940s that would ultimately lead to universal suffrage for women in Egypt's 1956 Constitution. She lobbied tirelessly for women's economic mobility and was opposed to foreign involvement in Egypt. She is famous for founding *Bint al-Nil*, "Daughter of the Nile," first as a magazine and later as an organization which worked to achieve greater literacy for women by supporting employment. *Bint*



Durriyya Shafiq, the founder of the influential  
women's magazine *Bint Al-Nil*, at work.

*al-Nil* and Sha'arawi's Egyptian Feminist Union—the two major women's organizations in Egypt—worked together at times to achieve their goals. In response to her public protests of Egyptian national policies, in 1957 Safhiq was placed under house arrest by President Gama Abdel Nasser. She committed suicide in 1975 after a period of isolation.



Nawal El Saadawi at an Occupy London protest in 2011.

Photo By Wasi Daniju

Nawal El Saadawi, a contemporary of Shafiq and Sha'arawi, is another foundational women's rights advocate. In 2015, at the age of 83, Saadawi said to *The Guardian*: "I am becoming more radical with age." She has championed the ending of female circumcision and spent fifty years of her life fighting to have it banned in Egypt, a goal that was finally achieved by law in 2008. She continues this fight, however, knowing that the custom endures in some areas of her country.

Not all women's advocates in Egypt are as visible as Sha'arawi, Shafiq, or El Saadawi. There is, for example, "the girl in the blue bra," whose assault during the 2011 revolts catapulted a movement for ordinary women who didn't even know what it was. While some mainstream news agencies, like NPR, have drawn parallels between supporters of the "girl in the blue bra" and Western feminist movements, these events are distinctly Egyptian. Just as Egyptian Muslim women have fiercely fought for their right to self-rule, education, suffrage, and control over their own bodies, they have also specifically debated the veil, secularism, female bodily harm, and the military. The image of the woman in the blue bra, a veiled Muslim woman dragged in the street and kicked by military police, was particularly galvanizing among Egyptian women. This singular incident catalyzed a march by several thousand women in Cairo in protest of the military's brutal actions during the 2011 uprisings.

## Turkey

In the early 20th century, when the Ottoman Empire was in decline, elite women organized themselves to fight against illiteracy, unemployment, polygamy, and hijab. In 1908, Fatma Aliya Topuz, an important conservative novelist and thinker, founded The Ottoman Welfare Organization for Women, and by 1914, women were admitted to university. In 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk came to power and the Republic of Turkey was born. Atatürk's reforms of language and dress aimed to secularize Turkey, orient it towards the West, and remove Islamic influence from public life. Under Atatürk, women's movements were incorporated into the state's official policies and forbidden from operating outside of the system. Veiling became a lightning rod for many of these reforms. In 1934, the Law Relating to Prohibited Garments was introduced and women were banned from wearing the veil in public and in government spaces. Throughout the 20th century, the state maintained responsibility for the "liberation" of women, though women's roles remained more or less traditional



within the home. There were many women who elected to keep their veils and resented the loss of choice, for many reasons, including what was perceived as an undue influence of the West on women's appearance and dress in public.



**The Purple Needle campaign in Turkey demonstrated how “a chic ornament” could help a woman defend herself.**

In the 1980s, many Turkish women, even those who support a secular government, began to reject the notion that the state should be the leader and protector of women's rights. The headscarf debate began anew in 1989, after an increase in sexual harassment in the streets of Istanbul led to claims that more cover for women would lead to less harassment. Many women's rights groups felt that covering was not the answer, blaming the perpetrators of harassment rather than their victims. In response, an effort to help women fend off attackers known as the Purple Needle campaign was launched in 1980s Istanbul. Activists handed out needles adorned with purple ribbons to women on the streets to use as discreet weapons during instances of harassment or assault. According to Charlotte Binder in "Feminist Movements in Turkey," the campaign empowered women by demonstrating how a “chic ornament [could] also be used as an instrument to defend yourself against harassers.” This organized effort successfully led to changes in laws to protect women, more shelters for women, and a greater recognition of victims' rights in the public arena. The campaign was revived in 2008, when harassment in the Taksim Square protests went virtually unpunished. Vigorous debates persist today around the headscarf; President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is committed to leaving more room for religion in the state, while his critics feel this is a rejection of Ataturk's secular vision. As the hijab finds itself at the center of this debate, ordinary women are becoming more engaged in the conversation.

## Iran

The involvement of women in both nation-building and resistance was not limited to Turkey and Egypt. Women were leaders in the resistance to the Qajar Dynasty, which ruled Iran until 1925. In 1918, Mohtaram Eskandari, an early leader of Iranian women's movements, founded the Society of Patriotic Women. Its goal was to uphold Islamic values, promote girls' education and literacy, encourage national industries, and support war efforts. Following the fall of the Qajars, women continued to be active in leadership movements as the shah took control and initiated reforms to westernize the country. Known as the “White Revolution,” the shah's reforms were intended to secularize Iran, as Ataturk's had in Turkey. William Morgan Shuster notes in his book *The Strangling of Persia*, “Persian women since 1907 became almost at a bound the most progressive, not to say radical, in the world.” During this time, women's magazines and journals, including Mohtaram Eskandari's *Nosvan Vatankhah (Patriotic Women)*, were prevalent and valuable to communicating

messages of the movement. These publications are among the most important records we have for understanding the ebbs and flows of the women's movement of this era.

In Iran, women generally wore veils until the shah, after a visit to Turkey in 1935, demanded that women remove them. As in Turkey, this caused resentment among some women, who saw the removal of the veil as yet another form of Western domination. However, pressure from the religious sectors, among others, succeeded in overthrowing the shah through a revolution, and in 1979, under Ayatollah Khomeini, women were forced by law to return to veiling after 44 years. In spite of this strict clothing regulation, among other inequities, women have in fact made great strides under the Islamic Republic. Today, according to the United Nations Office for the High Commissioner on Human Rights, over 30% of academic seats at universities and seminaries are held by women, compared with only 1% prior to the revolution. The same source indicates that 40% of medical specialists and 98% of gynecologists in Iran are women. Female literacy rates have risen to more

than 90%; prior to the revolution, it was under 40%.

Throughout these extreme changes, women were vocal and open supporters of their own right to participate as equals. One of these vocal women, Shirin Ebadi, rose to prominence in the late 1980s as a human-rights attorney and worked on behalf of women and children and universal human rights. She is also the first woman to serve as a judge in Iran, and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003. In 2005, with other prominent women leaders, Ebadi co-founded a campaign called "One Million Signatures," which raised awareness of issues such as girls' education, polygamy, domestic violence,

and marriage and inheritance. Despite the campaign's prominent leadership, it gathered most of its momentum through a grassroots movement that involved a variety of women across regions, classes, and other sectors of society. While this campaign was hugely successful at an international level, gaining at least five international awards, it was interrupted by a government crackdown in which the

leading women were arrested and physically assaulted, and the signatures destroyed. The campaign was forced to begin anew and continues to organize women across Iran today.



Shirin Ebadi speaking at the Global Challenges Conference in 2015.

Photo by Overseas Development Institute.

## Contemporary Feminisms

As we have already seen, distinct calls for women's rights across the Middle East have emerged that are unique to the social and political conditions of each country and region. A feminist from Morocco may not agree with one from Saudi Arabia or Syria; indeed, a feminist from Morocco may not even agree with another feminist from Morocco! Additionally, a "Muslim feminist" may not necessarily agree with an American feminist and vice versa. The notion of "feminist" is only correct

when presented, in the plural, as feminisms. This can begin to reflect the diversity of views that exist, even among those with the seemingly common cause of advocating for women's rights. The best way to undertake this task is through examining the many examples of how women in the region deal with the various challenges they face. By focusing on a few of these stories, we can begin to unpack the complexity of women's experiences in the Middle East.

A brief look at contemporary political leadership in the Muslim world takes us to Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the first female Muslim head of state who became the leader of Pakistan in 1988. A veiled woman, Bhutto was an outspoken advocate of women's rights and, despite controversy throughout her presidency, served as an example to hundreds of thousands of Pakistani girls that women could be educated and attain prominent positions in society. In a 1995 speech to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP's) World Conference on Women in Beijing, Bhutto invoked the Qur'an in support of the rights of women when she said:

"In distinguishing between Islamic teachings and social taboos, we must remember that Islam forbids injustice--injustice against people, against nations, against women. It shuns race, colour, and gender as a basis of distinction amongst fellowmen. It enshrines piety as the sole criteria for judging humankind. It treats women as human beings in their own right, not as chattels. A woman can inherit, divorce, receive alimony and child custody. Women were intellectuals, poets, jurists and even took part in war. The Holy Book of the Muslims refers to the rule of a woman, the Queen of Sabah. The Holy Book alludes to her wisdom and to her country being a land of plenty. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) himself married a working woman. And the first convert to Islam was a woman, Bibi Khadija. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphatically condemned and put an end to the practice of female infanticide in pre-Islamic Arabia."

Bhutto went on to champion many of the same issues as women of generations before her in Egypt, Turkey, and Iran, when she concluded:

"Empowerment is not only a right to have political freedom. Empowerment is the right to be independent, to be educated, to have choices in life. Empowerment is the right to have the opportunity to select a productive career, to own property, to participate in business, to flourish in the market place."

Bhutto's legacy as an overall leader is a complex and controversial one; her government was ultimately disbanded in 1996 amidst corruption charges, and she lived for a time in exile in Dubai. In 2007 President Pervez Musharraf granted her amnesty and she returned to Pakistan, only to be assassinated later that year.



**Benazir Bhutto, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, on a diplomatic visit to the U.S. in 1989.**

**Photo by U.S. Department of Defense**



Malala Yousafzai, pictured here in 2014, tours the world to discuss the systemic nature of gender inequality.

Photo by the Southbank Centre

Regardless of her conflicted past, Bhutto has influenced thousands of young girls, including one in particular, Malala Yousafzai, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 at age seventeen for her work advocating for children's education. Malala herself fought bravely for her right to attend school in the SWAT Valley of Pakistan when, in 2012, she was shot in the head by a member of the Taliban for her outspoken ideas about girls' right to an education. She survived her attack and has been a vocal advocate for children's access to education ever since.

Pakistan is not the only Muslim country with female leadership. According to *Foreign Policy*, as of 2012, Middle Eastern countries impose more quotas for women, or a minimum required number of participants, at the legislative levels of government. These same data show that five Middle Eastern countries (including Bahrain,

Oman, and Sudan) had higher female participation rates in legislative roles than the United States did, where women held only 16.5 percent of Congressional seats. In Afghanistan, Fawzia Koofi is a rising politician who was the first female speaker of the Afghan parliament and ran for president of Afghanistan in 2013.



In 2012, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and First Lady Michelle Obama pose for a photo with Leymah Gbowee (left); and Tawakkol Karman (right), both 2011 Nobel Laureates.

Photo by U.S. Department of State.

Of course, not all women's-rights advocates support quotas. Many feel that quotas limit women's agency, imply women are incapable of achieving success without governmental intervention, or integrate less qualified candidates in important roles simply to fulfill a mandatory minimum. One country where the quota debate has taken place is in Yemen, where only one woman serves in the 301 member parliament and only three of the thirty-five ministers are female. Human Rights advocate Amal

Basha worked for years on an article for the new, yet-to-be-ratified constitution, promising 30% representation for women in government. Though this was ultimately endorsed, many (both feminists and others) did not support it. As female literacy in Yemen is only 55% and girls only receive an



average of eight years of education at this time, many are concerned that women will not be qualified for the open positions. Feminists feel that in the long run this may undermine the overall goal of the movement to improve women's positions in society.

Another Yemeni woman, Tawakkol Karman, is a human rights advocate and won the 2011 Nobel prize for her non-violent work on improving women's safety and peacebuilding in Yemen. Karman emerged during uprisings in Yemen, specifically in 2011, to encourage protesters to resist peacefully. Her followers refer to her as "Mother of the Revolution" and "the Iron Woman." Karman, a conservative Muslim and a member of the Islamist al-Islah party, reconciles Islam with her progressive ideals. On women's roles, she believes that women should not campaign as women first, but for their home and for their society. For this reason, she feels strongly that women should be active members of political parties and government, and work towards a modern, democratic, civil state. When pressed by a reporter that her hijab represented a conflict between her modesty and her intellect and education, she responded by saying:

"Man in early times was almost naked, and as his intellect evolved he started wearing clothes. What I am today and what I'm wearing represents the highest level of thought and civilization that man has achieved, and is not regressive. It's the removal of clothes again that is a regression back to the ancient times."



It is important to remember that activism and faith are not mutually exclusive. In fact, practicing Muslim women have gained visibility and become more vocal on a number of different issues. As has been discussed in this article, women in the Middle East have long been agents for change; social media has simply brought more of them greater attention.

This campaign for Merve Kavakçı evokes her challenge of the ban on the headscarf in Turkish Parliament. Other elected officials wearing headscarves are also featured in the image.

In Turkey, Merve Kavakçı-Islam, a female politician, was elected to parliament as a deputy in 1999 as part of the Virtue party (the AK party eventually formed from this in 2001), but was never allowed to

take her seat due to her refusal to remove her hijab. She left Turkey in 2001, and currently advocates for Muslim rights around the world. In Kavakçı-Islam's view, Atatürk's efforts to secularize Turkey only resulted in replacement of the familial patriarchy by the state patriarchy; in each case, women were told what to do and how to do it. Ultimately, she believes that the Turkish state should not be involved in people's private lives, and that women wearing hijab should not be precluded from participating in and contributing to government and society.

In Jordan, a constitutional monarchy, Queen Rania has made a concerted effort to reach out to Jordanians, as well as others around the world, on issues such as education, treatment of women, and perceptions of Muslim life. Queen Rania models her sense of piety and modesty in an as-needed fashion; she does not usually wear hijab, but can be seen wearing it in situations that require showing respect for elders or religious leaders. In a 2010 BBC interview she remarked, “I am a staunch supporter of every woman’s right to wear the hijab, just as I am a staunch supporter of every woman’s right to choose not to wear it.” Ultimately, as with all the women mentioned here, it is Rania’s work, not her clothing choices, that best represents her. Rania demonstrates her interests through global education initiatives, microfinance support for women, and social-media campaigns.

## Conclusion

Through these very few examples we can begin to see how the present generation of women in the Middle East advocate for change through Islam and see it as an instrument--not an obstacle--towards their goals. Muslim women have less been shaped by hijab, as is often the assumption, and more shaped by their own societies, families, and institutional structures. It is important to recognize the individual accomplishments of women within each unique environment, all of whom have been making lasting social, educational, economic, and political improvements in their respective communities. The veil as the definitive symbol of male oppression is a concept manufactured beyond the borders of the Muslim world. Muslim and Middle Eastern women, like women everywhere, have the same day-to-day concerns, challenges, and ambitions. They seek the right to an education, the right to work and provide for their families, access to adequate food and shelter, and fair treatment under the law. Above all, they desire to make their lives and those of their loved ones better. The current women’s movements we see through leaders like Bhutto, Yousafzai, Karman, and Kavakçi-Islam are happening throughout the Middle East and the Muslim world. They are likely to gain even more momentum in the future.

## Teaching Tool

### Expressions of Muslim Femininity: The Fulla Doll

[www.fulla.com](http://www.fulla.com)



Clockwise from above left: Saudi Fulla, Day of Style Outdoor Fulla, Fulla Prayer Set 2, and Moroccan Style Fulla.

Fulla has been called the “Muslim Barbie.” However, if you look at the “About” page on Fulla’s website, it does not describe her as Muslim at all. Rather, it describes her as “Arab, body and soul.” Yet, in her Saudi version, her *hijab* and **abaya** are a clear indication of her faith. So, who is Fulla?

Fulla represents teenage girls in the Arab world, not just one. She is an Egyptian girl, or a Moroccan girl, or a Syrian girl; she is a pious girl, a soon-to-be doctor or teacher, a sister, and a friend. Moreover, while Fulla represents the characteristics and values of Islam, she does so in diverse ways through her clothing choices. So, Fulla can be a “good” Muslim girl in a variety of ways.

Typically, when Fulla is shown in the West, it is the Saudi Fulla, in her “outdoor” clothing (her *abaya*). However, Saudi Fulla comes with nuances that are often overlooked at first glance. First, she

comes with “indoor” outfits that, while modest according to Islamic standards, are also trendy and stylish. Her hair is often streaked with color, most often auburn but also purple at times. This would not be seen by those outside of Fulla’s family or female friends but is an indication of her taste and personality. Second, there are a wide variety of Fullas, just as there are a wide variety of Muslim women, from a number of Arab countries. Each country is represented by Fulla differently in her clothing, ranging from conservative to more liberal interpretations of Islamic dress. While Fulla has come under criticism (as has Barbie), for putting forth a standard of unattainable beauty, she also represents many iterations of Islamic ideation. Whatever your view, Fulla is as much a useful tool for understanding girls’ culture in the Arab world as Barbie would be for girls in the U.S.

## Discussion Questions/Activities

Have students visit [www.Fulla.com](http://www.Fulla.com) to accomplish the tasks below and answer the attached questions.

### Fulla’s Values

Look through the website’s products, games, and media and answer the following questions.

1. According to the makers of Fulla, what constitutes modesty?
2. What makes this product marketable in the Middle East? Would it be marketable here in the West?
3. How are indoor and outdoor Fulla different?
4. What do you think Fulla’s streaked hair says about her personality?
5. What types of friends does Fulla have and who is missing from her friend group? Why do you think?

### Fulla on Exchange

Have students visit [Fulla.com](http://Fulla.com) and start with the learning tab. There are 19 places in the Middle East to which Fulla goes on “exchange” and visits with new friends. In each place, she learns about the people and places and posts pictures of what she learned. Assign students one of these places and have them answer the following questions.

1. Where did Fulla go on her trip?
2. What was the most significant thing you learned from Fulla’s trip?
3. Was there anything that might have been told differently in a textbook here in the U.S.?



4. Why might it be important for Arab children to simulate visits to other Arab countries in this way?

## Additional Research/Essay Assignment

Directions to teacher: The following question can be used to guide students in writing an informational essay.

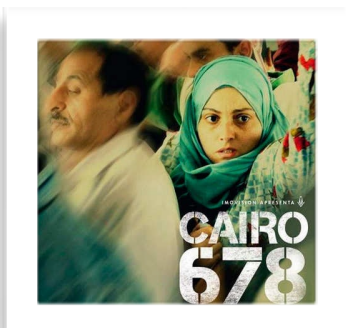
Student Instructions: Compose a well-thought-out short essay that addresses the following questions (or other questions) in informing your reader about the topic we have been studying. Be sure to include specific references to the text(s) that are correctly cited, use proper grammar, and include introductory and concluding statements as well as transitions where appropriate.

1. Are there other toys, music groups, or forms of entertainment that aim to communicate Muslim values for girls?
2. What elements of identity do these toys employ in reaching their target audience?
3. What can we learn from the advertisements for such products about a particular culture or context, if anything?
4. In your opinion, what can't a product or its advertisements help us understand when it comes to cultures, societies, or individuals?

## Teaching Tool

### Sexual harassment in Egypt: *Cairo 678*

Available for purchase and to stream online from the Global Film Initiative and other vendors such as Amazon.



In the film *Cairo 678*, directed by Mohamed Diab, three Egyptian women in the city of Cairo face sexual harassment and struggle with the post-traumatic stress of those experiences. Each woman comes from a different socio-economic class in Cairo and responds to the trauma and support from her family and community in different ways.

Seba and her husband are from an upper class; she is an artist and he is a doctor. Nelly and her fiancé are both aspiring comedians. Showing the pressure on men as well as women, Nelly's fiancé is forced to take a bank job during the day to make enough money to get

married and prove he is a suitable husband. Finally, Fayza is a working class married woman who, between her job and her husband's, can barely make ends meet.

The premise of the film is based on the idea that Egypt's prevalent sexual harassment, which occurs frequently in the streets and on buses, is largely tied to its economic woes. While the film clearly places the responsibility of harassment on men, the origin of their behavior is linked to the need for stable finances prior to marriage even as many are struggling in a failing economy. Ergo, since men are not able to get married without suitable financial stability and any sexual behavior outside marriage is frowned upon by society, the suggestion is that men fulfill their physical desires through clandestine touching and groping that leads to trauma for female strangers in their own communities.

## Discussion Questions/Essay Topic

Directions to teacher: The following questions can be used to either guide a student discussion or to guide students in writing an informational essay.

Student Instructions: Compose a well thought out short essay that addresses the following questions in informing your reader about the topic we have been studying. Be sure to include specific references to the text(s) that are correctly cited, use proper grammar, and include introductory and concluding statements as well as transitions where appropriate.

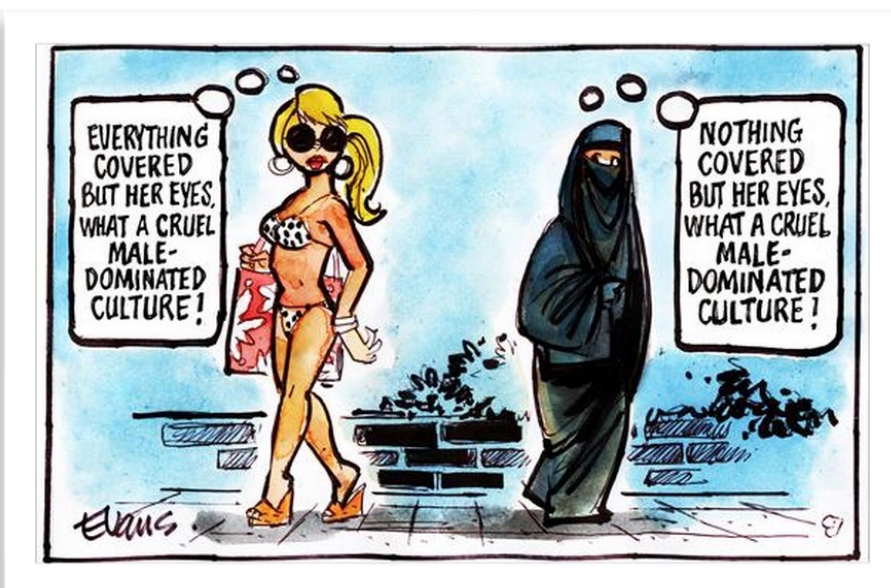
1. How does each woman respond to the harassment?
2. How does economic class affect the way that each woman manages the effects of harassment?
3. What types of harassment are depicted in the film?
4. What role do the police play in sexual harassment?

5. Reflect on the following scenes: the buses; all instances of harassment in the film; Nelly on the talk show; and Nelly in her first comedy routine. What role does the general public play in sexual harassment?
6. Seba teaches a course on self-defense and Fayza takes it upon herself to go to the extreme. Read the following article about the Purple Needle Campaign in Turkey and discuss comparisons. [www.stopstreetharassment.org/2012/12/pinsneedles/](http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/2012/12/pinsneedles/)

## Teaching Tool

### Symbols of Feminine Power: Islamic Dress

The range of veiling practices within the context of Islam is widely debated and frequently misunderstood and misrepresented, both within and outside the Middle East and larger Muslim World. For Muslims, the question may not be whether or not to wear hijab, but *how* to wear it and whether to wear **niqab** and a **chador** or **jilbab**, a full-length outer garment. In fact, some Muslim women find Islamic dress empowering, rather than limiting. Other Muslim women do not see these conventions of dress as necessary to embrace both Islam and progressive values.



Cartoon by Malcolm Evans (2008)

The following sources provide various perspectives on Islamic dress. Have your students read and analyze each of them and then answer the questions that follow.

1. Read this Cartoon: Evans, Malcolm. "Cruel Male-Dominated Culture Cartoon." *The Society Pages*. Accessed July 19, 2015. <http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/files/2008/12/1.png>.
2. Read the article: Mustafa, Naheed. "My Body is My Own Business." *Islam101.net*. Last modified June 29, 1993. Accessed July 19, 2015. <http://www.islam101.com/women/naheed.html>.
3. Watch the Video: Yusuf, Hanna. "My Hijab Has Nothing To Do With Oppression. It's A Feminist Statement." *The Guardian*. Last modified June 24, 2015. Accessed August 28, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/video/2015/jun/24/hijab-not-oppression-feminist-statement-video>



4. Read the Article: Y Alibhai-Brown, Yasmin. "As a Muslim woman, I see the veil as a rejection of progressive values." [theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/20/muslim-woman-veil-hijab). Last modified March 2015. Accessed July 19, 2015.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/20/muslim-woman-veil-hijab>
5. Read the excerpt: Mernissi, Fatema. *Scheherazade Goes West: Different Cultures, Different Harems*. Washington Square Press, 2002. Size 6 Experience, pages 209-211.

## Discussion Questions/Essay Topic:

Directions to teacher: The following questions can be used to either guide a student discussion or to guide students in writing an informational essay.

Student Instructions: Compose a well thought out short essay that addresses the following questions in informing your reader about the topic we have been studying. Be sure to include specific references to the text(s) that are correctly cited, use proper grammar, and include introductory and concluding statements as well as transitions where appropriate.

1. For each source, what is the primary message, in your own words?
2. Do any of the sources communicate the same or a similar message? If so, what?
3. Do any of the sources stand out as distinctly different? If so, which ones and how?
4. How do each of them have a unique and distinct voice, even if some of them share a perspective?
5. What, in your opinion, is the most credible view and why?

## Teaching Tool

### The Green Movement and Social Media in Iran: “We Are all Neda.”

On June 20, 2009, amid street protests in Tehran, 26-year-old Neda Agha-Soltan stepped out of her vehicle for fresh air, and was shot by the Basij, Iran’s revolutionary guard. The protests happening at the time of Neda’s death followed the 2009 re-election of Ahmadinejad, who many feel illegitimately stole the election from his opponent, Mir-Hossein Mousavi. This series of protests launched what is known as “the Green Movement.” The image of Neda’s death was reported around the world and her death became an important symbol for those resisting Iran’s government. Women, in particular, found inspiration in Neda, as they were specific targets of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s restrictions on dress and also participated in or led protests around the country. For many who lost their loved ones and never heard from them or knew what happened to them, Neda’s face became a symbol for those who died at the hands of Iran’s regime. “Neda” means “voice” in Persian; in a way, through her death, she became the voice of the Iranian opposition. Following Neda’s death, social media exploded with a video of her death and hashtags of #neda and #weareallneda.



I am Neda Button,  
Netherlands, 2009.

## Discussion Questions/Essay Topic:

Directions to teacher: The following questions can be used to either guide a student discussion or to guide students in writing an informational essay.

Student Instructions: Compose a well thought out short essay that addresses the following questions in informing your reader about the topic we have been studying. Be sure to include specific references to the text(s) that are correctly cited, use proper grammar, and include introductory and concluding statements as well as transitions where appropriate.

1. Research laws in Iran about women singing; why would Neda’s name be particularly moving to many people who oppose the government?
2. Neda was not looking to participate in the protests. Should she be upheld as a symbol of them?
3. Read this article commenting on the role of women in Iran’s society: Rich, Judith. "Can Women Change The Course Of History In Iran?" *Huffington Post*. Last modified July 25, 2009. Accessed July 19, 2015. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-judith-rich/can-women-change-the-cour\\_b\\_219313.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-judith-rich/can-women-change-the-cour_b_219313.html).

4. Discuss the following quotes that came from Tehran via Twitter posts. The quotes are pulled from the article referenced in question 3. Do you agree or disagree with the quotes and why or why not?

"It took only one bullet to kill Neda,. It will take only one Neda to stop Iranian tyranny."

"Neda died with open eyes. Shame on us who live with closed eyes."

"They killed Neda but not her voice."

5. Discuss the use of social media - why do you think Neda became such an important symbol for so many around the world (i.e. not just in Iran)?
6. Do you believe that women are on the cusp of change in Iran, as the article suggests? Why or why not?
7. Two years later in 2011, another death at the hands of police occurred in Alexandria, Egypt. The victim became central to a widespread campaign "We are Khalid Said." Read this article and explain any similarities you see in common: Londono, Ernesto. "Egyptian man's death became symbol of callous state." *The Washington Post*. Last modified February 8, 2011. Accessed July 19, 2015. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/08/AR2011020806360.html>

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## Common Core/Standards

### Common Core/Standards/College, Career, and Civic Life (C3)

#### Anchor Standards Reading

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##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1**

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4**

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10**

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

#### Anchor Standards Writing

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##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1**

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2**

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.5**

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

##### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.8**

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.



### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9**

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.10**

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

#### **Anchor Standards Speaking and Listening**

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### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1**

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4**

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.6**

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

## **Social Studies ELA Standards by Subject/Grade (9-10)**

#### **Reading: Literature » Grade 9-10**

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### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1**

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.

#### **Reading: Informational Text » Grade 9-10**

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### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1**

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.4**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative,

connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7**

Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.10**

By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literacy nonfiction in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

History/Social Studies » Grade 9-10

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**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.10**

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1**

Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.2**

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.4**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.5**

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.8**

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced

searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.9**

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.10**

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## **NCSS Themes**

### **1. Culture**

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Through the study of culture and cultural diversity, learners understand how human beings create, learn, share, and adapt to culture, and appreciate the role of culture in shaping their lives and society, as well the lives and societies of others. In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with geography, history, sociology, and anthropology, as well as multicultural topics across the curriculum.

### **2. Time, Continuity, and Change**

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Through the study of the past and its legacy, learners examine the institutions, values, and beliefs of people in the past, acquire skills in historical inquiry and interpretation, and gain an understanding of how important historical events and developments have shaped the modern world. This theme appears in courses in history, as well as in other social studies courses for which knowledge of the past is important.

### **4. Individual Development and Identity**

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Personal identity is shaped by family, peers, culture, and institutional influences. Through this theme, students examine the factors that influence an individual's personal identity, development, and actions. This theme typically appears in courses and units dealing with psychology, anthropology, and sociology.

### **9. Global Connections**

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The realities of global interdependence require an understanding of the increasingly important and diverse global connections among world societies. This theme prepares students to study issues arising from globalization. It typically appears in units or courses dealing with geography, culture, economics, history, political science, government, and technology.

## NCSS C3 Framework

### *D2.Eco.3.9-12.*

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Analyze the ways in which incentives influence what is produced and distributed in a market system.

### *D2.Geo.4.9-12.*

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Analyze relationships and interactions within and between human and physical systems to explain reciprocal influences that occur among them.

### *D2.Geo.5.9-12.*

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Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.

### *D2.His.3.9-12.*

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Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.