

FEMINIST CITIES AND RELIGION



RE-IMAGINING CAPE TOWN AS A WOMEN-FRIENDLY CITY

WOMEN'S DAY
WEBINAR

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Feminism, Cities and Religion



Cities

- Historically women's voices and bodies and safety have been (still are?) disregarded in the design of our cities.*
- A feminist perspective identifies & challenges male-centred design of the spaces and rhythm of a city that exclude women and perpetuate patriarchal norms that privilege men and discriminate against women.

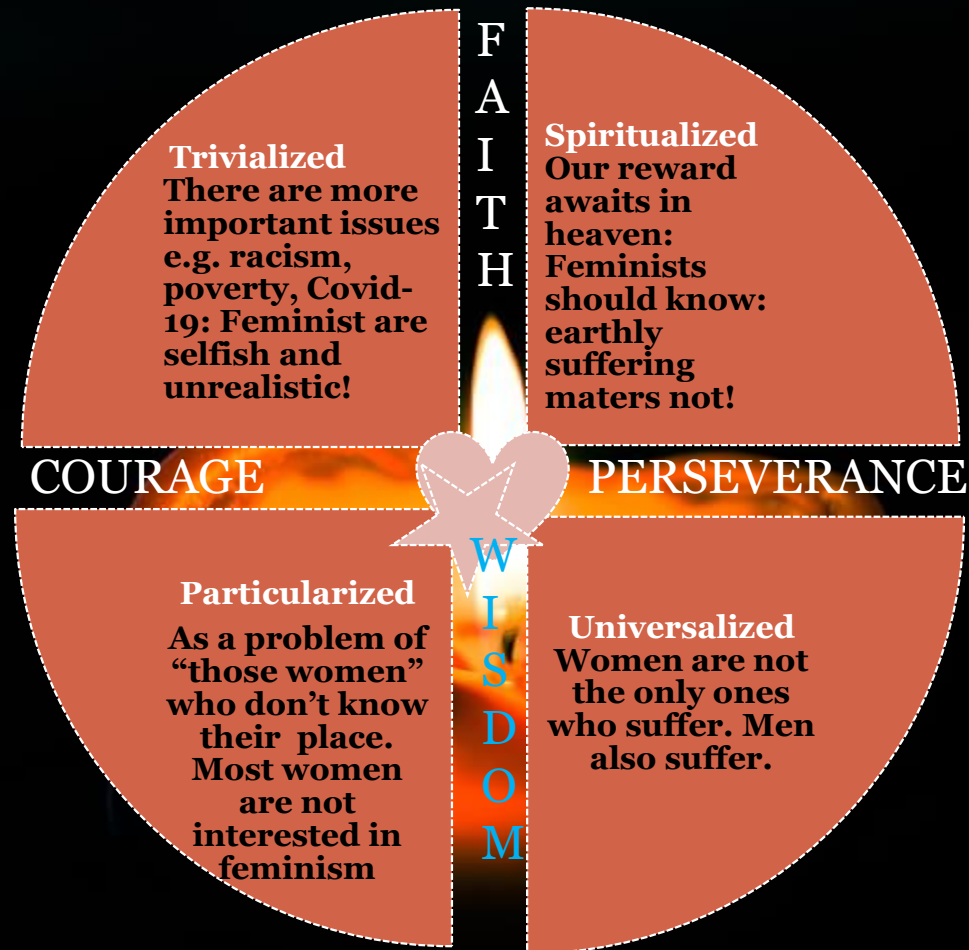
*See Leslie Kern 2020. "Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-made World"

Religion

- Historically women's voices (and bodies) have been (still are?) excluded from certain 'sacred' spaces and practices.
- A feminist perspective recognises patriarchy as an oppressive system of oppression that justifies male-headship in relationships. Feminist theologians seek to expose the patriarchal bias that is embedded in the sacred and they dispel the dualism operative in private/ public spheres.

See Miranda Pillay 2013. "The Anglican Church and Feminism: Challenging 'the Patriarchy of Our Faith'"

Feminist Insights are often Dismissed



(Mary Daly, 1973; Miranda Pillay 2013)

Women-Friendly Cities

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Copenhagen



Amsterdam



Vancouver



Singapore



Auckland

<http://www.thestorypedia.com/entertainment/5-women-friendly-cities-world/> (2018)

Cape Town...



10 August 2020

GBV ... VAW & Femicide



Uyinene Mrwetyana

I was raped and murdered in a post office before my body was dumped.

I was 19 years old.

#WeRemember



#AmINext

Meghan Cremer

I was found dumped in a sand mine with a rope around my neck.

I was 30 years old.

#WeRemember



#IAmNotNext

Jesse Hess

I was killed alongside my 85-year-old grandfather in our flat.

I was 19 years old.

#WeRemember



#EnoughIsEnough

Women, Religion and Patriarchy



- Women are no longer the silenced majority.
- While public protests, and the call to end GBVF from government and civil society – including our faith communities are necessary intervention strategies, **hope for safer lived-realities for women hinges firmly on challenging the patriarchal status quo...** challenging grand narratives that ignore women's lived-reality and agency.

Role of religion in a City for all?



**Many policy/ law makers are members
of a faith community**

Oppressive

- ✓ follow the ‘normal’ dominant culture (maintaining status quo) excludes, marginalizes, exploits ‘others’ through arrogant, superior attitudes & practices shaped by inherent biases and/ or systemic racism, classism & sexism.
- ✓ Hierarchical

Transformative

- ❖ seek ‘freedom’ for all (counter-cultural) where all can flourish and have “abundant life” shaped by a spirit of justice, solidarity and community
- ❖ Relational – principle/ norm of most (if not all) religions.

ON RE-IMAGINING CAPE TOWN AS A WOMEN-FRIENDLY CITY



Calls for Corrective Action:

- 1. Be intentional** about listening to what and how women experience previously male-dominated spaces.
- 2. Validate** women's experiences
- 3. Explore alternative** practices/ operations that will open opportunities for women to access services and resources in a safe, women-friendly environment

In Summary



- Hope for safer lived-realities for women hinges firmly on feminist insights to recognize and challenge privileges afforded to men by patriarchal norms operative in families, communities of faith, places of work, etc.
- Generally, all religions hold relational values such as solidarity, community, common vulnerability and they hold the potential to inspire their adherents to advocate for the well-being and flourishing of all.
- City planners and policy-makers are (more often than not) also people of faith who can influence and shape outcomes that are just, liberative and equitable for women and “deliberately silenced or preferably unheard voices”.

Sources



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