

Islam, Women, and Phyllis Chesler

Bruce Bawer writes in [collection](#) of articles, *Islamic Gender Apartheid: Exposing a Veiled War against Woman*, is shot through with a notes-from-the-front-lines urgency and a righteous rage. The earliest of these pieces date back to 2003; the most recent are a few months old. Together, they form a chronicle of the post-9/11 era as observed by the only top-tier second-wave American feminist who – as the pernicious patriarchy of the Muslim world was increasingly introduced into the West – remained true to her values, consistent in ideology and in principles. Other feminists, including the entire academic Women's Studies establishment, have linked arms with the sharia crowd. They've preached that it's wrong for Westerners, operating from positions of post-colonialist privilege and power, to profess to "save the brown woman from the brown man." They've made a heroine out of the vile, hijab-clad Linda Sarsour, a booster of sharia and apologist for jihad whose star turn at the Women's March on Washington last January catapulted her to international fame. Even to suggest that such a person can be a feminist in any reasonable sense of the word is, of course, right out of 1984: war is peace, freedom is slavery, Sarsour is a feminist.

But that's the consensus now. And Chesler? Well, Chesler, in the eyes of her former sisters, is a traitor to the movement. Just ask feminist blogger Ellen Keim, who in a 2011 [mocked](#) Chesler's "ideas" about women and Islam. Triumphantly, the blogger cited a recent lecture in which an "Islamist Feminist" explained it all: Egypt's January 25, 2011, revolution had actually been spearheaded by "highly-educated, professional, working women" who helped install Morsi's "Islamic, patriarchal society" because they knew the latter would afford better protection "from gropings on the street" – plus better

health care and day care – than Mubarak's secular state did. (No, this is not a joke.)

This foolishness, this madness – this outright patriarchy-worship in the guise of feminism, this perverse insistence that political virtue always consists in taking the side of “the other,” even if “the other” is out to oppress or rape or even kill you – this is what Chesler is up against. And her only weapon is the facts. That's what this book is – 462 pages of facts about a culture whose systematic abuse of women she refuses to stop talking about. In these pieces, she takes us to Iran and Iraq, Sudan and Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Syria and Turkey, Nigeria and Pakistan, and France and Britain and the U.S. She attends to such phenomena as forced marriage, underage brides, honor killings, female genital mutilation (FGM), Muslim family rapes, female suicide bombers (and their Western defenders), splenetic Muslim cabdrivers in New York, slaveholding by a Muslim millionaire on Long Island, and much else. Not to mention plenty about burkas – about a burka ban in Syria, proposals for burka bans in the West, opponents of burka bans in the West, fights over the burka in Nantes, riots over the burka in Paris, and so on.

It's all there in Chesler's book. But the people who most need to read this stuff and take it to heart – the Women's March marchers, the pussy-hat wearers, the would-be glass-ceiling-breakers like Lena Dunham and self-described “nasty women” like Ashley Judd – they'll probably never go near this book. As for Women's Studies, of which Chesler is one of the founding mothers, it has – as Chesler herself laments in these pages – been “Stalinized,” shifting its concern from “the ‘occupation’ of women's bodies worldwide” to “the alleged occupation of a country that has never existed: ‘Palestine.’” In 2015, the Women's Studies Association (WSA) actually voted to boycott Israel, the only country in the Middle East where women actually enjoy full equality. Meanwhile, as Chesler points out, the WSA hasn't bothered to condemn the brutal

treatment of women by Hamas, ISIS, Boko Haram, or the Taliban. It hasn't condemned forced veiling in Saudi Arabia or FGM in Egypt. Across the Muslim world, little girls are forced into "marriages" with elderly men who already have other wives – but the WSA considers it inappropriate for Western women to comment on the practices of non-Western men.

This is official feminism in 2017. It is a mark of her strength of character, her enduring warrior spirit, and her fierce, abiding devotion to freedom and equality for all women that Phyllis Chesler refuses to be a part of it and isn't cowed for a moment by any of the noxious name-calling she's routinely subjected to.