

Dr. Nawal El Saadawi

2017 4W Summit on Women, Gender and Well-being

UW-Madison

Dr. Nawal El Saadawi (Egypt) was unable to participate in the 4W Summit in the April 28th plenary as scheduled. The plenary was entitled “Transformative Transnational Feminism: Theory and Praxis for the Future of Feminism.” Below are her intended responses to the questions posed by the plenary facilitators Dr. Devaleena Das (India) and Dr. Colette Morrow (USA)

1. As feminist writers and activists with your individual intersectional layers of identity, what challenges did each of you face in your life and how did you transgress them? How do you see those challenges in the context of global feminism?

The most important challenges I face in my life are the following:

- Lack of solidarity between global and local groups of feminisms;
- Lack of awareness of the linkage between the global and the local or the “glocal;”
- Lack of the linkages between global capitalist colonialist religious patriarchal racist exploitation and women’s oppression in our countries;
- Concentration on Islam as the only oppressive religion on earth;
- Lack of comparative studies of different religions;
- Submission to the aggression of super powers (with military nuclear economic media weapons), against women and the poor, especially USA – Israeli aggression in our region (the so called Middle East);
- Inability to decolonize the language, gender and the economy in our countries;
- The abortion of recent revolutions in our countries and globally;
- The Hegemony of the so called Free Market and sexual trafficking in women, poor men, and children;
- Different and conflicting conceptions of feminisms;
- Identity politics that divide us and veil our mind, (divide and rule, veil and rule);
- The white savior complex: white middle class women, unaware of class race and colonial capitalist oppression, trying to protect other women;
- I do not like the word “other.”

2. *In what ways we can bring more ideas to feminisms from outside the US into the US especially in this era of Islamophobia so that international feminists and scholars can visit or teach here easily. How do we open the academy as well as specific activist partnerships to transnational feminist voices?*

This question to be directed mainly to feminists in the USA. Also the word 'Islamophobia' is vague and should be clarified. We need to know who are the global-local (glocal) capitalist patriarchal colonial powers that helped the growth of fanatic Islamic groups such as El Qaida, Taliban, Muslim Brothers, Boko Haram, Daesh and others.

Also the economic military powers behind the Judeo-Christian fanatic groups in the USA, Europe, Israel and others. To analyze and understand other religious fundamentalist groups in the world. We need transnational progressive brave voices regardless of gender or class or religion or race or other.

3. *How to avoid white savior complex -- white women "protecting" the "other" women*

This problem needs more awareness and understanding from both sides. We need more dialogues and more equal exchange of experience and knowledge .

4. *How to avoid feminist Orientalism?*

By more studies and more democratic discussions: not dominated by the more rich or more powerful.

5. *Do you think that we can frame guidelines for outsiders critiquing another cultural system?*

We should be free to criticize ourselves and others. We should be free to criticize any political, personal, religious, cultural, economic, or social system. But freedom should not be split from responsibility, sympathy and knowledge. I have to study your culture very well to be able to criticize it with no biases. Nobody has the right to frame guide lines for the others (so called outsiders). We live in one world dominated by one oppressive, inhuman system and should fight together, globally and locally to build a better world. I do not like the word "Outsiders"

Nawal El Saadawi

Cairo Egypt

4th April 2017