

Book Review

Zaleski, K., Enrile, A., Weiss, E.L., Wang, X. (Eds.). (2020). *Women's journey to empowerment in the 21st century: A transnational feminist analysis of women's lives in modern times*. Oxford University Press.

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Globally speaking, some say we live in a troubled world. Among a small circle of associates, friends, and family, discussions about the difficult problems we face and their possible solutions are frequent. Among this group, the questions are: "What can be done, and where do we start?" *Women's Journey to Empowerment in the 21st Century* addresses these questions on a global scale, focusing on specific international problems and their solutions. It is an excellent book and a good read. Empowerment of women is not a single issue; it is the combination of gender, race, class, culture and political factors that encourages violence against women and fosters inequality.

Women's Journey to Empowerment in the 21st Century: A Transnational Feminist Analysis of Women's Lives in Modern Times is organized into four sections. The first section describes the impact of climate change on women (Chapter 1), pregnancy among African American women (Chapter 2), rural education of girls in China (Chapter 3), sexual assault on college campuses in the United States (Chapter 4), trauma and healing among the women of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe (Chapter 5) and, finally, issues women of color face in academia (Chapter 6).

The statistics in each chapter supporting the specific topic illustrate how serious the challenges are for women, globally. Chapter 1 states that women produce 87% of the crops in Ghana, making climate conditions not only important to the economy but,

also, essential to the nutrition of Ghanaians. Infant and maternal mortality rates, described in Chapter 2, cite the disparity between mortality rates of white and Black babies in the United States. Twice the number of Black babies do not survive past their first birthday compared to white babies. Chapter 3 compares the impact of education on rural versus urban girls in China. According to the authors, young urban women aspire to higher education. Higher education leads to greater control of resources and results in an increase in family well-being.

Chapter 4 in Section I, discusses the need for restructuring reporting protocols and increasing prevention programs regarding sexual assault on U.S. college campuses. Chapter 5 describes the need for better cross-cultural sensitivity training for mental health professionals who work with American Indians and Alaskan Natives. In addition, this chapter advocates for an increase in recruiting of mental health workers among Native communities. Finally, Chapter 6 defines hegemonic masculinity, the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, and white fragility. This chapter suggests that even a minimum amount of racial stress can trigger defensiveness and a display of emotions among whites in the academic environment.

Section II considers the impact of social media on acts of online sexual assault, honor killings, normalization of sexual taboos in Japan, and the impact of Egyptian women speaking up. Chapter 7 discusses internet non-consensual image sharing

(NCIS), which is image-based, sexual exploitation, and abuse. The author cites a study (Lenhart et al., 2016), which reports that 1 in 25 Americans are victims of NCIS. Chapter 7 concludes that more research and policy analysis should be conducted in order to address NCIS. Chapter 8 suggests that in order for honor-based violence to decrease in Pakistan, improved state policies and an increase in social awareness must be addressed. Sexual violence also occurs in Japan as evidenced by the percentage of women groped on trains by men. Chapter 9 reports that the problem in Japan is so serious that there are women-only trains! Section II concludes with a chapter describing the importance of young women's voices in raising awareness of inequality and abuse in Egypt. Sexual harassment has been reported by 99% of Egyptian women.

Section III in *Women's Journey to Empowerment in the 21st Century* continues the theme of gender equity, gender violence, and politics. Chapters 11 through 16 describe the impact of increasing violence due to isolation of specific groups of women. Chapters 11 and 16 describe the isolation of female victims of rape when rape is a weapon of war. As seen in previous chapters, people with economic and political power ignore and isolate women who have been raped by soldiers. Chapters 12, 13 and 14 describe how child marriage (Chapter 12), widowhood (Chapter 13), and religious doctrine (Chapter 14) increase the chances of isolation for these groups of women. Isolation results in lack of equal protection under the law and equal access to healthcare.

The chapters in Section IV describe the issue of intimate partner violence in China, Kyrgyzstan, and Trinidad and Tobago. Chapter 18 addresses the prevalence of dating violence in China where one out of five college students report abuse in dating relationships. Chapter 19 is about female, same-sex violence in China, advocating a transnational approach of intersectionality. Same-sex violence occurs around the world in vastly different cultures, which is why a contextual perspective is necessary. Section IV ends with issues of violence in cults and

in the U.S. military. These chapters underscore the issue of violence when it is exacerbated by profound powerlessness.

The second wave of feminism in the late 1960s focused on the problems of inequality between genders in the United States. Much was accomplished. *Women's Journey to Empowerment in the 21st Century: A Transnational Feminist Analysis of Women's Lives in Modern Times* brings the global problems of inequality and violence against women to the forefront. These global issues, for the most part, are being addressed locally, often by the victims themselves. Bringing these issues forward on the global stage can, perhaps, support local workers by advocating policy, law, and social change worldwide. This book does an excellent job of presenting the challenges and addressing potential solutions.

References

Lenhart, A. et al. (2014). *Couples, the internet, and social media*. Pew Research Center. <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2014/couples-and-theinternet.aspx>