

A Memoir

"Ellinor Forje is a disgusting woman." This is a comment I discovered in 2015 on the social media platform Reddit, after I had published a book and film review of "Desert Flower" based on model and activist Waris Dirie's life. In an interview I had conducted with Dirie prior, she had condemned the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and I, in my subsequent assessment, followed suit.

The statement of opinion that earned me the Scarlet Letter was posted on one of the sub categories pertaining to men, written by a man or someone representing one on the site. The argument was essentially: If I could damn FGM then I should equally damn Male Circumcision because what is essentially the difference?

I never replied. I will now. There is a difference. Period.

I created my blog eight years ago, the goal was to include as many different voices as possible of women and men who create the cultural landscape in which we reside. I sought a visible representation of what is possible. Evading no one. So again, in 2015, when I was sent an email from the publicist for the horror flick, "The Human Centipede III", I, in my habitual ritual, googled all the actors to find more about them and in the act stumbled on former adult actress Bree Olsen and her then website.

Granted, it was carnal and the published images mainly for the male-gaze. However, what caught my attention was a blog she was running on there, the language concise, dynamic, opinionated and vivid.

But why would you interview a porn star, what does she have to say about anything regarding women? I am going to tell you implicitly, in a minute.

Public speaking is not something that comes naturally to me. To complete this assignment, I had to study it as a discipline. Researching, reading, and listening to the great speakers of our time and their iconic messages. Not stopping there but venturing back to the documented frameworks of ancient Greece and ancient Rome, and Marcus Tullius Cicero, the consul who turned the art of speaking into a science.

Cicero tells me that among four other things the orator should expose their speech with the art of gravitas, dignity, gesture, and skiftning of voice and face. To find inspiration for this modulation the orator must turn to the thespians.

I did, although I already knew that it would be a task finding my own reflection, in a world where motion pictures has proven to influence human behavior. They way we view ourselves. In this domain of cinema, like elsewhere, men reign supreme. And they are afforded a narrative that women often are not. Dimension, depth, and constructed diversity. Whereas women are or have very often been portrayed through a singular lense. Nevertheless, both cases having a direct impact on the psyche of its observer.

It is to the extreme where men can play villains and men of virtue equally and be praised

for either portrayal. This is the norm. And soon we will have movie upon us entitled "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood", a film depicting the life of American criminal and cult leader Charles Manson. Consequently, cementing his place in human history. Almost glorifying it.

Let me be clear, the intention is not to bash men. Quentin Tarantino is a director whose artistry I admire, and this admiration extends to the others involved in his upcoming project. Also, to Manson's defense, he never killed anyone, or so says the legend. And if you are wondering why these words I sound like poetry of a beautiful melody in your ears, it is because I have emulated a performance technique put forward by Winston Churchill.

Men are useful, you see.

Jests aside, defining what is as opposed to what could be is an enormous task. Although we live in an increasingly digitalized world where the media is easy accessible, women, for a plethora of reasons, are still restricted from harnessing the benefits this access brings. Thusly, using media as a tool to fortify women by just throwing technology at a deeply rooted problem, is not going to solve it.

It is of interest therefore to investigate the major factors influencing gender discrimination, the potential role of Media and Information Literacy (MIL), why women and disenfranchised groups in developing countries especially, have been relatively slow in using the media to successfully voice out their opinions in various spheres.

The historic lack of representation (or lush misrepresentation) appears to be the key culprit. Although we are in the mist of a revolution, the marginalization and systemic abuse has left an infected wound. The mis-education is filled with a reverberating sound, or as Carter Godwin Woodson would eloquently describe the syndrom "If you can control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his action. When you determine what a man shall think you do not have to concern yourself about what he will do. If you make a man feel that he is inferior, you do not have to compel him to accept an inferior status, for he will seek it himself. If you make a man think that he is justly an outcast, you do not have to order him to the back door. He will go without being told; and if there is no back door, his very nature will demand one."

Hence, whereas young boys take in the genius of Albert Einstein and the ferocious battles fought by Ghengis Khan, their counterparts gain an understanding of how Cleoptra triumphantly seduced Julius Ceasar and Mark Anthony. Girls never acquire a knowledge of how Cleopatra and her sisters received the same education as their brothers, how she was proficient in many languages, and how she ruled Egypt.

A history hidden.

And speaking of female sovereigns, in a nation as progressive as the UK it is astounding that the reality of the matter is that in a majority of its museums, art does not imitate life. According to data collected by Gørrill and Gabril, women contribute between only two and seven percent of the art hanging on the walls in the majority of most major galleries, with the gender income gap skewed in the favour of male artists.

This sort of data is essential to achieving the target of increased visibility of women in the media. Cross generational as well as cross cultural experiences of girls and women, and the barriers they face in their day to day lives, have to be effectively monitored and recorded for posterity.

What is more, as we incorporate more technology as a part of our basic necessity of life, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is going to play an extensive role, and so is data-driven view to gender equity. It is imperative therefore that the next frontier is gender-balanced to avoid the highly Sci-Fi scenario of man versus machine when of bridges can be built in the contemporary. What is? As opposed to, What could be? - Is a future that is more equal and humanlike.

As an added bonus, I am going to share an excerpt of my Interview with the Porn Star. She is actually a former one, but the image of her previous profession will stigmatize her for the rest of her life

Also, Disclaimer: I am not promoting this industry, I am highlighting why a platform is a necessity for all women: Inspiration is not singular.

WHERE DO YOU POSITION YOURSELF IN THE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT MOVEMENT?

It's getting to a point where it sickens me that women's equality is still a topic. The millennium hasn't been about equality as commercials of an assortment of races and genders claim it to be. The millennium is better at masking gender and race discrimination. It's without question, the higher you go in almost any company, it becomes predominantly white males. There are white women, black men and women, Hispanic men and women that are just as qualified. At most we just see them sprinkled about just enough for a company to not be able to be held accountable.

We're still living from a place when physical strength was a means for survival and in most instances that was the male. Now we live in a time where the most important attributes to being successful are found just as commonly in females as males such as intelligence, perseverance and creativity just to name a few.

I used to be "anti-feminism" because I didn't know what it meant. I thought it meant to hate men or to try and make them feel lesser than. That's just not the case at all. Being a feminist is just wanting the same equalities as a man. To be equal to. In my opinion, I think this benefits the man. Perhaps if we all did what made sense rather than what society has brainwashed us with, most men wouldn't buy dinner on every date, most men wouldn't feel defeated if their female spouse makes close to what they make or more. And most importantly if we were able to take down these very specific walls of gender that society has built, men could feel free to be themselves, to be more sensitive if they wanted to be. "Be a man." What is this? Most commonly applied to little boys when telling them not to cry. Let them cry. Let them laugh. Let them cross their legs. We are all human beings and we should all have the same opportunities given our skill sets without bias and discrimination.

