

Panel II: Gender and Sexuality in North Africa

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Paper Title: *“Between Two Jailers”: Women’s Experience During Colonialism, War, and Independence in Algeria*

Abstract: Although women fought alongside men during the Algerian war for independence (1954-1962), they were treated as second-class citizens afterwards and denied their full rights. I will argue that in doing so, the men in power effectively hindered the progress of their nation.

My thesis will focus on the actions and treatment of Algerian women during French colonialism, the war, and postwar society after independence. The war precipitated a global conversation about the struggle of the colonized, but the role of women was often excluded or distorted. This paper will address the relationship among historical bias, sexism, colonialism, and patriarchy that has influenced this topic.

I will also compare the ways in which the French and Algerian sides controlled and manipulated the social and political roles of women. The idealized constructs of gender assumed by both Algerian men and the French colonial regime were used to project a certain image of women that benefited their own interests, with little tangible effects for women themselves.

By examining the broader relationship among nationalism, race, class, and gender and using comparisons to the recent Arab Spring revolutions, I will argue that women must be given the power to fully engage in decisions that support their own development and I will address the factors that prevented this from happening in Algeria. My research highlights how women’s empowerment and participation is critical to the economic, political, and social development of a postwar society.