

Reimagining History through Women's Lives: A Gendered Analysis of the Algerian War of Independence

Chiara Valenti

Abstract

This article explores the role women's agency played in the fight for, and development of, post-colonial Algeria. The perspectives and lived experiences of women, especially women of colour, have been excluded from both the discipline and practice of International Relations as a result of its patriarchal and Eurocentric foundations. By adopting a post-colonial feminist perspective on the development of feminist movements in Algeria, this article allows for an examination of the ways in which women's bodies were appropriated by colonial agendas, and how these women fought these oppressive principles as well as the Islamic fundamentalism that surged during and after France's rule.

Keywords: gender, Algerian Liberation, colonization, Eurocentrism, FLN.

Introduction

In a time when we are called to reform repressive structures based on privileged histories, a starting point in this process of unlearning is to reimagine history through the lives of those rendered invisible by its writers. The voices and lived experiences of women of colour have long been excluded from both the discipline and practice of International Relations; an unsurprising consequence of its patriarchal and Eurocentric foundations. This Eurocentric and male-centric bias has led to a stunted history, one that omits the lived experiences of those repressed because of their race, gender, class, religion, and/or sexual orientation, and fails to acknowledge their instrumentalization by those in power, as well as their contributions to social and political movements for freedom across time and space. Once such belittled history is that of the role played by women of colour in the fight for liberation from colonial empires. Algeria is one such case. And one way to reimagine history is through these women's lives.

This article will begin by analysing feminist perspectives on colonial and post-colonial discourses by outlining a post-modern and post-colonial critique of feminist epistemology. It will examine how

Algerian women's bodies were appropriated by the French colonial agenda, and how this led to the development of feminist movements in Algeria. The women of these movements went on to be fundamental to the Algerian fight for liberation from France's colonial rule, and consequently shaped the progress of women's rights in Algeria. Finally, we will investigate the shift of Algerian women from active participants to silent bystanders in post-colonial Algeria, leading them to take the promotion of their rights into their own hands.

Feminist Epistemology and its Post-Modern and Post-Colonial Critique

The engendering of history begins with questioning the ways in which patriarchal structures have led to a production of knowledge that is male-biased, ahistorical, and imposing of incomplete universal truths.¹ Truths that apply the male experience, of today and yesterday, as all-encompassing, consequently neglecting women's experiences and producing a partial perspective. This is not to say that feminist theory, specifically White Neo-Liberal feminism, has not created universal truths of its own, ones that overlook racial, cultural, and historical specificities of women of colour. In their denial of race and of the socio-historical context that informs their feminism, White Neo-Liberal feminists have become the oppressor and silencer of coloured voices. Thus, to truly redefine the male-focused and Eurocentric standpoints prevalent in the mainstream production of knowledge, feminist epistemologies must begin from previously disregarded female experiences. One such branch of feminist epistemology is post-colonial feminist theory, which concerns itself with the representation of women in once colonized countries and in western locations, and the ways in which women of colour's oppression not only as colonized subjects, but as racialized women.² To better understand post-colonial feminism, it is necessary to first look at feminist epistemology, and the post-modern critique of it.

Feminist epistemology's crux is that gender is a set of socially constructed definitions of what we mean by 'masculinity' and

¹ Amanda Gouws, "Feminist Epistemology and Representation: The Impact of Post-Modernism and Post-Colonialism," *African e-Journals Project* 30 (1996), 66-82; 66.

² Ritu Tyagi, "Understanding Postcolonial Feminism in relation with Postcolonial and Feminist Theories," *International Journal of Language and Linguistics* 1 no. 2 (December 2014): 45-50.

'femininity', creating a social hierarchy wherein masculine characteristics are deemed more valuable than feminine ones.³ The result is not only unequal power structures, but a reality that is methodically male-biased, and considers competent theory that which has been interpreted in masculinized ways.⁴ Thus, a feminist standpoint claims that general knowledge is socially constructed and thus situated in such a way to reflect the biased opinion of the dominant group; in this case, white men. A feminist approach reshapes knowledge through *gender-sensitive lenses*,⁵ changing the context of discovery and justification as it redirects the attention to women's lives and creates *women's knowledge*.⁶ *Women's knowledge* recognizes how knowledge is socially constructed according to sociological, cultural, and historical relativism of the cultural agendas that shape the power relations that cause gender inequality; or what Sandra Harding calls *strong objectivity*.⁷

The creation of *women's knowledge* brings forth a magnitude of deviations from mainstream knowledge production. *Women's knowledge* overcomes the subjectivity of Eurocentric and male-biased epistemology by making the lived experiences of women starting points for research. Feminist theory can reconceptualize the production of knowledge in complex ways because of how women's marginalization from the social order renders them weary of its dysfunctional nature. Women's subjugation incentivizes them to be aware of the different facets of oppression, giving research insights on the lives of the oppressed. It is important to note, however, that feminist theory is not based on the biological differences between men and women, nor does it claim that *women's knowledge* is morally or theoretically superior. Moreover, in creating *women's knowledge* feminists often create generalizations and universal truths of their own, and consequently exclude different intersections within gendered oppression. Post-modernism critiques this aspect of feminist epistemology. 'The production of knowledge according to post-modern assumptions rejects reason and universality as bases for knowledge'.⁸ It deems the creation of universal categories (such as

³ John Baylis, *Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 260.

⁴ Alison Jagger, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1983), 385.

⁵ Baylis, *Globalization of World Politics*, 263.

⁶ Gouws, "Feminist Epistemology and Representation," 67.

⁷ Sandra G. Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 138.

⁸ Gouws, "Feminist Epistemology and Representation," 70.

women) to be ethnocentric and the claims that derive from these categories as biased to the experience of a minority of people (such as white women).⁹ In order to fully contest and reject male-biased and Eurocentric knowledge production, feminist theory cannot afford to make sweeping statements across the category of women. By rendering gender a monolithic entity, White Neo-Liberal feminism fails to acknowledge how race, class, religion, sexuality, and other social identities intersect with gender to create multiplicities of oppression.¹⁰ By acknowledging these intersecting vulnerabilities, the experience of women across spatial, temporal, and social paradigms expose the institutionalized intersections of societal vulnerability that allow for oppression to occur. Therefore, intersectionality is paramount to produce fundamentally reconstitutive knowledge.

Post-colonial feminist theory expands this post-modern critique by analysing the power relations experienced by women in post-colonial societies. It concentrates on the construction of gender and the representation of women in both colonial and post-colonial discourses. Thus, post-colonial feminist theory is born out of a struggle against post-colonial and feminist theorists, both of which silence the lived experiences of women in post-colonial societies in different ways. As a term, post-colonial is defined as resistance to colonial power, and its discourses focus on subverting the colonizers' distorted power narratives that inscribed colonized people as non-human or inferior. Eurocentric knowledge production refers to the racialization of knowledge, and the representation of Europe as the source of knowledge and Europeans as knowers.¹¹ Post-colonial knowledge considers the lives and literature of the colonized subject the starting point for knowledge production, allowing for a disruption of the colonizer's authority and a reclaiming of history. While White Neo-Liberal feminism critiques of post-colonial theory as male-centred in its exclusion and exploitation of women's experiences, post-colonial feminism takes it a step further by acknowledging its obliteration and misinterpretation of women's roles in struggles for independence. Nationalist discourses' male-centrism is undeniable;

⁹ Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," in Linda J. Nicholson, *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 430.

¹⁰ Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241-299.

¹¹ Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, "Conceptualizing Gender: The Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies," *Jenda* 2, no. 3 (2002): 1-9.

however, Western feminism has also contributed to the oppression of the colonized female body and identity. In their eagerness to be the saviours of women of colour, White Western feminists have overlooked racial, cultural, and historical specificities that shape *Third World Women*. Post-colonial feminists reject this concept of *Third World Women* as it generalises women from these societies into a homogenous group that experience oppression in the same way by being only victims of underdevelopment, oppressive traditions and cultures, poverty, and religion extremism.¹² Consequently, post-colonial feminists analyse women's struggles in relation to their social location and the historical specificity of their struggles rather than generalising very different societies into a singular homogenous group on the basis of the economic development of a region.¹³

Post-colonial feminist theory agrees with post-modernism in its rejection of generalizations. However, it challenges the authority of White feminists who, in attempting to include all women, fail to acknowledge the importance of each woman's social and historical background, creating an erroneously generalized group. Post-colonial feminism is grounded in histories of racism and imperialism, thus acknowledging the multiplicity of oppressions that lead to the social and political marginality of women in colonial and post-colonial societies. While post-colonial discourse prioritizes the voice of the colonized subject, post-colonial feminism prioritizes voices of colonized women in its creation of oppositional agency. In doing so, it refutes White feminism's monolith of *Third World Women* and recognises the differences and contradictions inherent to the organizations and communities of *Third World Women*. While White Western feminism omits the deep imbrication of race in their gender analysis, post-colonial feminism exposes the ways in which gender and race were employed by the West as tools of domination that established binarily opposed and hierarchal social categories.¹⁴ This is the focus that will be woven throughout the rest of the article to analyse the ways in which French colonial agendas appropriated Algerian women's bodies and identities, and how these women fought the oppressive structures of colonialism and Islamic fundamentalism throughout Algeria's fight for liberation and post-colonial restructuring.

¹² Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 5.

¹³ Mohanty, et. al., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, 10

¹⁴ María Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007): 186-219.

Algeria unveiled and the development of feminist movement

The French military conquest of Algeria in 1830 was quickly followed by its colonization that lasted until 1962. Algeria was colonized through extreme violence, the extermination of villages, the expropriation of land and the capturing of women and children as war booty. Despite their inhumane efforts, France failed to thoroughly crack down on Algerian resistance. The French administration resorted to destroying Algerian's culture and traditions in order to provoke assimilation and decrease the chance of retaliation to French rule. The Algerian woman became the symbol of this struggle.

The French coloniser's fascination with the Algerian woman resulted from the stereotypical image devised by earlier colonizers of the North African region of an exotic beauty hidden behind a veil. White male colonizers had rendered women of colour and their homeland an exotic paradise, wherein their self-imposed sovereignty legitimized their appropriation of these women's bodies, identities, and land.¹⁵ Early colonisers had perpetrated this idea that women of colour hid a romantic exoticism and sensuality behind their veil. As Frantz Fanon puts it, this 'woman who sees without being seen frustrates the colonizer'¹⁶. When met with veiled women, this visual and physical barrier to their object of possession led to an aggressive reaction by the white colonizer. Thus, in addition to the pillaging of the country and the confiscation of property, the colonizer sought to possess the colonized women through rape. The French conquest of Algeria contributed to this image of the Algerian woman possessing 'an aura of rape about her', which is always preceded by her *unveiling* in European men's dreams – 'a double deflowering' as Fanon puts it.¹⁷ This is representative of what feminist legal discourse defines as "rape as a weapon of war" as this "double deflowering" was not merely a by-product of the conflict between the colonizers and the colonized. Rather, it was systemic, pervasive and orchestrated, making sexual violence an integral step within a planned and targeted policy.¹⁸ It was paramount to the colonial agenda in that not only did it allow for the

¹⁵ Zahia Smail Salhi, "Colonial Visual Representations of the 'Femmes d'Alger'," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 1, no. 1 (2008): 81.

¹⁶ Frantz Fanon, 'Algeria Unveiled' in Diana Brydon, ed., *Postcolonialism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, [1965] 2001), 1164.

¹⁷ Fanon, 'Algeria Unveiled', 1165.

¹⁸ Doris E. Buss, "Rethinking 'Rape as a Weapon of War'," *Feminist Legal Studies* 17, no. 2 (2009), 145–63; 145–147.

colonizer to appropriate themselves of Algerian women's bodies, but was also perceived as an appropriation of their men-folk's property.¹⁹ This reveals the multifaceted layers of patriarchal violence experienced by Algerian women in the colonization of their land. In their identity as cornerstones of Algerian culture, Algerian women were considered strategic targets by the French and seen as the gateway to accomplishing the disintegration of Algerian resistance. As a result, Algerian men secluded their women from public life to avoid the humiliation of their women's *double deflowering*.

An integral part of a culture is clothing, and, as Frantz Fanon points out, the veil worn by women is a major characteristic of Arab society.²⁰ And although Arab society has always presented a patrilineal pattern, its structure is matrilineal. As a result, the French devised a precise colonial doctrine: 'If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity of resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves'.²¹ The discourse behind the *unveiling* of the Algerian woman began with the European man's white saviour complex. In depicting women of colour as oppressed victims of their culture and religion, and men of colour as the perpetrators of this subjugation, colonizers were able to further their agenda of 'civilizing the uncivilized'. The French administration perceived, and depicted, the Algerian man as the vulgar guardian of the veiled woman, with no respect for women to the point of dehumanizing and demonizing her.²² This same rhetoric underlines White feminism's generalizations of *Third World Women*, rendering their analyses of the female colonial experiences obsolete. This instrumentalization of Algerian women by the French colonial agenda is the feminization of the colonized state. The binarily opposed and hierarchal social categories of gender and race were reflected in the dichotomy of dominant and dominated, classifying Algeria as feminine and France as masculine, and therefore dominant. Post-colonial feminism's acknowledgement of this pervasive victimization of women of colour reveals the ways in which race and gender were instrumentalized by the French as pretexts for their colonization.

¹⁹ Zahia Smail Salhi, "The Algerian Feminist Movement between Nationalism, Patriarchy and Islamism," *Women's Studies International Forum* 33, no. 2 (2010): 113–24; 114.

²⁰ Fanon, 'Algeria Unveiled,' 1159.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1160.

²² Salhi, "Colonial Visual Representations of the 'Femmes d'Alger'," 83.

Aid societies were set-up by the French administration to promote solidarity with Algerian women. Impoverished and famished women were the first to be targeted, as the French supplied them with food, accompanied by an indoctrinated resentment for their veil and their lack of participation in society.²³ From then on women were encouraged to also play an economic role, and Algerian men were frowned upon when they refused to introduce the women in their lives to European co-workers or neighbours. Many resisted these attempts of *unveiling* in an attitude of counter-assimilation to maintain their cultural and national originality, leading to further confinement of Algerian women. As the colonial conquest expanded in Algeria, the more women were secluded into the private sphere, only leaving the home in veiled groups or chaperoned by male relatives.²⁴ As Zahia Salhi explains, Algerian women became the colonised of the colonised as they were humiliated and alienated in both the public and private spheres, by both the French colonizers and the Algerian men.²⁵ However, some women did adopt the European way of life; 'accepting the rape of the colonizer',²⁶ as Fanon described it. Nevertheless, it was inevitable that the colonizer's persistence to *unveil* the Algerian woman, either for the purpose of erotic fantasies or to disintegrate Algerian society, would be met with resistance and reaction on part of the colonized.

The colonizer's objective became counterproductive, as their colonial agenda shaped and materialize the centres of resistance around which the colonized subject's survival was organized.²⁷ The more the French attempted to assimilate the Algerians, the more the Algerian women were secluded. By the 1940s, the struggle of the Algerian woman attracted the interest of Algerian nationalist parties. The political strategy of the Party of the Algerian People (PPA), and the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (MTLD) had initially solely focused on Islam and the fight against colonialism, making women's rights irrelevant to their cause. On the other hand, the Algerian Communist Party (PCA) was the only political party to believe in the equality of the sexes, and thus under it the Union of Algerian Women (UFA) was created in 1943. The UFA gathered from

²³ Fanon, 'Algeria Unveiled,' 1161.

²⁴ Salhi, "The Algerian Feminist Movement between Nationalism, Patriarchy and Islamism," 92.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

²⁶ Fanon, 'Algeria Unveiled,' 1163.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1166.

10,000 to 15,000 members between 1844 and 1951 and published its own journal: *Femmes d'Algérie* (Women of Algeria).²⁸

Following the Sétif massacre on 8 May 1945, during which women participated in the massive protests, all Algerian nationalist parties changed their attitude towards role of women as they were moved to the forefront of the fight against colonialism. For example, the PPA declared that 'it should work towards the improvement of the general level of awareness among Algerian women so that they could be brought into the national struggle'.²⁹ This attention resulted in genuine debate and discourse on the condition of Algerian women. The anti-colonial MTLD created the Association of Algerian Muslim Women (AFMA) in 1947. It was created by Mamia Chentouf and Nafissa Hmoud, which focused on providing aid for the victims of the Sétif massacre, as well as ensuring female education in both rural and urban areas with the help of UFA. This political and social involvement is what allowed previously secluded Algerian women to play an essential role in the struggle for Algerian independence. In its journal, *L'Algérie libre*, AFMA published a lecture by Lebanese feminist Anbara Salam Al Khalidi in 1950. The journal highlighted women's participation in Arab civilisation, and drew the attention of other Arab feminist thinkers such as Egyptian feminist Doria Shafik. *L'Algérie libre* demonstrated the production of post-colonial feminist knowledge of the time, one that debated on the role of women within the Arab-Muslim world and theorised a post-colonial cultural framework free of Western influence. This production of knowledge, in addition to the violence suffered by Algerian women in the revolution that followed suit, undoubtedly contributed to wider recognition of women's involvement in the anti-colonial struggle.

What is important to note from this post-colonial feminist perspective of the development of feminist movements in Algeria is that the Algerian feminists did not surge out of a vacuum to suddenly become war heroines of the 1954 revolution.³⁰ Rather, this perspective demonstrates how Algerian women's suppression resulted from the wider power structure based on systems of imperialism, patriarchy, and racism, allowing French men to make of Algerian women sexual objects of which they could gain possession. Moreover, it was this

²⁸ Salhi, "The Algerian Feminist Movement between Nationalism, Patriarchy and Islamism," 115.

²⁹ Zakya Dauoud, *Femminisme et Politique au Maghreb: Sept décennies de lute* (Casablanca: Editions Eddif, 1996), 134.

³⁰ Salhi, "The Algerian Feminist Movement between Nationalism, Patriarchy and Islamism," 115.

same patriarchal society that made their *double deflowering* a humiliation to the Algerian man rather than a violation of women's rights. Thus, Algerian feminist movements developed from a rebellion of the patriarchal chains imposed by the colonial occupation and the traditional Algerian society.

Algerian Women in the Fight for Independence

The National Liberation Front (FLN) was established in 1954 and was the nationalist party that launched the Algerian War of Independence. By 1956, most existing Algerian nationalistic parties had joined forces with FLN, including the UFA and AFMA. Amongst the first 1,010 freedom fights, 49 were women. By the end of the revolution there were 10,949, of which 1,755 were in the FLN ranks.³¹

The Algerian women's introduction into the fight for independence was revolutionary. Her depiction of 'victim' by the French colonizers, and their fluid identity as a result of their changing garb allowed Algerian women to exploit European stereotypes of "Oriental" (their veil and exotic beauty) and Occidental/European women³², gave them a kind of prowess that the male-fighters lacked. As Fanon explains, 'the unveiled Algerian woman swims like a fish in the Western waters'.³³ The FLN had defined the role of women in the revolution as the moral support of fighters and members of the resistance; giving instruction, dealing with provisions, and providing refuge; and helping the families and children of the freedom fighters, prisoners, and other detainees.³⁴ However, the Algerian women's role in the revolution extended far beyond these originally established functions. Once the FLN saw the necessity to expand women's assignments due to lack of human resources, women began to smuggle arms and money, nurse the sick and wounded, facilitate the movement of other freedom fighters, they hid messages under their veils, and dressed as Europeans when entering European quarters to deposit explosives. In 1956, Algerian women participated in a series

³¹ Danièle Djamila Amrane-Minne, "Women and Politics in Algeria from the War of Independence to Our Day," *Research in African Literatures* 30, no. 3 (1999): 62-77; 63.

³² Elizabeth Perego, "The Veil or a Brother's Life: French Manipulations of Muslim Women's Images during the Algerian War, 1954-62," *The Journal of North African Studies* 20, no. 3 (2015): 349-73; 355.

³³ Frantz Fanon, *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* (Paris: La Découverte, 2011); *Feminist Declaration on 8th March 1989 in Algiers*, WAF Article 2 (2001): 15-16.

³⁴ Amrane-Minne, "Women and Politics in Algeria from the War of Independence to Our Day," 68.

of terror bomb attacks. The campaign was later popularised by Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 film, *The Battle of Algiers*. This paramount participation in the revolutions led the FLN to declare that 'Algerian women won their rights by their participation in the war'.³⁵ Nevertheless, few took part in the physical fighting.

Algerian women's role in the revolution allowed them to make an unexpected move from the private to the public sphere and allowed them to defy major social taboos. Their participation not only challenged the complex patriarchal structure they found themselves subjugated to, but also altered the conceptualization of honour and the world's opinion of the Algerian revolution.³⁶ French writers like Simone de Beauvoir, Jean Paul Sartre, Gisele Halimi, and others began to criticise France's colonial agenda in Algeria. They rejected their stereotypical, restrictive roles of daughters, wives, and mothers in the private sphere of their household to then take on stereotypically male roles in the public sphere. It demonstrated the capacity of national revolutions to liberate women. Algeria gained its independence in 1962, after a war that lasted almost 80 years.

Post-Colonial Algeria

A question arose in the aftermath of the Revolution, however: would the strides Algerian women had made be maintained in post-colonial Algeria? Two responses derived from the revolution, a liberal and a conservative response. The liberal response sought the promotion for women's rights and their integration into society, while the conservative response promoted cultural authenticity and a reestablishment of Islamic cultural values.

The FLN did have a policy that committed to the promotion of women's equality, which was practiced during the revolution and progress for women's rights was made. Yet, post-colonial Algeria saw the withdrawal of Algerian women from active participants to passive victims. The National Union of Algerian Women (UNFA) was created in 1962 to rally women to the national programme for the emancipation of women. President Houari Boumedienne took office in 1965 and spearheaded the integration of women into the national programme for development and the championing of gender equality. Women secured citizenship, equal rights to free co-education and

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

³⁶ Salhi, "The Algerian Feminist Movement between Nationalism, Patriarchy and Islamism," 116.

health services, and entry into the professional workforce.³⁷ Colonization, however, had brought about unavoidable disruption to the religious and cultural values of traditional Algerian society, values that Islamic fundamentalists wanted to re-establish. Inevitably, France's gendered colonial agenda had made Algerian women their keepers, and with that the protectors of Algeria's pre-colonial traditions and customs.³⁸ Thus, the reconstruction of Algerian national identity was dependent on Algerian women's return to subjugation by the previously colonized. The camaraderie that had existed between Algerian men and women during the revolution had disintegrated.

The conservative faction that had risen from the revolution pressured the socialist state to Islamise Algerian society throughout the 1980s. President Chadli Bendjedid, who succeeded Boumedienne in 1978, began this process. The peak of this influence was seen on 9 June 1984, with the implementation of the Family Code, which reproduced provisions of Islamic Shari'a Law into the Algerian legal system and legalised men's superiority and legitimised women's subordination. The main provisions of the Code were: women have no right to marry unless given permission by a matrimonial guardian; women cannot divorce, while men may; women are procreators by law; women must obey and respect their husbands, and need their permission to work; women have custody of their sons until they are 10 and their daughters until marriage; and polygamy was institutionalised, meaning men could have up to four wives.³⁹ As scholar Zahia Smail Salhi succinctly described: 'The code makes women minor under the law, treats them as non-citizens and defines their role primarily as daughters, mothers, and wives'.⁴⁰ Regardless of the UNFA's theoretical purpose, it never reached out to the masses, and instead remained a formal state organization. Algerian women recognised they no longer could rely on the state to promote and implement their rights and equality.

³⁷ Meredith Thurshen, "Algerian Women in the Liberation Struggle and the Civil War: From Active Participants to Passive Victims?" *The Status of Women in the Developing World* 69, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 889-911; 891-92.

³⁸ Salhi, "The Algerian Feminist Movement between Nationalism, Patriarchy and Islamism," 116.

³⁹ Nadine Claire and Sophie Laws, "International interview: NEW FAMILY CODE DEPRIVES ALGERIAN WOMEN OF RIGHTS," *Off Our Back* 15, no. 3 (March 1985): 5-7.

⁴⁰ Salhi, "The Algerian Feminist Movement between Nationalism, Patriarchy and Islamism," 119.

Unsurprisingly, French humanist endeavours to “emancipate” Algeria women had deemed feminism a colonial concept in post-colonial Algeria, and therefore a betrayal to the state. The patriarchal foundations of nationalism were, and are, alive and well, making Algerian women’s efforts in the fight for national independence obsolete. In 1999, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika took office and promised to champion the cause of the Algerian women. Nevertheless, the 1984 Family Code stands, apart from amendments made in 2004 that allow Algerian women married to non-Algerian men to pass their citizenship to their children, and for foreign-born men married to Algerian women to acquire citizenship. Despite attempts by the Algerian post-colonial state to re-subjugate its women into silent victims, Algerian women have courageously continued to occupy the public sphere. Through organizations for survivors of rape who have been disowned by their families, protests for International Women’s Day, women’s solidarity networks, and the continued struggle to repeal the Family Code, Algerian women continue to demonstrate extraordinary resilience and unity. Algerian women have also contributed to post-colonial and feminist production of knowledge. For example, Khalida Messaoudi’s book, *Une Algérienne debout*, has been translated in English as *Unbowed: an Algerian Woman Confronts Islamic Fundamentalism*,⁴¹ as well as into Italian, German, Norwegian and Turkish. As these women continue to stand for the principles of the Algerian republic, they have proved again how essential their social, political and economic contributions are to Algeria’s development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a post-colonial feminist analysis of colonisation allows us to uncover the integral role women of colour played in colonial discourse, their consequent functions in struggles for independence, and their position as catalysts for feminist movements in post-colonial society. Throughout this post-colonial feminist analysis, justification for the Algerian women’s oppression and manipulation was based not only on gender, but also on religious and cultural identities as well. Firstly, this allowed to demonstrate how and why the French colonialists could place the Algerian woman at the centre of their strategy to dismantle Algerian society, consequently

⁴¹ Khalida Messaoudi, *Unbowed: An Algerian Woman Confronts Islamic Fundamentalism*, trans. Anne C. Vila (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

explaining how the Algerian feminist movements developed as a rebellion to the patriarchal chains imposed by the colonisers and the colonised. Secondly, this gender-sensitive lens examined the integral and invaluable role Algerian women played in the execution of the Algerian War of Independence, and established how in doing so, female fighters and defenders defied their stereotypically-female roles and gave them agency to demand for recognition beyond their roles of daughter, mothers, and wives in the private sphere. Finally, when analysing post-colonial Algeria and the implementation of Islamic fundamentalism, this analysis evidenced how despite the restriction placed on them by the Algerian Government the Algerian women continued to demand the emancipation and empowerment of women's rights by their defiant occupation of the public sphere.