

Muhammad, the vulnerable: Contextualizing masculinity, unpacking muslimness, and reimagining solidarity as a state in the 21st century

Outline

“I wouldn't have considered it possible for me to love any woman. I'd had too much experience that women were only tricky, deceitful, untrustworthy flesh. I had seen too many men ruined, or at least tied down, or in some other way messed up by women. Women talked too much. To tell a woman not to talk too much was like telling Jesse James not to carry a gun, or telling a hen not to cackle.”

The late El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz or as most of you know him, Malcolm X

Reveal it's malcolm

M. Ali.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wpan4-P8ak0>

reveal it's Ali

Deconstructing the good guy defense

Even the best amongst both in our present and our history are should all feel the need to examine and critically analyze their ideas of masculinity.

MX AND MA are indicative of the kind of young american masculinity many of us in the room can find similarity with. The “nice guy” masculinity. The kind of masculinity that at first glance, on a surface level, seems loving and nurturing but in reality is a reflection of patriarchy. I sense of identity I myself *found* sameness with. A sense of self rooted in ego and domination.

After multiple accounts of his passing spread about, Mark Twain famously responded by saying, “the reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated”

Similarly I am here today to say that the rumors of masculinity no longer being toxic have been greatly exaggerated; the idea that patriarchy no longer manifests harmfully, that sexism only runs its course in the most extreme cases are mythical notions. The toxicity of how masculinity forms and contemporarily exists has only changed in sense of how its performed and realized. The poison is very much the same regardless of how the bottle, the packaging has changed. And I believe the best place to start unpacking this issue is at the ego/self.

Jihad-nafs

1. My issues with Ibn Qaymiyyah opinions of statehood and torture aside,
 - a. In his work *Rawaat al-Muibbin wa Nuzhat al-mushtaqin* (روضه المحبين و نزهة المشتاقين) or the *Garden of Lovers* and the Promenade of Those with Longing *Ibn Qaymiyyah* explains سورة العنكبوت ayah 69:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

DR. CHALI

And the ones who have striven in (our way), (Literally: in us) indeed We will definitely guide them to Our ways; and surely Allah is indeed with the fair-doers.

- i.
 - ii. “The most compulsory form of jihad (afraad al-jihad) is jihad against the ego (nafs); against unbridled passions (hawa); against the Devil (shaytan); and against being worldly (dunya).” (pg 475)
2. “I was going through the hardest thing, also the greatest thing, for any human being to do; to accept that which is already within you, and around you.” -M.X
 3. When we define our sense of self or nafs, we do so not by the sum of our character but by the singularity of our reproductive organs.

A colonized masculinity

1. Where do our ideas of masculinity come from?
 - a. Colonial constructions of masculinity
2. Positive examples from the sunnah
3. if muslim men are to conceptualize their egos as being constructed by colonial ideas of patriarchy...attempts to decolonize and reconstruct a healthy masculinity is arguably a question of sunnah. For us to be a mercy, we cannot dominate.
4. So many of us claim to be modernist and yet we do not critique modernity. We do not delve into the many ways in which colonization has shaped our Islamic praxis and pedagogy.

a bedouin was surprised to see the prophet kiss his grandsons

the prophet's response

“man laa yar ham la yur ham”

Who doesn't have mercy on others will not have mercy upon them

When the prophet's son was passing away

Abdul rahman ib 3awf (Ra) was surprised to see the prophet show such emotion

“inaahaa rahma” this is mercy

Solidarity as a state

1. A state of being, a constitution of self
2. The personal is political
3. Yes, all men
 - a. it is important to recognize that unpacking and restructuring masculinity is a process /every/ man has to begin (and continue. there really is no end to it). There aren't any magical groups of men that have lived in a space free from the reign of patriarchy.
4. Recognizing complicity
 - a. Baqarah ayah 83-86 (hurting ones own community)
5. Stop distancing yourself, brothers!

Conclusion

1. Respect, care, sympathy; displays of humanity should never be a question of proximity.
2. *Not by way of familial relation, shared religious praxis, or cultural difference.*
 - a. One of the issues with the mother, daughter, sister analogy is its inability to draw the connection between the personal and political. That is to say such a connection is only drawn in one direction. It is a dynamic that disconnects your mother's womaness from the reality of a shared womaness. It disconnects your ideas of justice from the weight of its broader implication. It allows you to see women selectively, to value women conditionally. It justifies you to not see a woman, to not see people, when they're sex workers, when they're transgender, when they are of different religious sects. So make no mistake, such notions of liberation, 'ideals' of justice centered around uplifting only the people we deem acceptable, represents a justice that is not wholesome...which is no justice at all.
 - b. We must learn to appreciate woman OUTSIDE of what they can do for you us. To appreciate ALL women.
3. Back before Fred Hampton was assassinated in '69 he would say, "theory's cool, but theory with no practice ain't shit"
 - a. I invite you to join me to practice, to adhere to parts of the deen we too often set aside, that we too often look past in pursuit of power, control, and invulnerability.
 - b. **"By Al-'Asr (the time). Verily, man is [deep] in loss, except for those who believe and do good deeds, urge one another to the truth and urge one another to patience."** (Quran 103)

Imam Shafi'ee once said:

“There is an ayah in the Qur’an that is like an arrow in the heart of every oppressor and at the same time a source of comfort for the heart of the oppressed.” People asked: “What is it?”

He replied:

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا

“And never is your Lord forgetful”

[سورة مريم : 64]

- a. Oh all gives those unjustly taken from us the highest places in jannah. Aid us in carrying on their legacies and honoring their names.
- b. Allah swt protect us. Shield us when we lose the ability to do so ourselves. Grant us success in our ways and justice in the spaces we inhabit. Line our perceptions with an iron honesty and guard our conclusions from the inebriation of laziness the rashness of our egos. Give us patience. Patience and the wisdom to know when we no longer owe it.

Wa aqimissalah