

The Silence of A Victim

For many, the slogan of the women's rights movement in the United States is simple: we've come a long way, baby! And while most agree that women still have far to go in terms of issues such as equal pay and fairness in the workplace, almost all would agree that women in the United States have it much better than women living in other areas of the world. Once such area of the world that is particularly hard on women is the Middle East. Within the Middle East is the country of Morocco and inside that country, women have some of the harshest, most unfair laws when it comes to equality, or lack thereof.

While Morocco has come a long way, such as granting the women right to divorce, there are other areas that still show the striking unfairness many times heaped upon Moroccan women. For example, women have fewer inheritance rights if their deceased husband has a living male relative. They can also be denied custody of their children due to gender alone. Perhaps most shocking, however, is a loophole in the law that allows for a rapist to marry his victim to escape criminal charges. This is the law that has recently made Morocco world headline news once again as tragedy has highlighted this little known fact.

Amina Filali was walking down a Moroccan street at the young age of fifteen years old when she was approached by a man and raped. Due to the public stigma associated with a young girl's virginity lost when raped, she waited two months before she garnered enough courage to tell her family. When they went to the police precinct to report the crime, the court officials recommended Amina marry her rapist to save her family's honor.

Amina's family consented and she was married to the man who sexually attacked her the following year, at the age of 16. The first five months of marriage were hell for the young girl. She told her mother that her husband regularly beat her and her mother simply encouraged her to stay patient. Finally, the young girl could no longer take the situation and swallowed rat poison to end her life.

Activists in Morocco immediately picked up on Amina's story and started a Facebook page called "We are all Amina Filali". They are calling for reform to the law to end such a provision. According to them, the law does not do enough to protect the individual. Legislation outlawing all forms of violence against women has been stuck in bureaucratic red tape since 2006. They are hoping that Amina's story will quicken the pace of the reforms and usher in bring gender equality to Morocco.

Discussion Questions:

Why is Amina's case so unfair?

Can you imagine being in the situation that this young girl has been forced into?

Why do you think a situation like this is able to happen? What would need to change so that it never happens again?