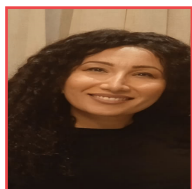


"Femen's Colonial Feminism: The Ongoing Colonization of Muslim Women's Bodies"



Dr. Jyhene Kebisi

MA Convenor of the Gender Studies Program at Macquarie University in Australia

On March 11th, 2013, the Tunisian ex-Femen member Amina Sboui posted a bare-breasted photo of herself on Facebook. Sboui's topless photo created a big controversy in Tunisia where most Tunisians felt shocked and irritated by it. In order to support Sboui, the topless group Femen launched an International Topless Jihad campaign during which its members asked women to post bare-chested pictures of themselves so that they express their solidarity with Sboui and other "oppressed" Muslim women. The rhetoric and tactics of Femen associated veiling with oppression and unveiling with liberation. Femen's Islamophobic speech offended Muslim women worldwide. My presentation offers an evaluation of Femen's potential to achieve change in Tunisia. I argue that while Sboui's bare-breasted activism contributes to the diversity of Tunisian feminist activism, the topless method advocated by Femen is counter-productive in this Muslim-majority country. Accordingly, my speech gives an overview of the long struggle for women's rights in Tunisia in order to show the absence of a need for Femen's imperial "saving." The analysis discusses Femen's contradictory topless feminism through a focus on the inconsistencies and inaccuracies of the group's "liberatory" campaign. My presentation explores the ineffectiveness of bare-breasted feminism and its inability to advance women's rights in Tunisia.

Biography:

Dr. Jyhene Kebisi is the MA Convenor of the Gender Studies Program at Macquarie University in Australia. Dr. Kebisi's research has appeared in the Journal of World Literature, Antipodes: A Global Journal of Australian/New Zealand Literature, the Journal of Global Postcolonial Studies, Postcolonial Text, Law & Literature and the Journal of North African Studies. Her op-eds have appeared in key outlets like The Berkley Forum, The Conversation, Overland, The New Arab, Jadaliyyah and Arena. Dr. Kebisi is the recipient of multiple prizes and awards, including Fulbright.