
A CRT Counterstory: Intersectionality of Caste, Class, and Womanhood in Pakistani Culture

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While teaching young girls from the lower socioeconomic class and usually lower castes in a rural part of Punjab, Pakistan, I witnessed not only class-based learning gaps but also the ways in which class impacts their subjecthood and their academic lives. These experiential facts are even more complicated for those who are multiply marginalized based on class, caste, religion, and other discriminatory factors like color, accent, and hair but whose marginalization remains largely invisible. Storytelling, in these situations, serves both as a personal and political tool for marginalized people to have conversations about these challenges. By using the genre of counterstory, this paper highlights the intersectionality of caste system, gender hierarchy, colorism, and racism, particularly in the context of Pakistan. This "new rhetoric" of counterstory enables a storyteller to bring their experiences to a wider audience and talk about various issues with minimized possibility of chastisement. Many scholars offer and employ this methodology, for example, Martinez,¹ Derrick Bell,² and Patricia Williams³ have written dialogues and told stories by using their experiential knowledge of marginalized and underprivileged communities. Building on this previous work, this paper provides its readers the chance to analyze and understand their experiential knowledge because "counterstory or counter perspective is presented to develop the minoritized viewpoints and to critique the viewpoints which put forth by various characters."⁴

1 See Aja Y. Martinez, *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory* (2020). <https://www.amazon.com/Counterstory-Rhetoric-Writing-Critical-Theory/dp/0814108784>

2 Bell, Derrick. *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice*. 1987. Print. *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*. New York: Basic Books, 1992. Print.

3 Williams, Patricia J. *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor*. *President and Fellows of Harvard College*, 1991.

4 See Aja Y. Martinez, *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory* (2020). <https://www.amazon.com/Counterstory-Rhetoric-Writing-Critical-Theory/dp/0814108784>

Abstract

While teaching young girls from the lower socioeconomic class and usually lower castes in a rural part of Punjab, Pakistan, I witnessed not only class-based learning gaps but also the ways in which class impacts their subjecthood and their academic lives. These experiential facts are even more complicated for those who are multiply marginalized based on class, caste, religion, and other discriminatory factors like color, accent, and hair but whose marginalization remains largely invisible. Storytelling, in these situations, serves both as a personal and political tool for marginalized people to have conversations about these challenges. By using the genre of counterstory, this paper highlights the intersectionality of caste system, gender hierarchy, colorism, and racism, particularly in the context of Pakistan. This "new rhetoric" of counterstory enables a storyteller to bring their experiences to a wider audience and talk about various issues with minimized possibility of chastisement. Many scholars offer and employ this methodology, for example, Martinez, Derrick Bell, and Patricia Williams have written dialogues and told stories by using their experiential knowledge of marginalized and underprivileged communities. Building on this previous work, this paper provides its readers the chance to analyze and understand their experiential knowledge because "counterstory or counter perspective is presented to develop the minoritized viewpoints and to critique the viewpoints which are put forth by various characters."

Key Words

Counterstory, Intersectionality, caste, marginalized communities, Pakistan

Counterstory politicizes storytelling and turns experiential knowledge into an effective political tool. Thus, it turns a simple event, occurrence, or experience into a strong voice of the marginalized people whose voices are often silenced, or whose stories remain unheard. Aja Y. Martinez writes, “Counterstory challenges privilege and recognizes that experiential knowledge of minoritized and/or vulnerable populations is legitimate and critical to understanding the structural power imbalances and abuses alive and well within our professional lives, organizations, institutions, and mentoring relationships.”⁵ It is fascinating that any story when told with the intention of “critique[ing]” a dominant ideology and with a focus on social justice can turn into a counterstory. Counterstory is particularly useful in situations where people usually don’t have resources and access to a traditional political audience, for example, my young female students in Pakistan.

When it comes to performing gender roles in Pakistan, religious and cultural expectations of gender performativity are inseparable from each other. People deploy religion, caste, class, and various other intersecting elements to question others’ identity, their morality, or even their sense of belonging in a community. For instance, I identify as a Muslim woman who grew up in a rural part of Punjab, Pakistan, and is labeled as a Jatt in Muslim culture.⁶ These intersecting elements of religion and caste provide the foundation but also the threats to the identities of most people because people form and perform their identities around these constructions. Though I am under the pressure of performing my role as a Muslim, Pakistani, and Punjabi/Jatt woman, this role affords me certain privileges. For example, my Muslim identity or my caste is already taken as a signal of a certain morality, lifestyle, worldview, and access to resources or location. Likewise, others who belong to different caste find other ways to validate their identities in specific contexts, depending upon the hostility or hospitality of the situation. In such contentious situations, counterstory acts as a neutral yet political tool for sharing alternative, different experiences.

Sharing personal stories and engaging in dialogue, when institutional changes to ensure equity remain difficult, transforms people into kind and empathetic human beings, which leads to a greater understanding of the systemic and intersectional nature of these issues. This is what the genre of counterstory does. Robert A. Williams Jr., in his forward to Richard Delgado’s *Rodrigo Chronicles*, notes that the “Storyteller” is the one who bears the heavy responsibility for maintaining the various connection of community like “an intricate web of connections: kinship of blood, marriage, and friendship, alliance and solidarity” (xi). Williams

specifically brings up the role of ancestors such as grandmothers and grandfathers as storytellers to share their stories so the coming generations could recall their narratives and connect with them. Moreover, Martinez in *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory* (2020) defines counterstory as a “method of telling a story by people whose experiences are not often told.” She further elaborates that counterstory as a “methodology serves to expose, analyze, and challenge stock stories of racial privilege and help to strengthen traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance” (34). Furthermore, according to Richard Delgado, counterstories “can open new windows into reality, showing us that there are possibilities for life other than the ones we live. They enrich imagination and teach that by combining elements of reality, we may construct a new world richer than either alone.”⁷

Speaking methodologically, Delgado highlights several functions of counterstory, for instance, it can be used methodologically and/or rhetorically, as a narrative, parable, chronicle, and as a dialogue (2413). In this paper, I employ “Counterstory as a Narrated Dialogue.” This dialogue occurs between a teacher and students in a course, titled “Culture and Gender in Pakistan,” and highlights the issues of the predominant caste system, gender hierarchy, colorism, and racism, particularly in Northern Punjab, Pakistan. I found this method of storytelling applicable and effective as it engages both the teacher and students in the dialogue. In doing so, it blurs the hierarchical difference in the classroom and highlights the commonalities of their experiences as women. Additionally, Delgado’s method of “Counterstory as Narrated Dialogues” dispenses the chance for the reader to experience the recurring events and ideas which describe through the exchange of dialogues between various characters. This exchange can also be challenged from the status quo perspective. Bruno Bettelheim and Derrick Bell also point out that various stories can easily “shatter complacency and challenge the status quo.”⁸

Using counterstory as a dialogue also makes it into a pedagogical strategy and it indicates that educators’ role cannot be ignored when it comes to countering imperial or state ideology. “Counterstory as Narrated Dialogues” involves various themes which assist certain learning subjects such as students. Dialogues do so by describing and imagining students’ unique experiences. Martinez writes that “this form of counterstory consists of stories written to facilitate classroom discussion, while interweaving research data and creative nonfiction” (35). While writing counterstories, Richard Delgado introduced his much-chronicled characters in student-teacher roles: the professor and Rodrigo.

5 See Aja Y. Martinez, On Cucuys in Bird’s Feathers: A Counterstory as Parable, Aug 13, 2020; Writers: Crafts & Context <https://journals.shareok.org/writersccjournal/article/view/8>

6 It’s a name of a caste which further divided into sub-castes and apparently considers higher than other castes in Punjab, Pakistan.

7 Delgado, Richard. “Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative.” *Michigan Law Review* 87. Aug. 1989 (2010): 2411-2441.

8 See B. Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (1975); Kundera, *The Novel and Europe*, N.Y. Rev. Books, July 19, 1984. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1975/12/08/the-uses-of-enchantment>

Both characters were presented in such a way that they complement each other. They offer multifarious insights while maintaining the central thematic narrative. Overall, the discussion and interaction between them are enlightening.

In this “Counterstory as Narrated Dialogues,” the teacher engages diverse students’ narratives who belong to different castes and classes: Kiran (belongs to middle class, has wheatish complexion), Kinza (belongs to a lower class, her parents work in the fields, has dark complexion), Asma (belongs to upper-middle class, has dark complexion), Samra (belongs to a middle class, has fair complexion). Before proceeding, I want to acknowledge that these are imperfect and limited categories of identity and class but due to the limited space and scope of the paper, I rely on these categories here. I would also like to highlight these female students from a wide array of the socioeconomic class would usually go to the same (and mostly the only) school in a village; parents prioritize their sons’ education, so they send them to the city for education, but girls aren’t usually allowed to go to the city for education in more traditional families. In these dialogues, I serve as a moderator for the conversation, posing questions and directing the answers.

Through this paper, readers will be able to scrutinize their own thinking process by looking at the counter perspectives which will be presented through this counterstory. This genre “invites the reader to suspend judgment, listen for their point or message, and then decide what measure of truth they contain.” Moreover, they can “show that what we believe is ridiculous, self-serving, or cruel. They can show us the way out of the trap of unjustified exclusion. They can help us understand when it is time to reallocate power” (2415).⁹ This counterstory also shows that even people who believe in equity are sometimes unable to recognize their own internalized insecurities and biases and unquestioningly believe in their views and performative actions to feel confident enough to announce them in front of other people.

Teacher: [enters the classroom]

I heard the familiar voices as soon as I enter in the class. It feels just like any other day of June, other than the fact that there are comparatively fewer students in class today. I take a minute to gather my breath as I usually have just ten minutes break between two classes. Looking at the students, I was surprised – presumably, some of them chose not to show up because of today’s topic,

“Race, Caste, and Pakistani Culture” which could be uncomfortable for some of them. Deep in thought, I grabbed the book and opened page number 56, where the title of chapter five stares at me: “Race, Caste, and Pakistani Culture.” I pick the black marker and write the same title on the whiteboard and think about the binary of black and white and its relevance to our discussion topic. I ask the class to open page 56 and request Sadaf to read the text aloud. While she reads, multiple things flash in and out of my mind when I hear her pronounce the words like caste, patriarchy, race, and ethnicity. I tilt my head forward to listen attentively to Sadaf.

Sadaf [reading aloud]: “You may belong to any religion, caste, or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the state” (Muhammad Ali Jinnah).¹⁰

Sadaf stops and looks at me, anxiously, it seems as if she is waiting for my approval to stop reading now. I nod to her. Then I smile and ask the class “what comes to your mind when hearing this quote? What do you think about the separation of the Indian sub-continent?”

Kiran [leaning forward, raising her hand]: Why did we demand a separate homeland for us? What’s the purpose of it if we’re still following all the norms that we used to follow while living together before separation? What is the point of this “Two Nation Theory”?¹¹

While I arrange all these questions in my head, she further adds:

Kiran: It seems our Two-Nation Theory was originally based on the differences of faith, culture, and caste – which now prohibits us from enjoying our lives with people of other cultures, ethnicities, and religions as it did to our ancestors.

I start thinking about the article “India’s Caste & Untouchability had a Role in Pakistan’s Creation” written by Pervez Mehmood.¹² I clear my throat and mention points in reference to that article and comment, “it seems true, we have failed to counter the ingrained concept of caste and its association with the idea of untouchability in our country. Its failure is glaring since no one could dine in and do intermarriage in this caste system. These were the two main points highlighted by the exponents of The Two-Nation Theory. The staunch followers of this theory avoid any social or physical contact with the lower-caste people other than the fact that lower-caste women are considered fair game for higher-caste men.

9 See Delgado, Richard. “Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative.” *Michigan Law Review* 87.Aug, 1989 (2010): 2411-2441.

10 See G. Allana, Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s first Presidential Address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan (August 11, 1947). http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00islamlinks/txt_jinnah_assembly_1947.html

11 In accordance this theory, Hindu and Muslim are two discrete nations, have their own distinct religion, culture, ethnicity, and tradition, therefore, Muslims should have a separate homeland where they can live their lives according to Islamic values.

12 India’s caste & untouchability had a role in Pakistan’s creation” Parvez Mahmood, Sep 2019 <https://theprint.in/opinion/indias-caste-untouchability-had-a-role-in-pakistans-creation-writes-islamabad-columnist/288057/>

I nod to Kinza who had raised her hand. She anxiously starts sharing her own story.

Kinza: Teacher, you all know my family is living in the Haweli¹³ of the Bajwa family.¹⁴ After finishing school, I go to their house and work there with my mother and my father and brothers work on their lands. Bajwa's wife never let me or my mother touch their utensils and food. They've separate plates and glasses for us. Once I mistakenly drank water from their glass, Bajwa's youngest daughter started yelling and slapped me on my face.

[Kinza looks down as if this story is too difficult for her to tell. I can feel the pain in her voice and words.]

Kinza [continues]: Once I asked my mother, what did you and Abbu¹⁵ do? Did you steal their gold or food or their beautiful clothes? Did you sit on their clean sofas or drink water from their clean glass? Teacher, my mother didn't answer any of these questions, but I told her how much I love Bajwa's beautiful home.

Asma [jumping right in]: Teacher do you remember the Annual Drama competition we had last year?

I smile and ask for confirmation, "are you talking about *A Doll's House* in which Samra performed as the protagonist?"

Asma [takes a deep breath and continues]: Yes, nobody knows about this incident because I've not shared this with anyone, but I think since we're talking about our own experiences, I should share it too.

I prompt her with curiosity, "go ahead, go ahead, please do."

Asma [further adds]: First I was supposed to perform the role of the protagonist, I was so excited and happy as I always wanted to perform and act on stage. But later the director refused to take me for Nora's role. Instead, she chose Samra for the role because she is beautiful and fair, and I have a dark complexion.

[The class is so quiet that I can even hear myself breathing.]

Asma [continuing]: But the funny thing was, they were looking for someone dark and tall for Krogstad's role [she laughs not only at the absurdity of this situation but also at our sociocultural behaviors.]

[Nods and murmurs in the class]

Shanzay: Have you listened to the famous song, *Goray rang ka zamana kabhi ho ga na purana, gori tujhay dar kiska hai, taira to rang gora hai* (the admiration for fair complexion will never be old; dear, you needn't worry for you've fair skin)¹⁶ by Vital Signs.¹⁷ There are various other songs, advertisements, films, and drama series where fair complexion is portrayed as the beauty standard. This colorism and racism are ingrained in Pakistani society, which is why girls use fairness creams to lighten their complexion. Otherwise, it is harder for them to get a good marriage proposal or even get a good job because of people's inherent biases. There is a huge industry for fairness creams and treatments. Now, even many showbiz celebrities are getting fairness treatments and endorsing them.

Asma [pausing to think for a moment]: It is alarming to see that most fairness creams ads, like *Fair & Lovely*,¹⁸ portray a dark-skinned woman as disconsolate and undesirable. After using the fairness cream and miraculously becoming fair-skinned, she feels confident; while in older ads, she used to get a rich, handsome husband, in the newer ads, she becomes a successful boss or employee.¹⁹ In Pakistan, women's fair complexion is the standard of beauty, social status, and professional success. Whoever is fair-skinned is considered the luckiest and the most desired member of the family. Whenever my grandmother visits our home, she always tells me various methods that she sees on Television or hears from other people to lighten my skin complexion. When I express my disapproval of these things to her, she says she only does this because she cares about me and my future. This colorism is so embedded in society that people care more about fair skin than other persons' feelings and their confidence.

Shanzay [jumping in]: The most infuriating and saddening thing is when celebrities and well-respected people endorse and popularize these ideas. For example, Sarfraz Ahmed (Captain of the Pakistani cricket team) made a racist comment and said *Abbay Kalay* (You, black man) out of anger for Andile Phehlukwayo (South African cricketer) during a recent cricket match since Andile Phehlukwayo was playing very well.²⁰

[I, while nodding appreciatively to Shanzay for sharing this, add] "it seems we're still living in the era of colonialism and white supremacy. The British left but our minds are still colonized. It is so ingrained in our society that we assume dark-skinned people

13 A place where people keep their animals and prefer their workers to stay there.

14 A famous sub-caste from the high caste of Jutt. They usually own lands.

15 Urdu word for father.

16 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhrQnw71VqA>

17 A popular pop and rock Pakistani band.

18 Most used fairness cream in Pakistan, which has now been renamed and rebranded as Glow and Lovely.

19 See M. Saira ROLE OF MEDIA IN GLORIFYING WHITE COMPLEXION <http://www.sci-int.com/pdf/636339925156006351.pdf>

20 See Dawn Skipper Sarfaraz makes 'racist' remarks directed at South African batsman, Jan 23, 2019 <https://www.dawn.com/news/1459295>

as illiterate, inferior, uncivil, and unsophisticated in comparison to those who have a fair complexion. Maybe it is another way to understand white privilege. Morning shows, instill the idea of fairness by introducing various whitening or polishing creams and injections, etc. People's families and even friends are complicit in this. One of my friends recently shared with me that she has always been bullied by her siblings and even by her mother just because of her dark skin color since all her siblings have fair complexion except her. Her family felt ashamed of her and usually tried to avoid taking her to family functions.

[Taking a deep breath, I start reading the next paragraph of the same chapter.]

J.H. Hutton describes the caste system under the following points:

1. "Caste is endogamous.
2. Castes have ranks/grades into the top-ranked and lower-ranked.
3. There are restrictions on commensality among members of various castes.
4. From the context of food, ritual, and sex, a member who belongs to a certain high-ranked caste is expected to be affected and polluted through contact with the low-ranked members of the castes (1963)."²¹

[Considering the importance of the issue, I start talking about the first point.]

"Pakistani society prioritizes heterosexual marriage and family values; these patriarchal and caste phenomena particularly affect girls." [I bring up a recent incident where a 20-year-old woman is killed by three family members for marrying out of her caste for love. This incident happened in Sahiwal in Pakistan.]²² According to the report of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 914 women were killed for honor in 2012, which slightly declined to 867 in 2013. In 2014, HRCF reported 1000 honor killings whereas 1096 in 2015.²³ Honor killings have persisted and even increased

in some regions, despite new anti-rape and anti-honor killing bills in Pakistan. These numbers are erroneous and likely represent a small fraction of these cases because most of these honor killings go unreported or are passed as natural deaths.

Kiran [starts sharing another comment]: It also reminds me of Nusrat Mochi, who left her parents' house when she was 25 to marry a man against her parents' will since the guy belonged to another caste. Now, Nusrat has two children, but she says she is still facing threats from her family for not marrying within her own caste and for bringing dishonor to the family.

[Nodding affirmatively, I ask the class]: Has anyone read the article by Ahmed Usman?²⁴

[silence]

[I continue] in the article, he discusses that marriages between low castes²⁵ and high castes²⁶ can lead to honor killing since they are not socially acceptable.²⁷ It refers to the second point about the asymmetrical situation of the caste system in Pakistan.

Asma [who has been silently listening to the whole conversation, instantly raises her hand and adds]: this reminds me of the concept of intersectionality that we discussed in class. These incidents show that the relationship of resistance and dominance in connection with gender, caste, and race is used as structural violence and social oppression. All these relations between men and women are actually created by society through its hegemonic attitude.²⁸ This is defined through sexuality, class, age, and race. For eradicating all these relationships, it's mandatory to construct certain intersectionality approaches (Crenshaw, 1991).²⁹

[Thinking about the framework of intersectionality coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), I comment]: you're right, it is impossible to talk about oppression without using the lens of intersectionality. Social equity work has become crucial now. But try to not evaluate everyone's experience through one fixed ideology or concept as everyone has their own unique life experiences and conditions.

21 Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon, and Northwest Pakistan, edited by E. R. Leach / Cambridge Papers in socio Anthropology 2/ Cambridge at the university press/ 1971

22 Firstpost, Honor killing: Pak woman murdered over inter-caste marriage, May 2014. <https://www.firstpost.com/world/honour-killing-pak-woman-murdered-over-inter-caste-marriage-1525681.html#:~:text=Islamabad%3A%20A%20woman%20was%20brutally,caste%20marriage%20to%20Shabir%2C%2026>.

23 Pakistan honor killings on the rise, report reveals, BBC World, April 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35943732>

24 A renowned professor at Uni of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

25 People belong to lower castes known as "Kammi".

26 People belong to high castes known as "Zamindar"

27 Usman, Ahmed. Social Stratification in a Punjabi Village of Pakistan: The Dynamic Between Caste, Gender, and Violence. Doctoral thesis, University of Leeds.2011 [Accessed 21 Dec. 2018] <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/21130/>

28 For further reading see, Chandra T. Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders* (2003).

29 Crenshaw, K. 1991. Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Colour. *Stanford Law Review*, 43, pp.1241-1279.

Asma [instantly raises her hand and mentions]: It also reminds me of *Feminism without Borders* by Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) that we read last semester. Mohanty writes about how Western feminist writers should stop treating Muslim women as a monolithic category without considering the unique experiences each woman has. They should not talk about their experiences without experiential knowledge.

[I, while appreciating her point, further add]: Jennifer C. Nash also raises these concerns in her book, *Black Feminism Reimagined after Intersectionality* (2018). In her book, Nash presents a series of questions prompted by her observations of the development of conversations on intersectionality in the context of Black women's intellectual output, women's studies, the corporate university, and popular culture. She illustrates the appeal of intersectionality being held as a form of Black Feminist agency. She adds that by determining who owns intersectionality, the idea becomes something that may be claimed as property. This political and intellectual shift separates Black feminism and Black feminist theory from the bodies of Black feminists by broadening the terrain of Black feminist theory to accept claims made from "diverse identities" (05). Her main aim is to include all diverse identities instead of just fixing this framework to black feminist and black identities and experiences. Nobody should feel as if they're ignored and left out in this system of oppression. How can we use intersectionality to understand and eliminate various oppressions around us?

Kiran [redirects the class's attention towards another notorious story]: Women have to suffer a lot as compared to men because of these gendered behaviors and the hegemonic caste system. Even when women report these cases of violence, the justice system further punishes them by prolonging their cases, putting them through emotional torture, and making them re-live their experience of violence and humiliation again and again. Mukhtar Mai's rape incident happened on 22 June 2002, but she's still seeking justice from Pakistani courts.³⁰ She belongs to a lower caste and did not have enough power to fight with the member of *Jirga*.³¹ Their regional justice system, her caste, her family, and Pakistan's legal system have failed together.

[I add] you're right, Kiran. Mai's case received international attention and news coverage. The New York Times reported that Mukhtar Mai's autobiography, *In the Name of Honor: A Memoir* (2006), ranked on number third as a bestseller in France.³² Pakistan's then-president and the former military dictator, General Pervez Musharraf, had commented that women falsely claimed to be raped to get rich and to avail immigration to the West.³³ Later, Mai is still in Pakistan while Musharraf moved out of the country after his government tenure ended in Pakistan.

Kinza [nodding her head in approval]: Maybe this is the reason these incidents have not stopped. People know they will not face consequences for gender and sexual violence. Remember how Qandeel Baloch was killed by her youngest brother even though she was the sole financial supporter of her family. The Pakistani caste system is also complicit in her murder since her real name was Fozia Azeem, but she adopted Qandeel Baloch as her alias before joining social media.³⁴ She was killed because of her class, caste, and most importantly her gender. She was murdered because of how people responded to her taking up Baloch as her last name and then performing a socially disrespectful image on social media.³⁵

[I add my point of view about the omnipresence of the caste system in society]: Yes, the caste system is most prevalent in rural areas. In an urban setting, the caste system dilutes in its various forms but doesn't fade away. In rural settings, it exists in its most violent and nasty forms. Class or access to financial resources can give one access to a lifestyle, but if one belongs to a lower caste, everyone uses that as the sole marker of their identity.

Asma [adds indignantly]: yes, it reminds me the incident happened to the Asia Bibi³⁶ who used to work in a field of a Muslim household. While picking up berries she went to get some water for her fellow Muslim who later accused her of touching the glass of water since she objected that the touch of a non-Muslim women made the water haram (impure) for her. Asia Bibi was told to convert to Islam right away to purify her soul upon refusal later she was accused of blasphemy by the Supreme court of Pakistan based on false and inadequate evidence. By the Pakistani court she was sentenced to death and the most drenching part was that Shahbaz

30 F. Natasha BIOGRAPHY: MUKHTAR MAI – SURVIVOR, ACTIVIST, Dec 20, 2017 <http://www.theheroinecollective.com/mukhtar-mai/>

31 A local council of people belong to high caste named *Mastoi Baloch*. They gather to resolves various disputes and have their own rules and regulation in that certain area which people from lower castes have to follow.

32 Kristof, Nicholas D. "A Heroine Walking in the Shadow of Death", *New York Times*. 4 April 2006. Accessed 29 March 2008. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/04/opinion/a-heroine-walking-in-the-shadow-of-death.html>

33 Randeep, Ramesh. Fury over Musharraf's 'cry rape, get rich' claim. *The Guardian*, Sep 2005. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/sep/17/pakistan.randeepramesh>

34 John Biggs & Davison M.A. (Oxon.), Dera Ghazi Khan: The Baloch tribal area. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03068375008731381>

35 See in response to @NidaKirmani tweet about Qandeel Baloch murder, Pakistani people response. Jul 15, 2020. <https://twitter.com/NidaKirmani/status/1283360774312939526>

36 See Graham Harrison. E, Asia Bibi: Pakistani woman jailed for blasphemy releases photos in exile (January 28, 2020). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/28/asia-bibi-pakistani-woman-jailed-for-blasphemy-releases-photos-in-exile>

Bhatti (Minorities Minister) and later Salman Taseer (Governor of Punjab, Pakistan) both were assassinated for talking on behalf of her. Everything just happened because Asia Bibi belonged to a lower caste and was not a Muslim while living in a Muslim country.

[I, while looking at the clock and realizing I'm left with five minutes, appreciate Asma for sharing this case and further add] "it shows intersectionality of discrimination. Asia Bibi dealt and went through all of this based on her religion, gender, and caste. We must examine all these hierarchies for fully understanding one's situation. It's the dire need of the hour to acknowledge all these existing structural differences at individual level and later at group level. Our today's class discussion and all these stories and personal experiences you shared shows us existing, ingrained operationalization of intersecting components such as caste, gender, race, and colorism in Pakistani society and how all these intersections are both fixed and fluid in our society. The assigning of occupations, ranks, self-worth, hierarchies, and even certain values are usually based on various arbitrary notions. All this thinking system creates an artificial ranks and belief system which further promulgated by certain fixed beliefs which are deeply ingrained in the societal value system and consciousness."

[I hear a bell ring and realize the class time is over. I thank my students for sharing their experiences while assigning the next chapter of the book "Pakistan, Islam, and peace" for the next class. I leave the classroom while further thinking about the relationship between caste, class, Pakistan, gender, and Islam and hope my students were doing the same].

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