

# [When longer heard. afghan women had served their](https://assignbuster.com/when-longer-heard-afghan-women-had-served-their/)

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When analysing the wayin which the Bush administration proceeded to enforce their feminist stance itis clear the government was completely misled. Female rights discourse becamestrongly fixated on the burqa, but this seems to have been a propaganda tool, used for “ geopolitical manipulation” (Fluri, 2011). Followinginterviews and participant observations with Afghan families, Jennifer Flurirevealed that in fact the complexity of the burqa was not understood by US aidworkers and that rather it seemed they were regurgitating requests from the USgovernment or simply following development ideologies (Fluri, 2011). It seems that there was unwanted concern surrounding female body and dress.

Thisbegs the question of why then was the government so concerned with the corporeal? It is likely that this was because of its use as a visual propaganda tool. Theimagery of Muslim women dressed in a burqa acted as tangible evidence of the oppressionthey were submitted to under the Taliban; visually differentiating the ‘ liberated’Western women from the oppressed and victimised Muslim women, and helping toreinforce the West as an archetype of civilisation. When the Taliban wasdefeated images of Afghan women ripping off their burqa were mass-produced and circulatedby US media, in effort to relay the success of the ‘ War on Terror’ campaign (Steans, 2008).

However in reality the situation did not vastly improve for women under the newUS supported regime, despite this their voices were no longer heard. Afghanwomen had served their purpose and were no longer of use or of interest topolitical elites (Steans, 2008). Thus demonstrating that the Bush administration’s concerns for women’s rightswere a façade. In addition, analysing the relationship between the RAWA(Revolutionary Assosciation of the Women of Afghanistan) and the Bushadministration is very insightful. Women from the RAWA were invited tocontribute to the table of high politics following the declaration of the ‘ waron terror’ and the subsequent promise to protect women’s rights. However their suggestionswere often ignored, for example they strongly advised against intervention, believing, as many other Muslims did, that this would cause “ resentment of USimperialism and create the conditions in which fundamentalist and terroristgroups would flourish” (Steans, 2008). Further theyasked the US “ not to support other fundamentalist regimes that denied womentheir most basic rights” (Steans, 2008) such as theNorthern alliance.

But the ignorance of these requests exemplifies thedismissive attitude of Western men toward women, and shows us that the promiseto protect women’s rights was a political guise. Throughout the ‘ war onterror’ there is a sense of Western men glorifying themselves as thebenefactors of freedom but as such they are exerting dominance over women in abackhanding way; they hold the power to grant them rights and to give theminvolvement in the cause. In reality, however, it is all on their terms andserves them a purpose. The idea of men as the protectors of women wascultivated right from the initial media coverage of 9/11 which seemed tocompletely ignore the courageous efforts of female fire fighters, policeofficers and other on ground workers, in an attempt “ masculinise” the ‘ war onterror’ (Steans, 2008). This would domestically ingrain the idea of men as the protectors and women asthose to be protected, which would subsequently feed into the internationalconflict. The trend of “ white men saving brown women from brown men” (Chakravorty Spivak, 1985) has beenprevalent throughout history.

Much like the claims to defend women in the ‘ waron terror’, during the 1800s, the British abolition of the Hindu suttee ritualwas justified as a protection of women. However, this was also an example of Orientalism, of the West imposing its values onto the East and using women to validate imperialism; as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak outlines in her essay ‘ Can the Subaltern Speak?'” The gravity of imperialism was that it was socially cathected as a ‘ socialmission'” (Chakravorty Spivak, 1985). As we haveseen, the ‘ social mission’ is sometimes gendered, but the West’s claims tosuperior masculinity and women’s rights are often flawed. The basis of women’srights should not be, men deciding which rituals and practices they think are’good or bad’, but rather giving women the freedom and power to decide forthemselves.