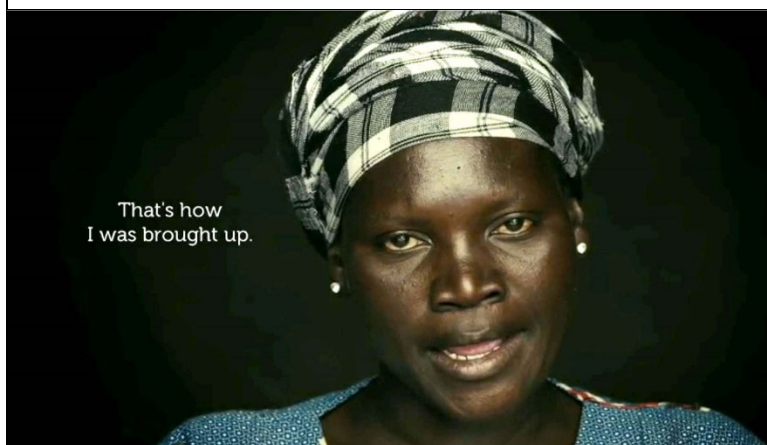




1. Maria (Italy) No, I never thought about it. I wouldn't have liked to be a man. Because men have an easy life. Too easy. And easy lives are boring. It's easier professionally, maybe even easier to attain their sentimental prey. For women, everything is much more difficult. But there is also the appeal of attaining your goals despite the difficulties. Without question, I prefer to be a woman.



2. Pilar (Spain) I feel powerless when, say, a very small woman enters the store, and sees something high up and says to me, "If only a man could get that. . ." You don't have to be a man. Jump up and grab it. You have two hands. Why a man? Whatever next? It makes me so angry. I really don't like it when women. . . I hate it when women are discriminated against. That's what makes me the most angry and disturbs me the most.



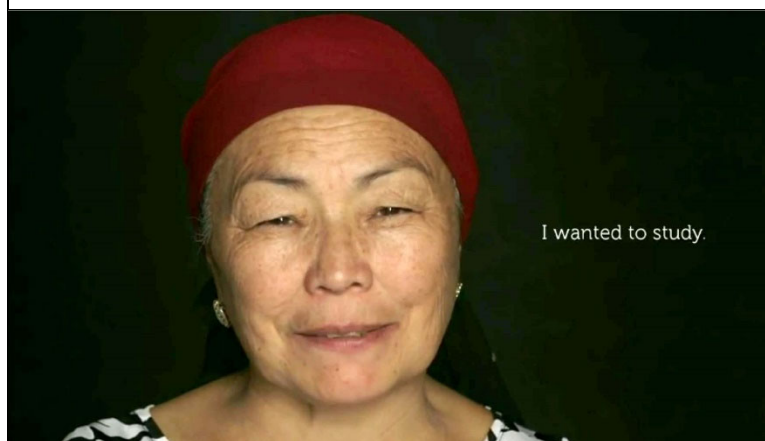
3. Aida (Senegal) Our household was just fine. No problems. It was good. We were married for twenty years. We divorced after twenty years of marriage. We divorced because I went to work one morning and he was against it. I explained that I knew nothing but work. That's how I was brought up. He refused, so I said to him, "If I don't work, will you give me what I need? If so, I'll stay." I waited, but he didn't give me anything. I said to him, "I'm going to work." We didn't fight. We divorced.



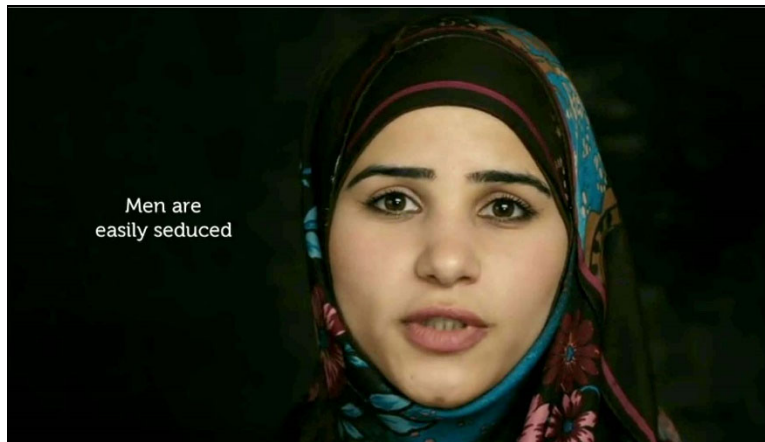
4. Carolyn (England) I ended my marriage. I had been married for nineteen years, very unhappily, and I'd stayed there for the children. And so, at fifty, I decided to end my marriage. And that led to a series of other decisions: I'd been vegetarian for thirty years, so I decided to stop being vegetarian. I'd been working in a career that I wasn't enjoying for twenty years, and I decided to stop doing that and retrain. And I also had been in love with a woman for a very long time. I asked her if she would have an affair with me, and she said yes.

So I went from being a heterosexual mother of two to being a lesbian mother of two. Which was an interesting experience—is still an interesting experience. And so I sort of turned everything upside-down. I thought, “I just can't do that life, that life that was so constrained by judgments and mores. I just don't want to do it anymore.”

And that series of decisions has been extraordinarily isolating, and—um—I think I'm coming out of that isolation now. A lot of judgments are made about women who get divorced when they have children. The expectations are that it's the most awful thing you can do to your children. That wasn't my experience, actually.

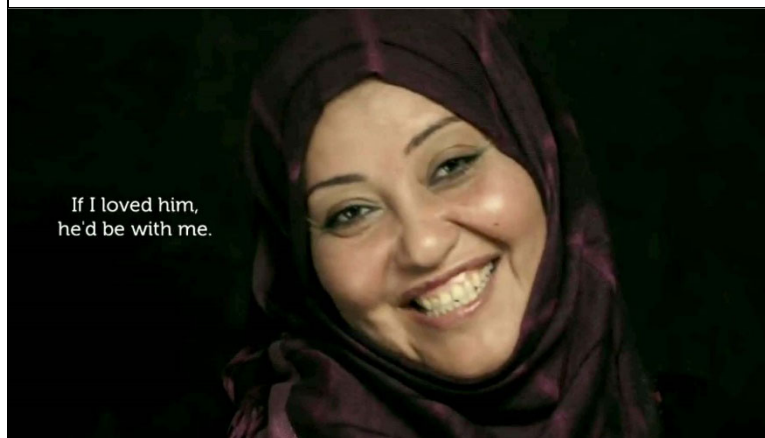


5. Sabira (Kazakhstan) When I was nineteen years old, my future husband, who knew me only by sight, kidnapped me according to Kazakh tradition, with the blessing of my parents. My father had already discussed it with me. I had told him that I didn't want to marry right away. I wanted to study. But my father gave his permission to the parents of my future husband. In broad daylight, I was taken away in a car with my future husband and a friend of his whom I knew. That is how they stole me. We drove all night, going 300 kilometers. We arrived at dawn. His elderly father welcomed us; when he saw me, he wept with emotion. I didn't want to go inside their house.



Men are
easily seduced

6. Walaa (Lebanon) Look at me. I'm wearing makeup, right? Am I attractive or not? If a man sees me, will he want to look at me? Yes, he will want to. The first glance is normal, but if he looks a second and third time, that's my fault: Because I'm wearing makeup, I allowed him to. I seduced him. Men are easily seduced by women's beauty. So, what I'm doing is wrong. In my Islam, when I wear a veil, it's to hide the beautiful things in me. My aim is to be even more religious. So, I expect someone who is religious to forbid my behavior. I like tough love.



If I loved him,
he'd be with me.

7. Fatmeh (Lebanon) I didn't choose my husband. He was my second cousin. I didn't really think about love. It's a question of customs and traditions. That's why I left him in Syria! If I loved him, he'd be with me.

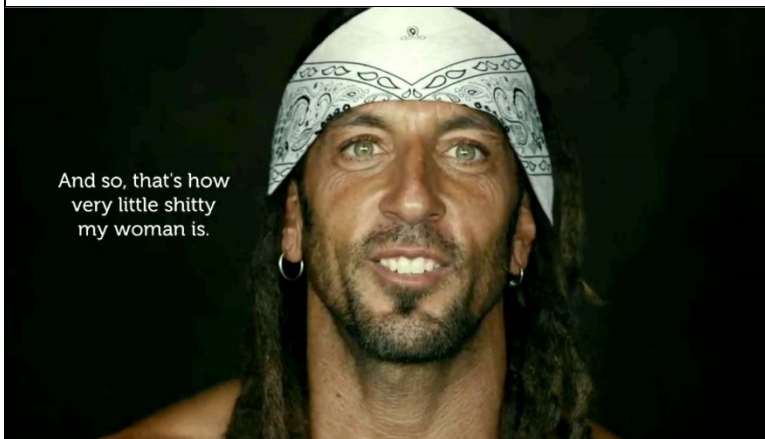


I know
I shouldn't laugh
about it,

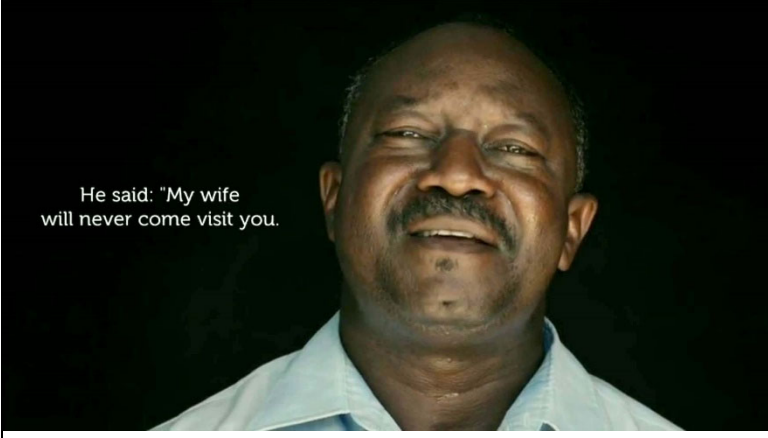
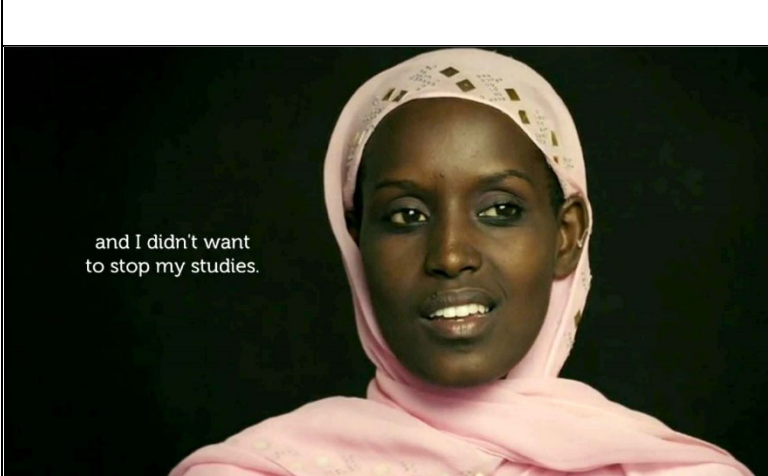
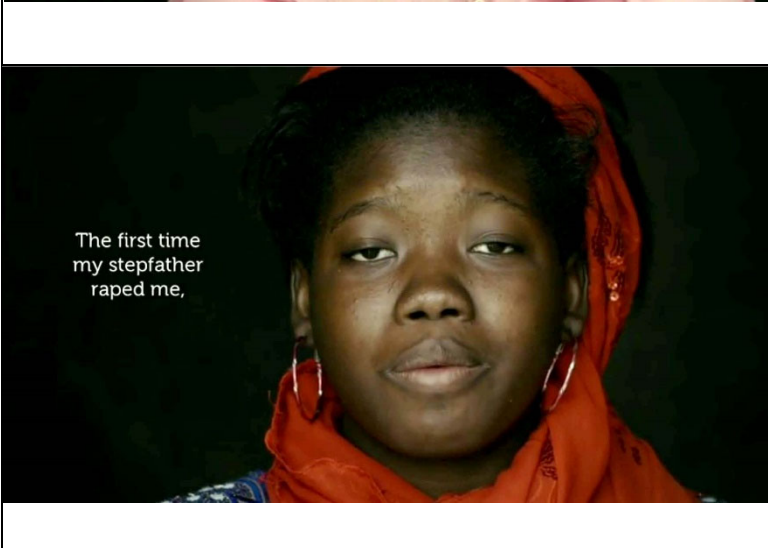
8. Milia (Peru) Today, I feel free. Because I can do lots of things without rushing. What's more, I'm divorced. Sorry. Excuse me. I shouldn't say that, should I? Sorry. Do you want to do that again? Is that okay? I know I shouldn't laugh about it, but I feel good. I feel free.



9. Brahim (Burkina Faso) Luckily, for us, polygamy isn't possible for women. I say "luckily" because if my wife loved another man besides me, it'd make things difficult. It'd be very complicated because I'm extremely jealous. Extremely jealous. I couldn't stand my wife spending the night in another man's arms and then spend the next night with me. I could never stand that. So, luckily, polygamy for women isn't possible in Burkina Faso. Because I just couldn't imagine it.

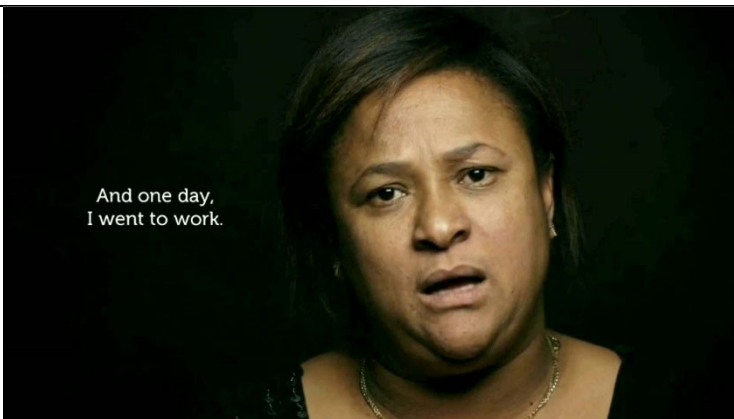


10. Frezno (USA) When I went and stayed with my. . . with my wife at her house in San Francisco—She's not my wife, but the woman I'm with—She. . . this was about a week after we started dating. . . and I woke up in the morning, and I said, you know, "I ask this of you and this of you and this of you, and, you know, you're hesitating." But the woman I'm with can't have a list of nos, like it's got to be pretty much all yeses or we don't have a relationship. I mean, this is where I'm at. And it took her about a month after I pointed that out to her to realize that these nos could not exist. And so, that's how very little shitty my woman is. She's freakin' very unique, very amazing. She gives me. . . like, she was raised to adore her man, like old-school Mexican, like know when to speak up. And that doesn't mean you can't tell me something, that doesn't mean you can't share, that doesn't mean that I don't want guidance. But in my household, the man is the man of the house.

 He said: "My wife will never come visit you."	11. Arsene (Burkina Faso) Okay, at home, on the weekends, I do the cooking. One day, a friend came to my house. He said, "You do the cooking?" I said, "Yes" "Is your wife sick?" I said, "No, she's resting." "What? You do the cooking while your wife has a rest?" "Yes, she needs rest." He said, "My wife will never come visit you. You'd put ideas in her head. When she comes home, she'll ask me to cook too." I said to him, "You must understand that they need to rest." Anyway, I enjoy cooking for my family.
 and I didn't want to stop my studies.	12. Cynthia (Rwanda) I'm in prison, because I had an abortion. I couldn't have continued with my studies because I was in a boarding school, and I didn't want to stop my studies. I'd have stopped for too long, with the p[re]gnancy, the birth, breastfeeding, and I couldn't consider that, so I decided to have an abortion. What pleases me today is that I'm getting out of prison tomorrow. I'll start a normal life again. I'll do what I couldn't do during my imprisonment. I'll continue my studies and work. And maybe one day, I'll have a child. I'll be just like everyone else.
 The first time my stepfather raped me,	13. Kadia (Senegal) The first time my stepfather raped me, I'd just turned eleven. He waited for my mother to have gone away. He asked me to come and clean the TV in his room. As I cleaned it, he put his hand over my mouth and threw me on the bed. He said, "If you scream, I'll kill you." I kept quiet. He raped me; then he said, "Go away, and don't tell your grandmother." If I could take revenge today, I would get a knife and kill him.



14. Crispina (The Philippines) We'd only been married for two weeks when he started beating me. We had children, and still he beat me. I couldn't take it anymore. Despite our seven children, I'd had enough, so I killed him. It doesn't really matter. He didn't look after the family, whereas I loved my children. That's why I killed him.



15. Donesia (Australia) There is a way out of being abused. For me, it was tough because I used to have the worst abuse. I would have a gun put to my head and get told to go on my knees and beg for my life. And I would do it. My kids used to be watching. Or get put out of the house, get kicked out of the house and have to sleep outside on the steps. And if I moved from there, I'd get a hiding the next day. It was tough because I thought it was me—I was the one doing something wrong in our marriage.

And one day, I went to work, and I was sitting in my office. And I thought. . . I closed my door—I remember that day very well—I closed my door, and I cried. I'd just been battered the night before. And I thought I needed to move on. And, um, one particular woman came and knocked on my door, and she said, "Can I come in?" And I said, "Yeah." And she said, "I need to talk to you." And we had this conversation about abused women. And I said to her, "I'm not being abused." And she said to me, "Yes, you are. It's all over your face." But people won't see it, because I always—like I said—love to smile. And then, we spoke about my kids, and when I started talking about my kids—those are the most important thing in my life—I thought if I don't move on out of here, I'm either going to be dead or my kids are going to be dead. So I need to move on. I need to do something.

And I went home that day, and I said to him, "I'm leaving." And I think Mark got a bit of a shock because he didn't realize that I was leaving. And he said, "No, you'll never leave me;

	you love me too much.” And I said, “Well, you know what? That’s what love is about. Leaving.” And I only gave him two choices; I said to him, “You either go for counseling, or I leave.” And, you know what? Today he’s a better man. He’s never lifted a hand for me since that day. That’s about nine years ago. So nine years ago, I was still an abused woman.
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