

# STUDENT VOICE

AMERICAN LANGUAGE CENTER • FES

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## Amazing Women

Heroines - Mentors - Pioneers



### Fatima bint Muhammad al-Fihriya al-Qurashiyya

was born around 800 AD in the town of Kairouan, in present-day Tunisia. Her family was part of a large migration to Fez from Kairouan. Fatima and her sister Maryam were well-educated in Fiqh, Hadith and Islamic jurisprudence. When their father died, they inherited great wealth and sought to improve the community that had welcomed them.

Fatima went on to found al-Qarawiyyin Mosque in 857–859 AD and Maryam founded the al-Andalusiyyin Mosque.

While the authenticity of this version of history has been questioned by some historians as literally being “too good to be true”, the pious legend has persisted nonetheless, with the historical figure of Fatima al-Fihriya becoming a great political symbol for women’s rights and education throughout the Islamic world.

The madrasa al-Qarawiyyin became a University in 1963. It is widely believed to be the oldest continually operating learning institution in the world.





## ISHA KANDISHA - THE VENGEFUL GHOUL

By Najwa Marradi - ADV2

As soon as her name is uttered, shivers run down children's spines recalling her gruesome stories. Aisha Kandisha is often represented as a beautiful woman with long dark hair, however, her legs are those of a hoofed beast; a goat or a camel depending on who is telling the story.

This evil entity is known for using her beauty to seduce men and lure them back to her lair. After she has finished with them, she literally "finishes them off" by eating them. She is sometimes described as a hitchhiker, trying to get her hands on clueless victims, foolish enough to pick her up. Several professional drivers have claimed to have encountered her on the side of long empty roads in the North of the country. Some say you can hear the sound of her rusty chains grating on the ground, others say she inhabits rivers and bodies of water.

Morocco has other female demonic figures that share the name "Aisha" and one can speculate that they are in fact manifestations of the same entity. In the past people would light candles in a shrine to appease her or sacrifice a black goat or black rooster to satisfy her hunger and gain her favor.

The real story, however, may truly surprise you! According to social historians, Aisha was once an actual historical figure; a woman from El Jadida. She was called Aisha Contessa or from which "Kandisha" was derived. The legend says that the Portuguese killed her husband and family and the intense grief turned her into a resistance fighter. She would use her feminine wiles and cunning to entice Portuguese sailors back to her house where Moroccan soldiers would kill them.

History has preferred to dirty and trample her memory and inspire fear in small children by turning her into a witch or monster. Instead, she ought to be honored for being an activist and warrior who fought for her country.



Photo: L Deygallier, Type de Femme Casablanca, Maroc

*"She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future." - Proverbs 31:25*

## Stop fighting yourself!

By lhssane Nejjari - ADV 3

You should eat fruit, but not too much, because fruits contain a lot of sugar and sugar is bad for you. Avoid carbs because they're bad for you and they raise blood sugar levels. Also, Carbs are your main source of energy. You have to eat every few hours to boost your metabolism. But you should try intermittent fasting and go 16 hours without eating to lose that extra weight. Going gluten free may reduce inflammation and help you lose weight. Eggs raises your cholesterol levels but they're a great source of protein and you should have them every day for breakfast. Avoid fat because it's bad for you and but a keto diet (high fat) will make you lose weight. Oh! And you should go vegan because it's low in calories, but on the other hand, a vegan diet may lead to digestive and other health issues. Makes sense right? No, absolutely not! "I am hungry, I am so hungry!" "No! You aren't hungry, drink some water, you can eat tomorrow. You've had enough calories for the day, just distract yourself. You'll feel accomplished if you eat less, weigh less, are less. It's better that way. Anyway, you can't be happy, smart, strong, and healthy all at the same time, right?" Wrong!

We have been taught to believe that the world only has two poles. Diet culture is loud and it's very hard to ignore all these Instagram posts telling you to be more disciplined and have more self control. But, let's get real. You can't outsmart your body, you can't drink water when you are hungry and suck in your stomach for the rest of your life. Don't focus on the number on the scales, get stronger! Your body is so much more than just a reflection in the mirror, your body is the only body you will ever have to carry you through life. So love it! Remember that your job isn't to please others. If your body is grossing someone else out, that's their issue to work on, not yours!



Image credit: UnSPLASH—Nadine Shaabana

## Don't!

Anon. - previous ALC graduate

Don't look at her.

Don't talk back.

Don't look at yourself in the mirror  
because you'll be scared.

Music played

hard to get.

The grammar has crashed,  
the vocab is unknown.

I don't know how to describe her?

Why refer to someone else?

It's you. and you should know better.

I'm lost between the him and the her.

My zodiac could be earthy  
but I embrace my fluidity.

Listen to the voices within.

To the things you and they have to offer.

We're all equals.

When we believe it,

only then can our heaven flower.





## TREE OF PEARLS

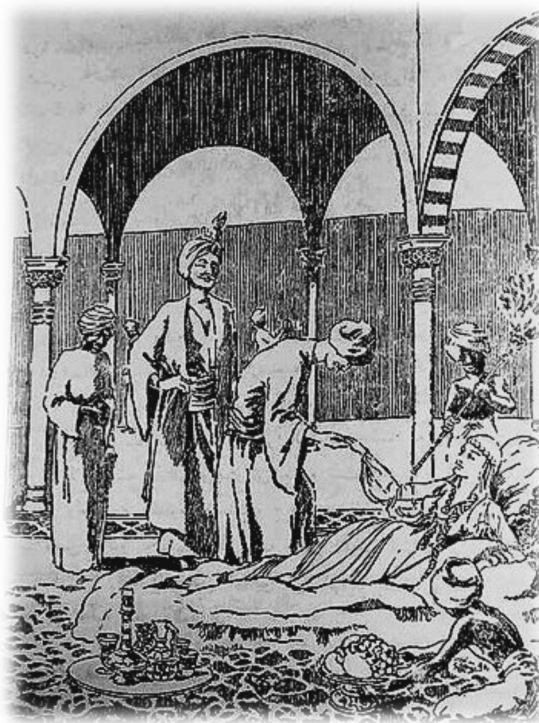
Aya Ez-Zahraouy - INT 6

We've heard of powerful kings and queens who ruled great empires of the past, but we probably don't know very much about the first queen in the history of Islam, and the second woman to sit upon the Egyptian throne since Cleopatra. Her name means "tree of pearls", and although she ruled for only 80 days, she defeated Louis IX in that time. She is the legend Shajarat Al-Durr.

Historians agree she was most likely born in present-day Armenia or Turkey. She was born sometime in the early 13th century, but little more is known about her origins, or how she got her name. When she was just a child, invading Mongols kidnapped her and she was presented as a child slave and concubine to "As-salih Ayyub", the Ayyubid sultan of Egypt and Syria. Since she was both beautiful and clever, she became the sultan's favorite concubine, and gave birth to a son called "Al-Khalil". After this, the sultan married her and she took the royal name al-Malika Asmat ad-Din Umm-Khalil Shajar al-Durr.

When her husband was away on military

campaigns, Shajarat gained much political experience, and after As-Salih passed away, he was succeeded by Shajarat Al-Durr's stepson, Turan shah. In political affairs, Shajar al-Durr played a crucial role after the death of her first husband during the 7th crusade against Egypt (1249–1250 AD). Turan's reign didn't last long, as the Mamluks rebelled against him and he was executed. The Mamluks' choice of leader then fell upon Shajarat Al-Durr. However, because she was a woman, the overlord of Egypt, the caliph of Baghdad, refused to recognize her rule.



Anonymous sketch from 1966 depicting Shajarat Al Durr

In order to maintain political control, she strategically married Azeddine Aybak, a Mamluk soldier, thereby becoming the sultana of Egypt on 2 May 1250. This marked the end of the Ayyubid reign and the start of the Mamluk era.

When Aybak wanted to take a second wife, Shajarat became jealous of his bid for more power and had him assassinated. Soon after, two military factions were fighting over the future ruler: those who supported

Shajarat Al-durr, and those who wanted Aybak's son by his former wife to rule. Shajarat's faction was defeated, and Aybak's son had her assassinated. She died 28 April 1257. Later, her bones were moved to a mosque named in her honor where they remain today.

Shajarat Al-durr was an incredible woman of determination and political influence, who in a short amount of time, engraved her name in history.



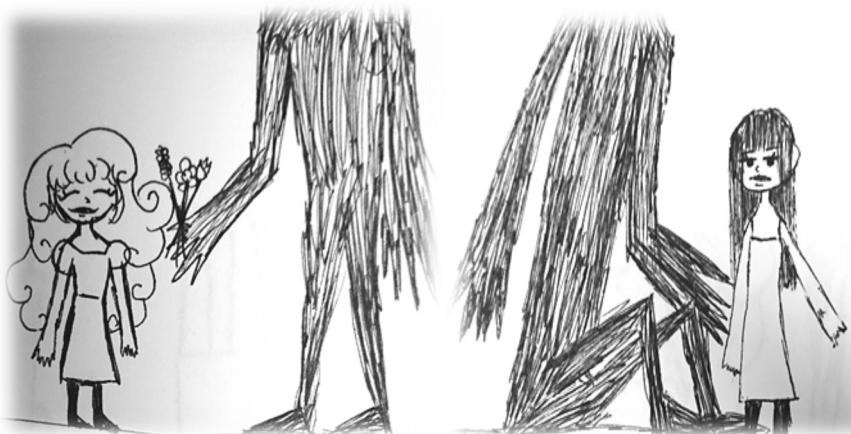
## GIRLHOOD

Imane el Montasser - INT 5

You don't know the pressure of being a girl. Us girls, were considered just bodies. Society gives us no choice. If you choose a career over marriage, they say you're selfish and won't have kids, and you'll end up alone. So basically, you are useless. If you get married, they say you have given up your life and you're useless, as if you were just born to marry. If you don't get married, they'll

say that no one wanted you and therefore you are useless. If you get married but then you get divorced, YOU were always the problem. If someone harms

you, you invited it. If you get raped, they blame your clothes. If you were covered, your behaviour was to blame. We are seen as useless in every single way. We are things, yet we are not. As a girl your life takes you another turn when you are 13 and go through puberty. Beauty standards make us suffer daily, we have to be shaved and look good. We are pushed to wear makeup and not love ourselves the way we are. They push us to lose weight or gain it, we lose our self-esteem, they make us hate our bodies



Original artwork credit: Alae Hammada—Beg 4

and want to change them completely to be some kind of "perfect". Otherwise, we are judged. We should big blue eyes, blonde, big lips, rosy cheeks, otherwise they loathe us. As a girl you are expected to lower your voice, lower your gaze, lower your standards. When we speak up, we are accused of playing the victim. Boys follow us on the streets, like dogs, and snap nasty words at us, saying how we love the attention, when actually we don't. we don't feel safe in our neighborhoods, towns or streets, our schools or even our gardens. We don't feel secure and when we try to stand for our rights and speak up about society, we are labelled western feminists. What is feminism anyway?

Its not about religion, culture or gender, its about human rights. It's my right as a human to feel safe. We don't want to be treated like princesses, we just want to be treated as equals.

We want the respect that we deserve, but that we so easily forget we are worth. We are no one's property, we are born free, and should be able to walk freely wearing what we want. It's my body and my choice. I am beautiful on my own terms; I won't change for anyone. We feel the weight of society's expectations and judgements and it's unfair that girls are treated differently by social standards.

"I am woman and I am free"

## To Every Faithful Teacher

Prof. Samira Bouqallaba

Apart from school subjects  
You taught me what is respect  
So glad to see every learner perfect  
Playing the symphony in your magic concert.

Now I can grasp why you were so serious  
Funny, happy, crazy and mysterious



Image credit: UnSPLASH—Vitaliy Lyubezhannin

And that your task is not such a luxurious  
To figure out all this I've been so curious!  
They told me you're my guide  
And you'll be standing by my side  
So brave to swim in this tide  
Guarding your dignity and pride.

Whispering in my ears...  
Yelling to test my fears  
Smiling to bring me cheers  
Caring about my tears

To every faithful teacher like you  
who taught me what is discipline and value  
So attentive about what I say and do  
Till I realized what is false and true