

# **KYALMUN'26**

**UN Women**

Study Guide

**Agenda Item:** The Erasure of Women from  
Historical Memory and National Narratives.

**Under Secretary General**

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## Letter from the Secretary General

Dear Distinguished Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the UN Women Committee of KYALMUN'26. This committee focuses on a powerful and often overlooked issue: the erasure of women from historical memory and national narratives. History is not only written by those in power, but also shaped by whose voices are remembered—and whose are forgotten.

As delegates, you are invited to challenge existing narratives, question systemic inequalities, and advocate for inclusivity and representation. I encourage you to engage with empathy, awareness, and courage. May this committee empower you to recognize the importance of visibility, equality, and lasting social change.

Sincerely,

Yağmur Saritaş

Secretary-General, KYALMUN'26

## Letter from the Under Secretary General

Most esteemed delegates,

As the Under Secretary General, I would like to welcome you all to KYALMUN'26 and the UNWOMEN committee. I am more than excited to serve you in this regard. My name is Asya Ateş, and I am currently in my sophomore year at Kağıthane Anatolian High School.

I just want to say that, as we're talking about a really serious issue that's still having a big impact on our lives and standards, I hope this guide helps raise awareness, encourage empathy and understanding for some of you who might be needing it. Having this opportunity alongside one of my closest friends, who is also your dear academic assistant (elalolo), makes it all the more special. I am more than willing to make this a memorable experience for us all.

In this committee, we will explore a topic that many of us are familiar with: the systematic erasure of women from history. I have a feeling that most of you already have ideas about it, and I hope this helps you in your debates and in finding solutions within the committee. Please read the study guide, even if only briefly, and focus on finding global solutions to the 'Questions to be Answered' section. Trust me, it will help you more than anything; let it be your guide through your solutions.

Lastly, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have via email or phone. I wish you the best of luck with your debates and hope you are as enthusiastic about the committee as I am.

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## Introduction to the Committee

UNWOMEN was founded in 2010, The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women is a United Nations Organization dedicated to promote gender equality and empowering women internationally. The committee was a result of a merger of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other entities and has been holding sessions since 2011. It was established to address gender inequalities and ensure that the specific needs of women and girls are met.

UN Women supports UN Member States while they provide global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments to set laws, policies, and services. It plays a crucial role in providing women a life that is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UN Women focuses on four different strategic priorities:

- Women have the right to lead and participate in governance systems.
- Women have income security, work, and economic autonomy.
- All women and girls live in a world free from all forms of violence
- Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from natural disaster and conflict prevention and humanitarian action.

UN Women is headed by an Executive Director and advised by an Executive Board representing different regions. It is a member of the UN Development Group.

## Introduction to the Agenda Item

### **"The Erasure of Women from Historical Memory and National Narratives."**

*"For most of history, Anonymous was a woman." - Virginia Woolf*

The formation of historical memory and national identity is a selective process shaped by storytelling and power structures. History is full of examples of patriarchal systems systematically excluding women from historical memory and national narratives. Women have played vital roles as leaders, innovators, activists, and intellectuals. However, their contributions have often been minimised, ignored, or attributed to male counterparts in official records.

Those in power largely shape national histories. This results in narratives that prioritise male experiences and strengthen gender stereotypes. This selective representation limits the visibility of women in political, social, cultural, and intellectual life, a pattern evident in education systems and public representation. The absence of female role models has a significant impact on society. It restricts women's participation in public life and prevents us from making progress towards gender equality.

Women were traditionally limited to domestic roles, which prevented them from accessing intellectual and scientific fields. Despite facing barriers and being targeted, women have made significant contributions to science, culture and social progress. This agenda item expects delegates to examine the structural causes of women's historical erasure and to explore policy approaches that promote inclusive education, gender-sensitive historical documentation, and the recognition of women's contributions within national narratives.

## Glossary

1. **Cultural Memory:** The shared pool of information and narratives that a society collectively remembers and values. This includes stories, symbols, memorials and media that shape a community's understanding of its past and identity.
  
2. **Historical Erasure:** The systematic exclusion or downplaying of certain individuals or groups from historical records, textbooks, memorials and national narratives to the extent that their efforts are overlooked or undervalued.
  
3. **National Narrative:** A nation's dominant story includes it's heroes, struggles, values, and defining moments. These narratives influence identity, policy and collective memory.
  
4. **Matilda Effect:** A recognised phenomenon of women's achievements in science and intellectual work being credited to their male colleagues or supervisors. This can lead to historical misunderstandings and a lack of recognition.
  
5. **Symbolic Representation:** The visibility of individuals or groups in cultural symbols or public memorials (such as statues, public holidays and museums). This shapes who is seen as important or worthy of remembrance.
  
6. **Gender Bias:** A set of stereotypes and systemic patterns that privilege one gender over another. Historically, gender bias has influenced who is documented, celebrated or taught in schools.
  
7. **Intersectionality:** This is a framework for understanding how different forms of identity, such as gender, race, class and ability, combine to create unique experiences of privilege and marginalisation. Historical erasure often results in the (double) exclusion of women with multiple marginalised identities.

8. **Public Remembrance:** Official acts of remembering history through public rituals, memorials, street names, museums and anniversaries. The choice of who is honoured reflects cultural values and power relations.

9. **Archival Bias:** The selective preservation of documents and materials in archives reflects historical power inequalities. Materials produced by or about marginalised groups, including women, are often underrepresented or lost.

10. **Memory Activism:** Efforts by individuals or groups to reclaim, recover, document and raise awareness of erased or forgotten histories, especially those relating to marginalised communities.

11. **Epistemology:** The study of how knowledge is created, validated and shared. In this context, it refers to who is allowed to influence what is considered acceptable historical or scientific knowledge.

12. **Media Framing:** The way in which media present, emphasise or silence certain stories and perspectives. This shapes the public's understanding of historical events and figures.

13. **Patriarchal Historiography:** Historiographical practices that prioritise male experiences and perspectives while marginalising or ignoring female ones.

14. **Representation Gap:** The difference between the actual achievements of a group (such as women in history) and how visible they are in cultural memory, education programmes, and national narratives.

## Historical Background

The erasure of women from historical memory refers to the systematic overlooking, minimizing, or complete omission of women's roles, experiences and contributions in the way societies record, retell, and institutionalize history. This phenomenon is deeply rooted in patriarchal structures and is reinforced by cultural norms, educational systems, state propaganda, and even academic historiography. When nations construct a "national narrative," they craft a collective story often heroic, linear, and male-dominated to legitimize identity, unity and political authority. Within these narratives, women's presence is frequently marginalized, leading to distorted understandings of the past and an incomplete picture of social development.

In the past (—) tasks such as housework, childcare, elder care, and responsibilities within the household have historically been seen as "natural duties" of women rather than as economic contributions. Because these tasks are unpaid and excluded from official statistics, women's labor became socially and economically invisible. Which leads the public to think "men are braver, stronger, smarter, etc. than women."

The historical evolution of hidden labour starts from early societies where women actively participated in food gathering and agriculture, to the Industrial Revolution, which separated home and workplace and pushed women into unpaid domestic roles. Social norms, gender roles, and patriarchal structures limited women's participation in scientific fields. Throughout history, women were often marginalized, excluded from education, and portrayed as intellectually inferior. Despite this, many women made meaningful scientific contributions that were later obscured or forgotten.

Women's situation in ancient civilizations such as China, India, Egypt, Greece, etc. Women were typically denied intellectual agency. If women had been more widely encouraged to participate in scientific production, the development of science might have taken a different path.

### a. Mechanisms of Erasure:

#### ➤ *Selective Documentation:*

Archives, state records, and chronicles disproportionately recorded the activities of male elites. Women's experiences were rarely written down unless they were royalty or exceptions to gender norms.

#### ➤ *Gendered Education Systems:*

Textbooks and school curricula reinforce national stories centered on wars, kings, statesmen, and diplomats—fields where men traditionally appeared. This excludes the contributions of women in resistance movements, social welfare, literature, science, and community building.

#### ➤ *National Myth-Making:*

Nation-states often rely on symbolic heroes (founding fathers, generals, revolutionaries). Women are symbolized abstractly—as “mothers of the nation,” “martyrs,” or “figures of honor”—rather than as political actors, strategists, or leaders. Their real contributions are replaced by idealized, passive images.

➤ *Cultural Norms and Patriarchal Historiography:*

Many cultures historically viewed women as private, domestic beings. As a result, historians assumed that women “did not participate” in major events even when evidence contradicted this.

**b. Examples across history**

- *Revolution and Independence Movements:* Women participated extensively in anti-colonial struggles (e.g., Algeria, India, Vietnam). They organized supply networks, intelligence systems, protests, and even fought in combat roles. However, after independence, new national governments rarely acknowledged these contributions. Men became the face of liberation; women were pushed back into domestic roles.
  
- *Scientific and Intellectual Contributions:* Women scientists, writers, and philosophers—such as Rosalind Franklin, Hypatia, Fatima al-Fihri, and Ada Lovelace—had their work sidelined or attributed to male colleagues. This shaped the idea that intellectual progress was a masculine endeavor.
  
- *Cultural Preservation and Social Stability:* Women have historically preserved languages, oral traditions, and community networks that sustained national identity during conflict or migration. These softer, less visible forms of nation-building are rarely documented, though they are foundational.

# Timeline of Important Events

## **1. Ancient Eras – The Foundation of Exclusion (c. 3000 BCE - 5th Century CE)**

The time when legal, religious and philosophical systems first said that women were inferior and this set the pattern for how they would be treated in the future.

- **c. 3000 - 1000 BCE: From Goddess Figures to Legal Hierarchy**

Early societies that used to worship mother-goddess figures slowly started to adopt patriarchal legal systems. As written laws emerged (like the Code of Hammurabi), women's identities became linked to male guardianship, dowry systems and inheritance exclusions. This marked the start of women being treated as property in legal and historical records.

- **c. 350 BCE: Aristotelian Biological Essentialism**

Aristotle's classification of women as "mutilated males" and biologically passive provided a philosophical justification for the idea that women were inferior. His works became essential to Western education, having a massive influence on Greek, Roman, medieval Christian and later Enlightenment thought. This philosophical claim justified women's exclusion from political life, citizenship, education, and intellectual authority.

- **1st - 5th Century CE: The Destruction of Female Intellectual Authority (Hypatia of Alexandria)**

Hypatia, a highly accomplished mathematician, astronomer and philosopher, was murdered by a Christian mob in 415 CE. Her death is widely considered to symbolise the violent suppression of independent female scholarship during the transformation of the Roman world. The destruction of her school and writings represented a symbolic breaking point, at which point female intellectual leadership was erased from mainstream historical memory.



- **Ancient China & India: Legal and Cultural Devaluation**

In major empires such as Han China and Gupta India, patriarchal legal frameworks denied women property rights, access to classical education and public positions. Family records often listed women only as "wife/mother of X", or sometimes by number. This meant that women's personal identities and achievements were excluded from official historical texts.

## 2. *The Medieval World: The Systematic Erasure of Female Knowledge (5th - 15th Centuries)*

Religious institutions and the state worked together to silence women, particularly in the fields of medicine, spirituality and education.

- **11th - 14th Centuries: Silence Mandates & Theological Restrictions**

The church authorities made it harder for women to have a voice, banning them from preaching, teaching, or having leadership roles. Religious scholars said that women were morally weak and prone to sin. This was used to justify their exclusion from literacy, scriptoria (places where religious texts were written), and documentation practices. Historical records from monasteries, which were the main places where writing took place, were mostly written by men.

- **1487 - Malleus Maleficarum (“Hammer of Witches” - The Salem Witch Trials)**



This influential book by Heinrich Kramer depicted women as inherently prone to witchcraft and moral corruption. It allowed the persecution, torture and execution of thousands of women across Europe. Women healers, midwives and folk doctors—who had traditional medical knowledge—were systematically eliminated, erasing female contributions to early medicine and pharmacology.

- **9th - 12th Centuries: Erasure of Women in the Islamic Golden Age**

Although women such as Fatima al-Fihri, the founder of the world's oldest continuously operating university (Al-Qarawiyyin), and female hadith scholars existed, mainstream histories focused almost exclusively on male philosophers and rulers. Later global narratives about the Golden Age minimised or overlooked women's contributions.

## 3. *Industrial Era: The Invention of “Invisible Labor” (18th–19th Century)*

Economic transformations have created new forms of female erasure by separating the public and private sectors.

- **18th - 19th Centuries: Institutional Scientific Exclusion:**

Scientific academies such as the Royal Society (1660), the French Academy of Sciences, and many universities denied women membership, access to laboratories, academic degrees and publication opportunities. This meant that women scientists were forced to publish anonymously or under the names of male relatives, which effectively erased them from scientific history.

- **19th Century: The Separation of Spaces**

Industrialisation meant that paid work was done in factories, which meant that the home was seen as a 'non-productive' space. Women were assigned unpaid domestic labour, such as cooking, cleaning, child rearing and nursing, which became invisible in economic metrics. National historical accounts focused on male industrialists and political leaders, entirely excluding women's labour, which was essential to social survival, from public recognition.

- **Global Colonial Context: Double Erasure of Indigenous and Enslaved Women**

Women in colonised regions performed agricultural labour, domestic service, textile work and caregiving. However, colonial documentation ignored these contributions. Their stories were also often erased from patriarchal local histories, resulting in a 'double erasure' whereby their labour became invisible in both global and national narratives.

#### **4. Modernity: Gatekeeping of National Narratives (Early 20th Century)**

While celebrating women's symbolic roles, nations actively restricted their political power (such as the first women's political party during the formation of the Turkish Republic, which got downplayed as charity work instead) and historical presence.

- **Early 20th Century: Media Erasure Through Satire**

Popular magazines such as Puck (US), Punch (UK) and Akbaba (Turkey) used caricature to ridicule women who were seeking political rights. These depictions shaped public perception, portraying women as irrational, unintelligent or overly emotional and effectively erasing their rightful place in public life.



- **Global Phenomenon: The Republican Motherhood Narrative**

In the aftermath of the First World War, national myth making praised women as 'mothers of the nation' who were responsible for raising patriotic citizens. Yet women were denied full citizenship, political office and representation in official histories of nation building. Their

contributions to war, independence movements and civic organisations were either downplayed or ignored.

## **5. Late 20th Century: International Legal Recognition (1960s–1990s)**

Movements all over the world and the United Nations (UN) have started to challenge the historical erasure that has been in place for a long time. (finally)

- 1960s - 70s: Women's History as an Academic Discipline**

Second wave feminism led to the foundation of women's studies and feminist historiography. New approaches to archiving (such as oral histories, community archives and microhistories) brought marginalised women's voices to light, which had been overlooked by traditional, male centred history.

- 1979 - 1981: CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)**

CEDAW required states to eliminate discrimination in education, culture and public life. It acknowledged the necessity of addressing historical inequalities by guaranteeing women's full participation and representation in public narratives.

- 1995: Beijing Platform for Action & Gender Mainstreaming**

The Fourth World Conference on Women established a global commitment to integrating women's perspectives into all state policies, including those relating to education reform, cultural memory and historical documentation.

## **6. 21st Century: Memory Activism and Digital Reclamation**

A new era of uncovering erased histories through modern technology and global movements.

- 2010: Establishment of UN Women**

The establishment of UN Women brought together global efforts towards gender equality, prioritising visibility and representation, as well as addressing historic discrimination in national narratives.

- 2017 - Present: #MeToo and Global Responses**

The spotlight on systemic gender-based violence through social movements has brought renewed public attention to women who were previously silenced by institutions. This has led to new historical analyses, curriculum reforms, changes to museums, and digital projects aimed at recovering women's stories.

# Women in Nation-Building and Independence Movements

Women have played indispensable yet systematically undervalued roles in nation-building and independence movements across history. While nationalist struggles are often narrated through male military leaders, political elites, and revolutionary theorists, women were central to the mobilization, sustainability, and ideological legitimacy of these movements. Their participation extended far beyond

symbolic support, encompassing armed resistance, intelligence gathering, mass mobilization, economic organization, cultural preservation, and post-conflict reconstruction. However, despite their contributions, women were frequently excluded from post-independence political power and erased from official national narratives.

From a policy perspective, this erasure reflects the gendered structure of nationalism itself. Independence movements often relied on women during periods of crisis but reverted to patriarchal norms once sovereignty was achieved. As a result, women were redefined as “mothers of the nation” rather than architects of the state. This selective remembrance has long-term consequences for gender equality, political representation, and citizenship rights in newly formed or post-colonial states.

## Key Roles of Woman in Independence Movements

1. Political Mobilization and Mass Organization: Women organized protests, boycotts, strikes, and grassroots resistance networks. Their social positions enabled them to mobilize communities, transmit political ideology, and sustain long-term resistance efforts.
2. Armed Resistance and Military Leadership: Contrary to dominant narratives, women actively participated in combat, guerrilla warfare and military leadership. Many independence movements formed women's brigades or relied on female fighters for strategic advantage.
3. Intelligence, communication and logistics: Women served as spies, code carriers and logisticians often exploiting gender stereotypes to evade colonial surveillance. These roles were critical but rarely documented.
4. Post-Independence Marginalization: Despite their wartime contributions, women were often excluded from constitutional drafting, political leadership and state institutions after independence, reinforcing gender inequality in new nations.

## Key Roles of Women in Nation-Building

Women preserved language, traditions, education, and national identity during colonial repression. Through literature, teaching, and oral history, they sustained nationalist consciousness. Which was considered as “Cultural and Ideological Nation-Building.”

## 10. Erasure in Science, Academia, and Intellectual History

The exclusion of women from science and intellectual history is deeply rooted in the systems that control the production of knowledge. For centuries, universities, scientific academies, research institutions and scholarly societies were either legally closed to women, or their practices excluded them. They were denied access to formal education, laboratories, academic degrees and professional positions, which limited their ability to perform independent research or be recognised as intellectual authorities. Even when women participated in scholarly work, they were often limited to supporting roles such as assistants, translators, editors, or educators — positions that were essential to intellectual progress, yet rarely recognised as original scholarship. Unequal access to funding and institutional resources further restricted women's research opportunities, resulting in long-term differences in visibility and historical recognition.

- ***Recognition, Credit, and the Historical Record***

As well as being excluded from institutions, women's intellectual contributions have often been overlooked due to misattribution and biased recognition systems. The Matilda Effect describes the tendency to attribute women's discoveries to male colleagues, supervisors or spouses, reflecting assumptions about gender and intellectual authority.

Historically, academic publishing and citation practices have reinforced this pattern: women's work has faced higher barriers to publication, lower citation rates, and exclusion from influential editorial and academic networks. Archival practices have also played a critical role in this erasure. Official records, letters and published materials, which were often produced by men, were prioritised, while informal writings, laboratory notes, community-based knowledge and oral histories associated with women were neglected or ignored. These practices have shaped a historical record that appears overwhelmingly male, despite women's actual level of participation.



- ***Education, Formation of the Tradition, and Reproduction of Narrative***

Educational systems are prime examples of institutions where intellectual erasure is practised. School subjects, textbooks and academic traditions often present knowledge as a single, progressive path driven by a select group of male 'geniuses', effectively excluding women from the foundational narratives of science, philosophy and literature. This selective formation of cultural memory not only manipulates historical reality, but also shapes how students understand who can produce knowledge. The absence of female intellectual role models discourages women from participating in scientific and

academic fields, and reinforces the belief that intellectual authority is masculine by nature. Over time, these narratives normalise exclusion and ensure that erasure is passed down through the generations.

### ● ***Intersectionality and Global Power Dynamics***

The erasure of women from intellectual history is worsened by the combination of gender with other factors such as race, class, colonial status and indigenous status. Women from colonised regions, marginalised racial groups and lower socioeconomic backgrounds often experience double or triple erasure. Colonial knowledge systems often exploited the intellectual labour of Indigenous and local women, particularly in medicine, agriculture, and cultural preservation, without acknowledging their contributions. Later national and global histories then centred on elite male figures as representatives of intellectual progress. This layered exclusion has resulted in a global intellectual canon that reflects power hierarchies rather than genuine contributions, which tends to hide diverse forms of knowledge and reinforce historical inequalities.

### ● ***Consequences and current significance***

The exclusion of women from the history of science and intellectual thought has clear consequences for the production of knowledge, innovation and policymaking. When intellectual authority is defined too tightly, entire fields and perspectives, such as women's health, caregiving economies, social reproduction and community-based knowledge, remain understudied or misrepresented. Addressing this issue calls for corrective and structural measures, such as archival recovery, feminist historiography, oral history initiatives, teaching programme reform, and changes to institutional funding, employment, and valuation systems. Organisations such as UNWOMEN play a crucial part in promoting gender-sensitive research practices and inclusive historical documentation. Reclaiming women's intellectual histories is not just a symbolic act of justice, but a necessary step towards creating more accurate, inclusive and effective knowledge systems.

# 11. Cultural Memory, Media, and Symbolic Representation

Cultural memory plays a major part in shaping how societies understand their past and develop a sense of national identity. Rather than being a neutral reflection of historical events, it is actively produced through symbols, narratives and representations that determine which contributions are valued and which are forgotten. The media, public memorialisation and cultural institutions are key mechanisms through which historical meaning is created and sustained. The systematic exclusion of women, their reduction to symbolic roles, and their portrayal through limiting stereotypes means their absence becomes part of collective memory. This helps to strengthen gendered power structures and limit the variety of national narratives.

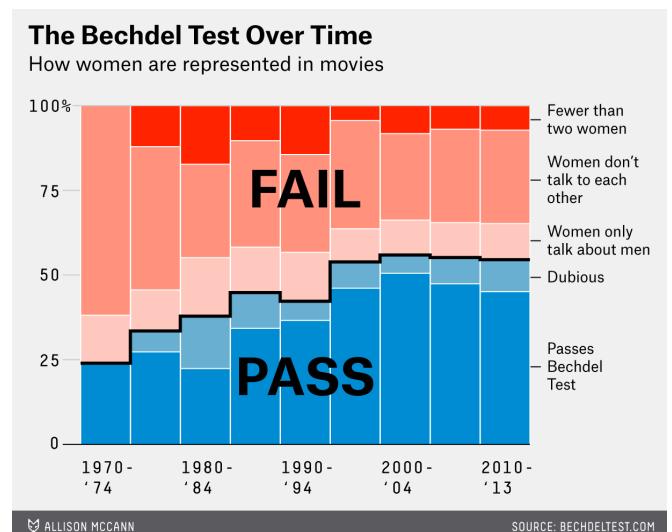
## • *Building Cultural Memory*

Cultural memory is not an accurate reflection of the past, but rather a narrative that is selectively shaped by social, political and institutional power. Through textbooks, museums, statues, national holidays and public ceremonies, societies communicate which lives and actions are considered worthy of remembrance. When women's contributions are excluded or marginalised in these spaces, their absence becomes normalised within national identity. Over time, this symbolic exclusion strengthens the connection between leadership, intellectual authority, and public life and men, while positioning women as secondary or supporting figures.

## • *Media Narratives and Gendered Representation*

The media plays a leading role in shaping collective memory and public perception. News coverage, films, documentaries and literature often prioritise male dominated narratives, such as warfare, political leadership and industrial achievement. Women's contributions, particularly in areas such as community organisation, cultural preservation and caregiving, are frequently overlooked or dismissed as unimportant. When women are represented, they are often reduced to simple archetypes such as the nurturing mother, the loyal companion or the passive victim, rather than being portrayed as independent individuals with political and intellectual agency. These patterns not only create a biased view of history, but also promote gender stereotypes.

For example, The Bechdel test (also known as the Bechdel Wallace test) is a measure of the representation of women in film and other fiction. The test asks whether a work features at least two women who have a conversation about something other than a man. Some versions of the test also require that those two women have names.



- ***Public Memorialisation and Symbolic Exclusion***

Public memorialisation is a formal, state-sanctioned expression of cultural memory. The decision making process surrounding memorials, street names, museum exhibitions and school subjects is deeply political, as it leads to the institutionalisation of certain historical figures while excluding others. The dominance of male figures in public spaces turns selective remembrance into an everyday part of life, creating gendered hierarchies within national identity. When women are acknowledged, it is often limited to symbolic or gendered roles, such as 'mother of the nation' or 'moral icon', rather than recognising their intellectual, political or strategic contributions. This form of symbolic inclusion does little to challenge existing power structures.

- ***Memory Activism and Modern Reclamation***

In recent decades, digital platforms and local community efforts have opened up new spaces for challenging historical erasure. Online archives, oral history projects, social media campaigns and community-led documentation efforts have played a significant role in recovering the stories of women who were previously excluded from official narratives. However, digital reclamation also has its limitations, including algorithmic bias, unequal access to technology, and the reproduction of archival gaps. To achieve sustainable change, institutional support must accompany community activism. For UN Women, promoting inclusive cultural memory through educational reform, media accountability and heritage policies is crucial for reshaping national narratives and achieving gender equality.

## 12. Colonialism ,Race and Intersectional Erasure

The intersectional erasure of women in history refers to the compounded marginalization experienced by women who existed at the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and colonial domination.Under colonial systems, historical memory was not only patriarchal but also racialized. Colonial powers constructed historical narratives that privileged white, European, male actors while systematically silencing Indigenous, African, Asian, and colonized women. This double exclusion(both as women and as racialized colonial subjects)meant that their political agency, intellectual labor, resistance and leadership were rendered invisible in both imperial and postcolonial national narratives.Colonial historiography framed European men as civilizers, rulers, and agents of progress, while depicting colonized societies as passive, backward, or chaotic. Within this framework, colonized women were either erased entirely or represented through stereotypes: as victims needing rescue or symbols of tradition.These representations stripped women of political agency and justified imperial control. Even after decolonization, many postcolonial states inherited these colonial knowledge systems, reproducing gendered and racial exclusions in education, archives, and national memory.

### ● *Intersectionality as an Analytical Framework*

Intersectionality explains why not all women are erased in the same way. Elite white women may be excluded from power narratives but still appear in archives, while colonized, enslaved, or Indigenous women are often entirely absent.Intersecting axes of erasure include:

- Gender(patriarchy)
- Race and Ethnicity
- Colonial Status
- Class and Literacy

This produces a hierarchy of remembrance in which colonized women occupy the lowest position.

### ● *Mechanisms of Intersectional Erasure Under Colonialism*

#### ➤ Racialised Archival Exclusion

Colonial archives prioritized written records produced by European men. Oral histories—where many women's experiences were preserved—were dismissed as unreliable or unscientific.

#### ➤ Stereotyping and Dehumanisation

Colonized women were portrayed as passive victims which erased women's resistance and leadership.

➤ **Criminalization of Resistance**

When women resisted colonial rule, they were labeled criminals, witches, or deviants rather than political actors, excluding them from heroic national memory.

## 13. International Legal Framework and UN Action

The erasure of women from historical memory and national narratives is not merely a cultural or academic issue; it constitutes a structural barrier to gender equality, political participation, and inclusive governance. Recognizing that historical invisibility directly affects contemporary discrimination, the international community—particularly the United Nations—has developed legal frameworks and policy instruments aimed at promoting women's visibility, participation, and recognition in public life. While international law does not explicitly mandate the rewriting of history, multiple UN treaties, conventions, and institutional actions indirectly and increasingly address historical erasure as a root cause of gender inequality.

- ***Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)***

CEDAW is the primary international legal instrument addressing systemic discrimination against women. Although it does not explicitly reference historical narratives, its provisions directly challenge the consequences of women's erasure. The CEDAW Committee has repeatedly emphasized that structural discrimination includes cultural memory, education systems, and historical representation. States are encouraged to revise textbooks, public commemorations, and educational materials to reflect women's roles. CEDAW frames historical erasure as a cultural root of legal and political inequality, making inclusive memory a state responsibility.

- ***UNESCO and Cultural Memory Frameworks.***

UNESCO plays a central role in addressing women's erasure through education, heritage, and cultural preservation. UNESCO directly links historical recognition to peacebuilding, cultural inclusion, and sustainable development.

- ***Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)***

The SDGs provide a development-based framework for addressing historical erasure.

### Relevant Goals

1. **SDG5(Gender Equality):** Targets systemic discrimination and harmful norms rooted in historical exclusion.
2. **SDG16 (Peace and Justice):** Emphasizes inclusive societies and participatory governance, which require inclusive historical memory.

## 14.Key Figures

- Rosalind Franklin(United Kingdom): Her field was molecular biology. Her X-ray diffraction images were crucial to discovering DNA's double-helix structure. The reason of her erasure is that her contributions were not properly credited during her lifetime and male colleagues received most recognition.
- Hypatia of Alexandria(Greco-Roman Egyptian): Hypatia was one of the most influential intellectuals of late antiquity. Her teachings shaped Neoplatonic philosophy and early scientific thought. Later historiography minimized her scientific contributions, framing her primarily as a tragic victim rather than a scholar. Her legacy was overshadowed by male philosophers whose work survived through institutional preservation. Relevance: Demonstrates how women's intellectual authority was excluded from the canon of "foundational knowledge."
- Manuela Saenz(Ecuadorian): Her field was Revolutionary Politics. She played a critical role in South American independence movements and directly influenced Simón Bolívar's survival and strategy.
- Policarpa Salavarrieta(Latin American): Her field was anti-colonial resistance. She served as a spy and organizer during Colombia's independence struggle. She is being remembered primarily as a martyr rather than a strategic operative.

# Country Stances

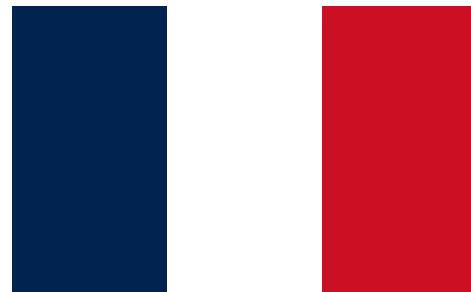
## *United States of America*

The United States recognises the historical exclusion of women from national narratives. It supports efforts to increase their representation through educational reforms, the recovery of archival material, and greater inclusion in the media. However, internal political divisions have sparked debate over the extent and framing of gender-focused historical narratives. Rather than federally mandated historical revision, the U.S. emphasises academic freedom, decentralised cultural institutions, and civil society initiatives.



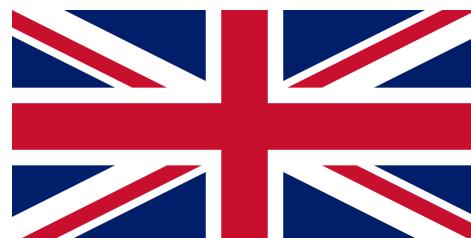
## *France*

France considers the inclusion of women in cultural memory to be essential for historical accuracy and social equality. The country supports state-led cultural reform, feminist historiography and gender-sensitive public commemoration, all the while maintaining a universalist approach to citizenship. France favours institutional interventions in education and heritage policy to address long-standing gender imbalances.



## *United Kingdom*

While recognising gender-based erasure in historical narratives, the United Kingdom stresses the importance of evidence-based revision and public dialogue. While supporting increased representation, the UK is cautious about politicising historical interpretation, emphasising scholarly independence, archival transparency and gradual reform.



## *China*

Although China supports the inclusion of women's contributions within national historical narratives, it prioritises social cohesion and state oversight when shaping cultural memory. Historical topics are reinterpreted through centralised institutions, and reforms are expected to align with national development goals. China is cautious about external involvement in shaping domestic narratives.



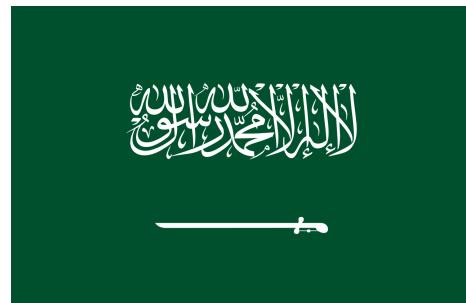
## ***India***

India recognises the historical marginalisation of women, particularly those from lower castes, rural communities and minority groups. While supporting inclusive historical documentation, India emphasises culturally sensitive and decentralised approaches that reflect regional diversity. The country remains cautious about universal frameworks that may overlook local context.



## ***Saudi Arabia***

Although Saudi Arabia recognises the evolving role of women in national development, it approaches historical representation within the framework of cultural tradition and social stability. Although recent reforms have increased women's visibility in education and public life, the country favours gradual, state-led approaches and resists external pressure to redefine national narratives.



## ***Turkey***

Turkey acknowledges the historical contributions of women, particularly in nation-building, while emphasising national unity and continuity. While supporting increased female representation in education and the media, it remains cautious towards narratives that challenge established historical frameworks or politicise cultural memory.



## ***African Union***

The African Union draws attention to the compounded erasure of women caused by colonial historiography and patriarchal norms. The AU strongly supports decolonial approaches, the recognition of oral history, and community-led documentation. The AU promotes international cooperation, emphasising respect for sovereignty and local knowledge systems.



## ***Russian Federation***

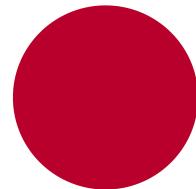
The Russian Federation views historical memory as a matter of national sovereignty and state identity. While acknowledging the contributions of women to social and wartime efforts, it emphasises preserving traditional historical narratives and cautions against reinterpretations that may undermine national cohesion or politicise history.



The Russian Federation is sceptical of externally driven frameworks that seek to reshape national narratives, stressing that historical memory should be determined domestically through state institutions and nationally approved scholarship.

## ***Japan***

Japan recognises that the contributions of women to intellectual, cultural and social development have been underrepresented in historical narratives. However, revising history remains a sensitive issue due to its implications for national identity and regional relations. While supporting academic research and incremental educational reform, Japan remains cautious about rapid or externally pressured changes to established historical narratives, emphasising consensus-building and scholarly excellence.



## ***Sweden***

Sweden strongly supports the full recognition of women's contributions to historical memory and national narratives, both as a matter of gender equality and democratic integrity, and for the sake of historical accuracy. The country actively promotes feminist historiography, gender-sensitive educational reforms, inclusive museum curation and media accountability. Sweden considers cultural memory to be a legitimate area for public policy and backs international cooperation, data collection and monitoring mechanisms under UN Women to address gender-based erasure. The country is open to binding commitments, reporting frameworks, and institutional reform at national and international levels.



## ***Islamic Republic of Iran***

Iran approaches historical memory through the lens of cultural sovereignty, religious tradition and national values. Although it acknowledges the role of women within society, Iran rejects externally imposed frameworks that seek to redefine national narratives or challenge culturally embedded interpretations of history. Iran opposes international monitoring or standardised approaches to cultural memory, emphasising that historical representation must remain under state and religious authority. Iran is therefore likely to resist any resolutions that frame the erasure of history as a universal problem requiring international intervention.



## Questions to be Answered

1. In what ways can education systems be reformed to restore women's visibility in national histories, while also respecting academic freedom and the local context?
  
  
2. Should states mandate changes to public memorialisation and cultural institutions, or should they rely on approaches led by civil society and based on incentives?
  
  
3. Which policies most effectively address archival bias and recover women's historical contributions, ensuring ethical and community-led management?
  
  
4. How can the media and cultural industries reduce gendered framing and tokenism without undermining editorial independence?
  
  
5. What role should international organisations play in supporting inclusive historical memory without violating national sovereignty?
  
  
6. How can intersectional and decolonial approaches be implemented to address the cumulative erasure of marginalised women?
  
  
7. What sustainable funding and accountability mechanisms are necessary to ensure long-term impact rather than just symbolic inclusion?