

When A Tree Falls Soundlessly: The Resonance and Impact of Christine Blasey Ford

Introduction by Meredith Darcy

*Why Does Patriarchy Persist? A Small Book with a Big Question*

by Naomi Snider and Carol Gilligan

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I'm so thankful that we are all here and together today. I've had a burning desire to gather with my peers and process *what happened, what shifted, what changed* back in September and October of 2018 with Christine Blasey Ford's testimony and the senate judiciary hearings. At the time of the hearings I was talking with friends, therapist, supervisor, but what I felt was missing was a group process with my peers. I met Naomi on our psychoanalytic institute's list serve—we were both one of a few people to be voicing our indignation and concern about the state of affairs during the hearings. We began a conversation: How does this affect our patients and the work we do? How does our feminism and our role as psychoanalyst converge? What can we do as psychoanalysts, individually, and as a group?

Well here we are 6 months later—let's talk about what happened and what we've been feeling, thinking, and seeing. I'll start:

On September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, I remember being caught of guard with the intensity of my affect when hearing Christine Blasey Ford's testimony: her clarity, her honesty, her

vulnerability. I was listening to her testimony on the radio, and so enrapt, I canceled my morning plans. The honesty in which she spoke was riveting—I heard the terror and complexity in her voice while she hauntingly detailed her attack, her feelings, and the resulting trauma. It was a bravery usually reserved for my consulting room. Explaining the details of her assault in front of a senate judiciary committee and openly to the world—here, this questioning, and this formal inquiry—that she/ *that we* were being seen, heard, and taken seriously. Detail by pointed overwhelming detail.

I remember being rapt by her voice and with the specificity and detail of her testimony. It felt so important, so big. (Like when I took my two young sons with me two years earlier with such certainty to vote for our first female president...)

How could she not be believed? Her account was so simple, so clear. A psychology professor for Pete's sake! Who could be MORE credible?

I don't even want to get into Brett Kavanaugh's moral indignation and his entitled outrage that followed. But listening to him after Dr. Ford's testimony—even as ridiculous as he sounded as the furiously offended and dull-witted caricature of the "victimized" male—*I realized that he had won*. That the sad fact was, that to change and affect a powerful white male's ascent and trajectory due to a sexual assault "allegation" from thirty years prior was just not going to happen. That it's not about right or wrong, or truth or lie, but it's that men and women are playing with a markedly different set of rules and code of conduct. The game is rigged.

But even in knowing this, I maintained a hopefulness that “the truth” would prevail. Waiting for the “investigation” into Dr. Ford’s allegations was demoralizing and terrifying: that her honest account could be so blatantly overlooked. In waiting that last week for the final senate vote, I felt like I was watching the movie Titanic, with futile fervor wishing that the ship would *turn JUST ENOUGH* to miss the iceberg this time...

When I heard the senate final vote on October 3<sup>rd</sup> confirming Kavanaugh’s appointment to the Supreme Court—a loss and rage welled inside of me. It was a familiar rage, but one I had kept buried deep inside. An outrage that I had known but not wanted to know. A deep sorrowful longstanding loss of my own voice and of being unheard.

I was shaken to my core. I spoke with friends and family trying to understand my feelings and what had happened. My patients spoke with me—also mournful and outraged. It took weeks to regroup and move on. But I was seeing something shifting: my patients were speaking their minds to their bosses, to their spouses. One patient, a litigator, spoke differently in court. She spoke with a renewed strength and greater conviction to the judge and the opposing counsel than ever before. My patients, both women and men, were outraged and upset—and there was a shift. A sense of: I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take it any more!! A demand to be seen and heard, to be taken seriously. I felt it too; I still feel it—with patients and in my personal life and professional identity.

So fittingly, today we have Naomi Snider and Carol Gilligan and their new book. *Why Does Patriarchy Persist?* speaks to women's voicelessness and resistance. How perfect!

***Why Does Patriarchy Persist?***  
***A Small Book with a Big Question***

Patriarchy is at once under siege and flourishing.

In light of our discoveries, we have a clearer understanding of why.

Co-authored by Carol Gilligan, developmental psychologist and one of the world's most influential feminist thinkers, and Naomi Snider, a human rights lawyer and research fellow at New York University the newly published ***Why Does Patriarchy Persist?*** tackles one of the most intractable dilemmas of our messy socio-political times:

- What is it about patriarchy that makes it so resilient and resistant to change?
- After decades of feminist striving for equality, how can a system of society in which men hold most of the power continue to survive -- and even thrive?
- What impact does this social and political structure have on us psychologically wherever we sit on the gender spectrum?
- How is it that both men and women come to sacrifice the possibility of equal and authentic connection for the sake of power and hierarchy?

- What role can therapists play in helping patient's re-find and re-claim the disavowed and silenced voices within themselves that maybe crucial to establishing democratic and responsive ways of being and relating.

Spurred in part by Donald Trump's election and a surge of unabashedly patriarchal politics, along with a new wave of resistance, notably, the #metoo movement, ***Why Does Patriarchy Persist?*** brings a novel -- and distinctly socio-psychological -- perspective to these troubling, age-old questions. With the election of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court despite credible accusations of sexual assault and powerful protests led by women, the need for answers has only grown in urgency.

While Patriarchy exists "out there" as a set of societal and cultural rules and structures that divide human traits into masculine and feminine and favour the former over the latter - it also exists "in here" - as a voice in our own heads - a set of internal, often unconscious, assumptions about how we as men and women can and should act, feel and think. How did the Patriarchy get into our heads and what can we do to get rid of it? These are the questions that this book seeks to answer.

Familiar explanations for patriarchy's persistence hold that people with privilege are reluctant to give up their power and will go to great lengths to maintain it. However, the authors contend that, along with the powerful economic and political drivers fueling patriarchy, there are *hidden psychological forces* that help keep patriarchy in place. Specifically, based on their research, the authors have identified a psychology of loss

underpinning patriarchal behavior -- unspoken codes of masculine honor and feminine goodness that require the sacrifice of love and connection for privilege and power.

Contrary to popular belief, this sacrifice of connection for the sake of hierarchy is neither inevitable or natural. The authors cite overwhelming evidence that vibrant, responsive relationships are critical to human health and thriving. ***Why Does Patriarchy Persist?*** explores the defensive psychology underpinning patriarchal behaviors while also highlighting promising alternative pathways -- mechanisms for healthy resistance -- that may ultimately open the door to more democratic and responsive ways of being.