

# How Patriarchy Affects The Way We Think

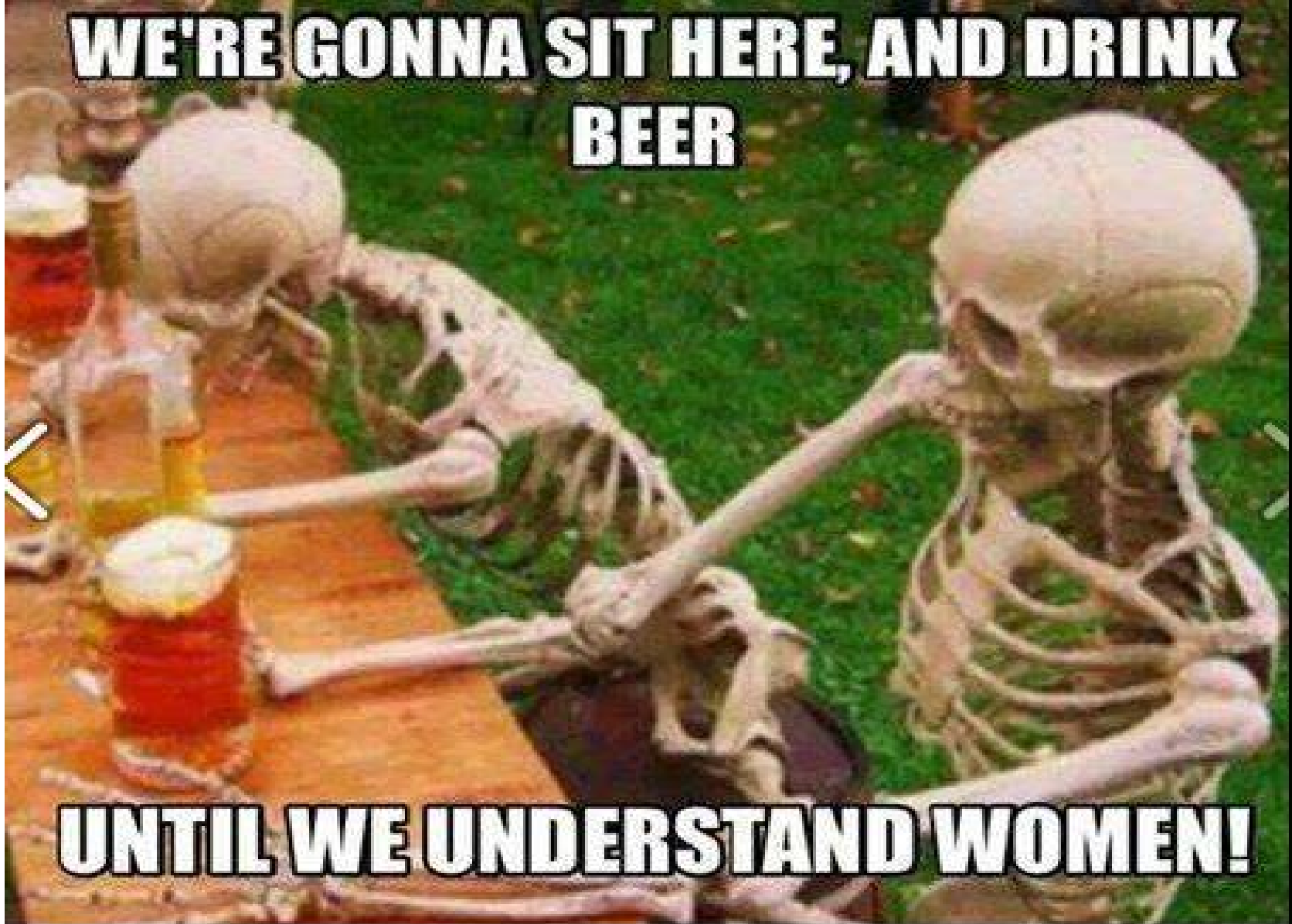


## How Patriarchy Affects the Way We Think

**What are the following cartoons saying?**

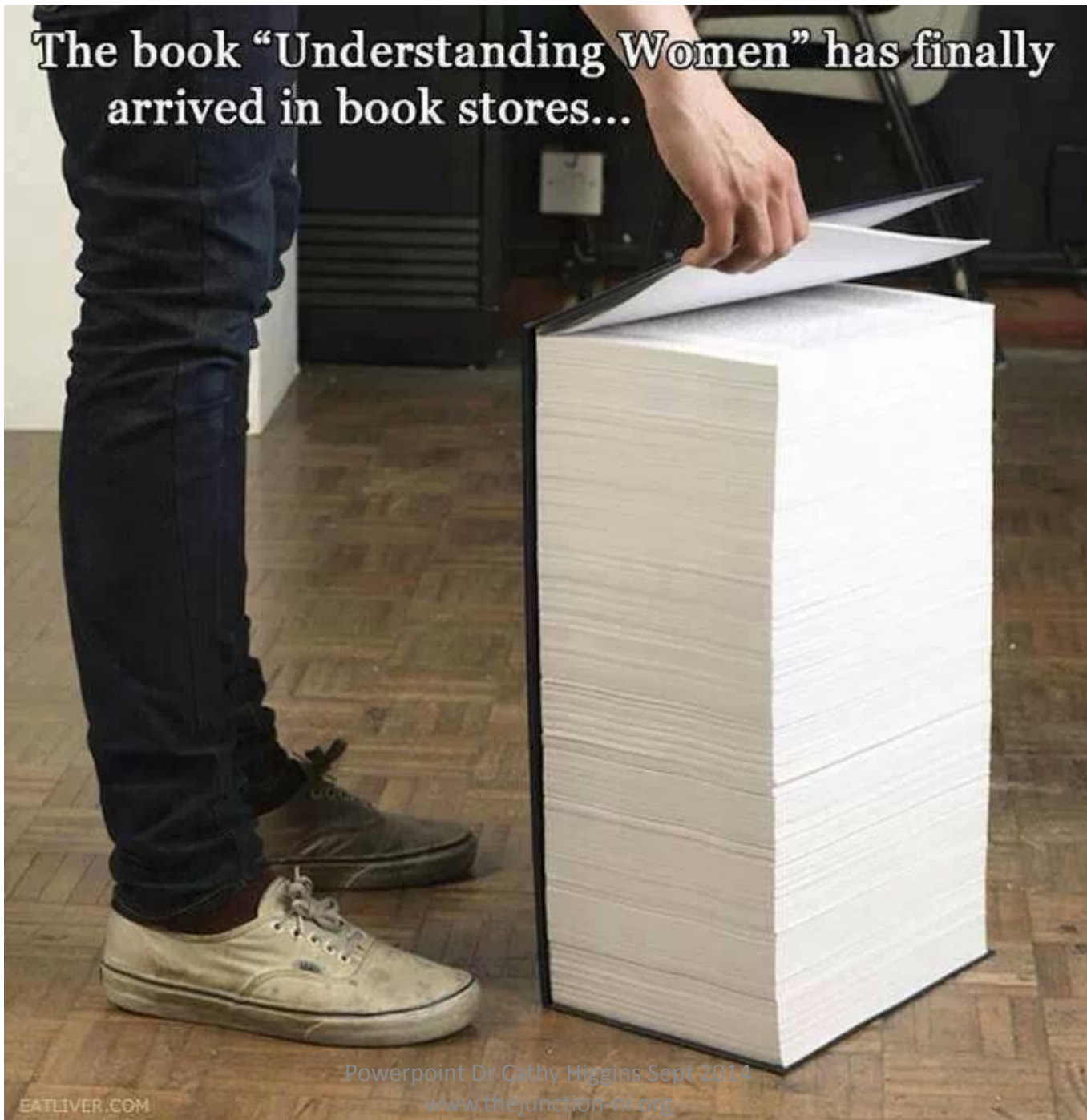
**What is your reaction to them?**

**WE'RE GONNA SIT HERE, AND DRINK  
BEER**



**UNTIL WE UNDERSTAND WOMEN!**

**The book “Understanding Women” has finally arrived in book stores...**





*"Tell me about your fear of women, Father!"*



**I'm a white male, age 18 to 49.**



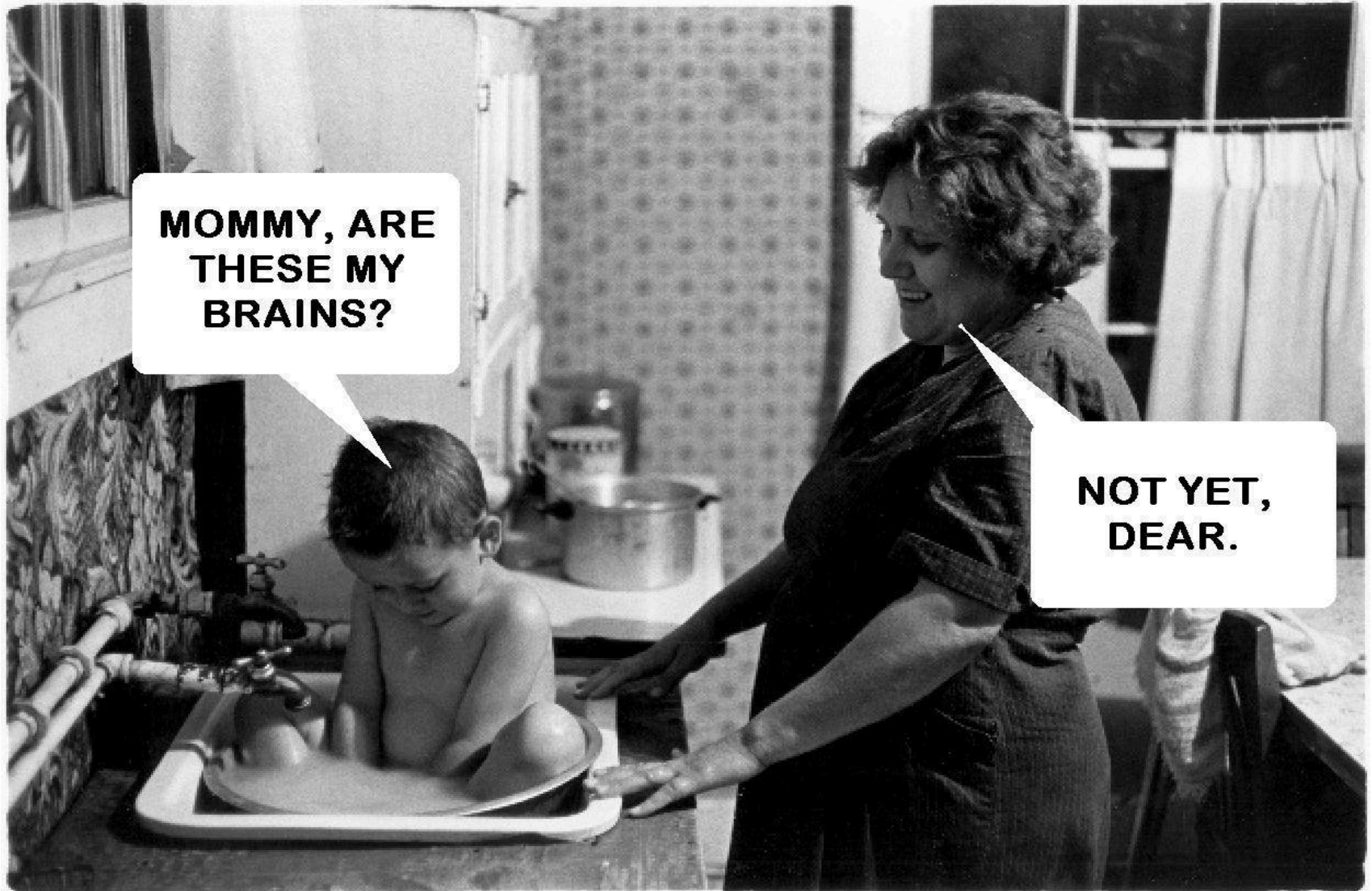
**Everyone listens to me, no matter how dumb my suggestions are.**



Why is it when a woman is confident  
and powerful, they call her a witch?







**MOMMY, ARE  
THESE MY  
BRAINS?**

**NOT YET,  
DEAR.**

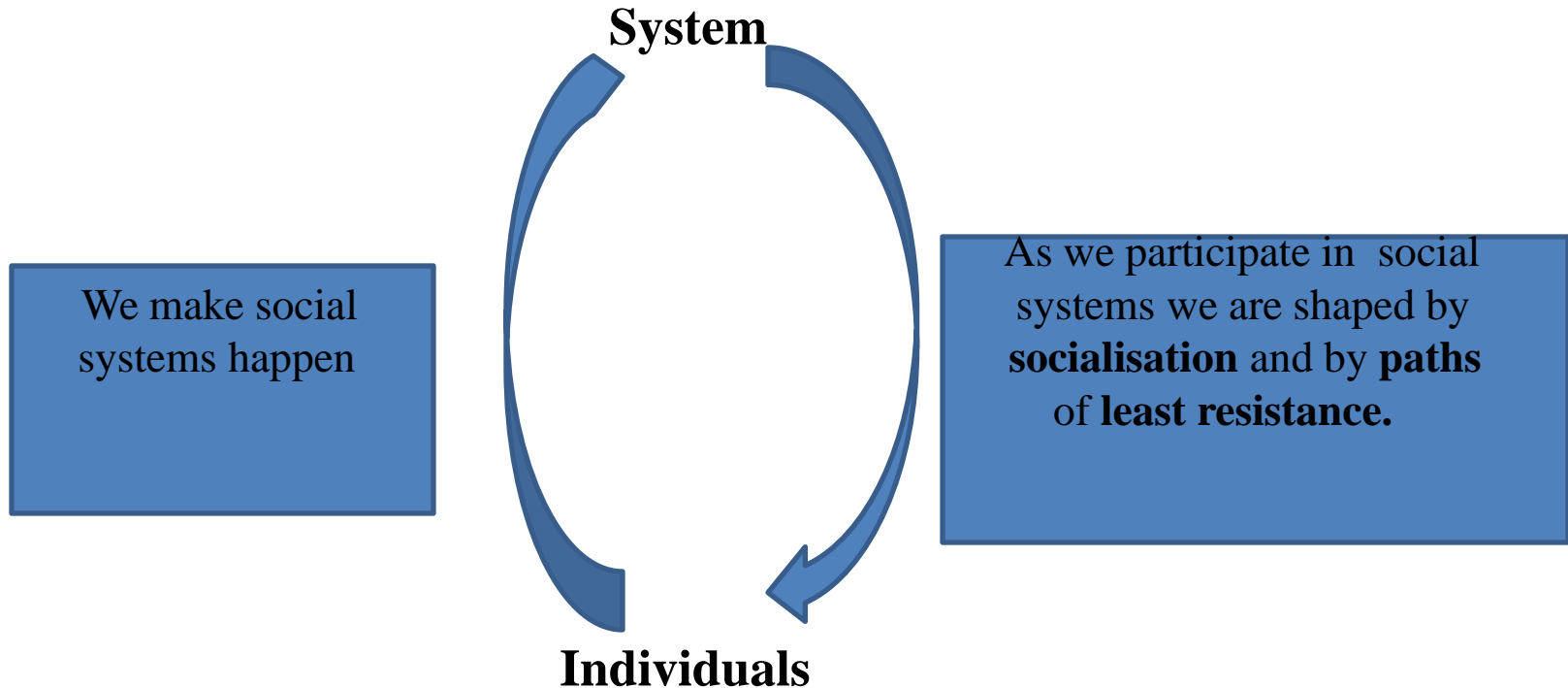


## How Patriarchy Affects the Way We Think

- Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus.
- If there was no bad women there would be no bad men.
- Men think with their penises.
- If she's pretty and she's sexy she must be dumb.
- Men need to be handled. If you know how to handle them properly you can get what you want.
- The woman is here to take care of her husband.
- She must have slept with someone to get where she is



# Patriarchy – A System



**Source:**

Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), pp. 31-33.



## Patriarchy – A System

- Patriarchy is a system which means it cannot be reduced to the people who participate in it.
- The arrow on the right hand side of the diagram points up that as we participate in social systems we are shaped as individuals.
- Through the process of socialisation we learn how to participate in social life – from families, schools, religion, work place, mass media etc.
- Through all of this we develop a sense of personal identity – including gender – and how this positions us in relation to other people, especially in terms of inequalities of power.
- Participation in social systems shapes our behaviour through paths of least resistance – the conscious and unconscious choices we make from one moment to the next.



## Patriarchy – A System

- The more aware we are of what is going on around us, the more likely it is that we can make informed choices. Therein lies our potential to make a difference.
- The arrow on the left hand side of the diagram represents the fact that human beings are the ones who make social systems happen. People then can make systems happen differently.
- When people step off the **path of least resistance** they have the potential to alter the way the system happens and thus shape people's behaviour differently.
- The patriarchal system may be larger than us but it doesn't happen except through us and that's where we have power to change the system.



## So what is Patriarchy?

- Patriarchy means ‘rule of the father’. A society or social system is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being male dominated, male identified, and male centred. It also involves the oppression of women.
- To understand how patriarchy affects the way we think we need to consider how it controls gender roles in society.
- Patriarchy establishes gender divisions. It attributes different characteristics to men and women, and exalts male qualities as superior.
- Patriarchy elevates some men over other men; and all men over women. Patriarchy is structured violence along gender lines.
- Patriarchy is an unjust system in which men and women participate, but which men and women can change from within.



## So what is Patriarchy?

**Patriarchy teaches male and female natures are biologically different. When gender roles are stereotyped these are the characteristics suggested:**

### **Men are by nature:**

- **Powerful**
- **Assertive**
- **Dominant**
- **Competitive**
- **Responsible**
- **Logical and rational**
- **Objective**
- **Controlled**
- **Sets boundaries**

### **Women are by nature:**

- **Supportive**
- **Intuitive**
- **Loving**
- **Giving**
- **Compassionate**
- **Understanding**
- **Nurturing**
- **Emotional**
- **Open boundaries**



## Time for a Story

When Mary McAleese was a young girl living in North Belfast the local priest called to her house. He asked Mary what she wanted to do when she left school. Mary shared her ambition to study Law. His instant response was to tell her to forget about it, because she suffered from two disabilities which were, in his view, completely unlikely to be overcome. One was that she was a woman, and the other was that she had no connections in the law. McAleese recalls: “It was said with the kind of dismissive authority which is intended to silence protest or debate. The owner of superior knowledge, of real certitude, had spoken, and that was that.” What shocked McAleese more was when in response her mother, who held the clergy in awe, pulled the chair from under the cleric and propelled him to the front door before he had time to uncork the bottle of baby Powers he’d been given. “ ‘You – out’, she roared at him. ‘And you,’ she said to Mary, ‘ignore him.’ ”

McAleese went on to be among the first few women to study law at Queen’s University Belfast. She became the first woman director of its Institute of Professional Legal Studies and, in 1993, its professor of law. In 1994 she became the university’s first woman pro-vice chancellor. And from 1997 to 2011 she acted as President of Ireland. Clearly, following her mother’s advice, and ignoring that of a male celibate cleric, was the way to go.

**Source: Article by Patsy McGarry, Irish Times, 20 June 2014**

**Why did the priest think that law was an unsuitable profession for a young woman?  
And what characteristics did he think women lacked that made them unsuitable?**





## An Illustration of Patriarchy

- Less than a third of Northern Ireland's most important jobs are held by women, despite women making up 51% of population:
  - 35% of senior civil service posts are held by women;
  - 5 of our top 100 businesses are led by women;
  - Only 16% of positions at superintendent level within PSNI are filled by women;
  - Only 15% of QCs- most senior barristers – are women;
  - Only 20% of N.I. Assembly seats held by women – the lowest representation in any of the UK's devolved or national legislatures.
  - Men also dominate senior positions in judiciary, politics, health and education.

**Belfast Telegraph Survey, September 2014**



## Patriarchy exists where:

- Males dominate in positions of authority – political, economic, legal, religious, educational, military... and therefore claim larger shares of income and wealth.
- People are struck when a woman finds her way into a key public position e.g. head of state, a corporate CEO, a religious leader, a member of parliament, a judge, a university provost, a general in the military, or security advisor...
- Male pronouns used to represent people in general ( man = human beings).
- Only two distinct genders: patriarchal heterosexuality is ‘normal’, same sex attraction is not.
- Men made in image of male god with whom they enjoy special relationship. Women cannot represent a male god.
- Women and the work they do, inside and outside the home, is devalued.
- Violence against women is pervasive: pornography, wife battering, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual slavery, female genital mutilation.



# An Illustration of Patriarchy

## UN Report 2014

About 120 million girls around the world - slightly more than one in 10 - have been raped or sexually assaulted by the age of 20, a UN report says.

Intimate partner violence is the most common form of gender-based violence against girls. Globally, nearly one in three adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 (84 million) in formal unions have been the victims of emotional, physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by their husbands or partners. Rates of partner violence are particularly high in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Among adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 who have ever been victims of physical and/or sexual violence, about 7 in 10 said they never sought help to end it. While the reasons vary, many girls said they did not realize that what they experienced was a form of violence or did not see the abuse as a problem.

What do these findings say about the effect of patriarchy on children and young girls?



Patriarchy has been around for a long time!





## Patriarchy has been around for a long time!

- Patriarchy has a long back-story in antiquity.
- Patriarchy is an historic creation that developed over 3,000 years in Ancient Mesopotamia between 6,000 BCE – 3,000 BCE.
- It claims to be the **natural way of the world** and **God given**.
- To call patriarchy into question was unnatural and evil, which explains the demonising of women who challenged the patriarchal status quo e.g. Witch; and attempt to control women through promoting ideal model of Virgin and Mother.
- Women needed to be controlled by men otherwise disaster would prevail - i.e. Eve led Adam astray and all humanity suffered; Cleopatra led Anthony astray and threatened the survival of Roman Empire, therefore both had to be destroyed.



## How Patriarchy Affects the Way We Think.

- Patriarchy has shaped cultural attitudes and practices and affects how we think and behave, until we become aware of its presence and challenge it.
- The traditions, rules, and values of patriarchy, from the last six millennia, are often taught or modelled to girls and boys by mothers who believed they were helping their children to survive in a male dominated world.
- Consequently, the glass ceiling is not just outside us (e.g. caring for family still seen as women's priority), it is also within us (e.g. lack of confidence).
- “We all have an inner patriarch who controls us from the inside...from our unconscious.” Sidra Stone (Psychotherapist)
- The inner patriarch operates in men as well as women, his voice is the voice of our culture.



## How Patriarchy Affects the Way We Think.

- The inner patriarch, much like outer patriarchy, wants to make women feel safe by keeping them confined within old, well-defined boundaries so that they will not be exposed to danger or disappointment.
- Women's inner patriarchs trust and value men more than women, and believe women should remain in an inferior position – if not in work, then in relationships.
- The inner patriarch in women either questions women's intelligence, knowledge, and abilities, or is concerned about women's emotionality, trustworthiness and self-discipline.
- The inner patriarch in men is proud to be a man, and claims natural authority and privilege because of his gender. The patriarch within the man expects to be listened to, and expects women to defer to him.
- The inner patriarch sees his job as protecting heterosexual relationships and marriage, and through these the continuity of the culture.

## The Martha and Mary Story – The Inner Patriarch

- There is a story in the Christian Gospels of two women called Martha and Mary. Each deals with their inner patriarch in a different way. The well known rabbi, or Jewish teacher arrives at the house with his friends.
- Martha immediately goes into overdrive to fulfil cultural obligations and provide this group of men with hospitality. Her inner patriarch dictates her actions. It's telling her that it is her responsibility to make sure the men are looked after. That their needs are paramount.
- Mary greets the rabbi as an equal and engages in a dialogue of equals. She defies her inner patriarch who is telling her to help her sister in the kitchen. She believes she has as much right to engage in a discourse of learning as any man.
- Martha responds angrily to her sister and judges her actions as inappropriate. Martha is controlled by her inner patriarch, while Mary radically defies her. Which of the two women is more liberated?





# Patriarchy and its affects!

## Group Work Exercise

1. How has patriarchy affected the way you think, feel and act?
2. What would life look and feel like if patriarchy as a social system ceased to exist?



## Beyond Patriarchy

- Patriarchy, outer and inner, thrives on duality; i.e. Men and women are basically different, with men superior in every way.
- If we look at the world through dual lenses we will always see an ‘us’ and ‘them’. Those in the ‘us’ category are always the good, the right, and the just; whereas those in the ‘them’ category are bad, wrong and unjust and therefore need controlled, contained, or worse, eliminated.
- Moving beyond patriarchy means recognising that each person has a unique set of gifts to bring to the world, that are not determined by gender, or any other divisive grouping.
- It involves reclaiming those disowned parts of ourselves to become whole. For women this might involve owning their inner authority and taking on public roles and responsibilities; and for men it might mean owning their vulnerability and facing their fears.



## Plenary Discussion - Beyond Patriarchy

“Feminist effort to end patriarchal domination should be of primary concern precisely because it insists on the eradication of exploitation and oppression in the family context and in all other intimate relationships. ...The transformation of self, of relationships, [makes us] better able to act in a revolutionary manner, challenging and resisting domination, transforming the world outside the self.”  
(Bell hooks)

“Patriarchy [uses] gender to define men and women as fundamentally different from each other ...Patriarchy depends on such divisions, because there is no basis for men to dominate if we see the genders as fundamentally the same in their common humanity. (Allan G. Johnson)

**Does all change, including changing an unjust system like patriarchy, have to begin with the self?**

**What difference would it make to human relationships if we did not gender human qualities?**