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Speaking emissaries: Lebanese women's rights NGO Kafa and its media use for audience mobilization

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on a women's rights group in Lebanon, Kafa, this article offers a discursive reading of the NGO's campaign strategies that transform discussions of gender-based violence from a private familial to a public societal issue. Kafa, 'enough' in Arabic, engages its audience on mediated platforms, providing audiences with participatory strategies through images and videos. I ground my analysis in my interview with Kafa's communication director, interrogating Kafa's innovative media strategies to build a wider movement. Using global media and performance theory, I examine how pedagogical media strategies expand the public sphere and facilitate audience intervention into systemic issues. These media strategies act as necessary scaffolds towards building nation-wide support against gender-based violence.

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Introduction

Prior to 2014, Lebanon did not have any laws protecting women and children from domestic violence. That change would come just nine years after Kafa was founded in 2005 and seven years after Kafa first drafted and submitted to Parliament in 2007 the Law 293 to 'Protect Women and Other Family Members from Family Violence' (Kafa 2016). Kafa, meaning 'enough' in Arabic, is the most widely recognized gender-based rights organization in Lebanon (Kafa 2016). As a non-governmental, non-profit, and feminist organization, Kafa asserts its intentionally non-sectarian identity as a foundational aspect of its ideology. Its goals are to end gender-based violence in Lebanon, including eliminating institutional structures that facilitate gender inequality. UNICEF explicitly names Kafa in its MENA Gender Equality Profile in Lebanon as an important civil society gender equality service, noting the organization's submission of a shadow report to the 2008 session of the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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(CEDAW). Supported by other Lebanese civil society groups, KAFA has become a force for gender equality. By continually becoming self-aware of its supporters' internal biases, KAFA's work exemplifies a progression towards building representation in the state apparatus for native-born Lebanese women and children, as well as refugees and migrant domestic workers (MDWs) alike.

KAFA's impact as an advocate for human rights is not the only arena in which the NGO has experienced recognition; it has achieved global accolades for its numerous media campaigns that represent an innovative approach to social justice awareness and education that other global human rights campaigns have adopted. Using the lens of media production and implementation as an entry point into women's rights and women's rights organizations in Lebanon, I raise the following research question: How does KAFA use new media campaigns to reconfigure audience investment in the organization's fight against gender-based violence?

I argue that rather than using new media as a route for simply raising awareness about gender-based violence or advertising for their organization, KAFA uses new media as a tool to reconfigure normative public and private space. KAFA's mediatized outreach combines entertainment and educational materials in a narrative format to create instructional and modeling experiences (Frerejean et al. 2016) for an audience comprised of both victims of gender-based violence seeking assistance and those desiring to be allies in the movement. Using candid camera-style videos, an interactive website, an avatar, and commercials, these campaigns allow for inconspicuous interaction (Lee 2009) between the audience and KAFA's media in order to protect those audiences who are victims themselves and seeking out assistance, as well as those audiences intending to render commonplace conversations on 'taboo' topics such as spousal abuse, child abuse, and women's rights in Lebanon (Matar 2007; Rustum Shehadeh 2011).

Both shaping and grounding my research, I conducted an interview in January 2015 with Maya Ammar, KAFA's Communication Director since 2009, during my investigatory trip to Lebanon in the midst of my research process. This interview brought production-insight to the NGO's media materials, providing rationales for why and how KAFA uses these materials and a deeper understanding of its intended impact. I bring in Maalki's (1996) scholarship on the speechless emissary to launch a visual discourse analysis of KAFA's pedagogical strategies, breaking down the visual representations into categories of: *emissary*, *delegate*, and *proxy*. Maalki (1996) uses 'speechless emissaries' to describe an image of Hutu tribe refugees without history or context, exploring the process by which refugees are dehistoricized and depoliticized when given the title of refugee. In this article, the woman and the child experiencing the abuse in the *emissary* examples do not speak;

their bodies merely serve as vessels of which abuse becomes visible or audible. Instead, the audiences in the videos are interpellated as speaking emissaries.

Building on this concept, I bring in two additional manifestations of media-as-pedagogical tool: the *delegate* and the *proxy*. Whereas the *delegate* models labor efforts to its audience (Hughes 2014), the *proxy* is a re-mediation of media performance that functions as a stand-in for human-to-human interactions (Frerejean et al. 2016; Lee 2009). Experimental work on technological substitution points to mediated materials with modeling—instruction paired with vocalized rationale and modeling—as more effective tools for teaching skills to new learners than instruction with practice-based learning (Bandura 1978; Bandura 2001; Belloni 2008; Frerejean et al. 2016). These research conclusions become relevant for the work at hand when viewing Kafa's media strategies as scaffolding techniques in building a wider base. Kafa's collection of media materials, as well as a set of the materials in isolation, serve as examples of modeling for audiences to observe, learn, extract, and apply.

I embed this theoretical work within a Lebanese-specific context, particularly entering into conversation with Suad Joseph's (2001, 2011) scholarship that interrogates the relationship between nationalism, familial ties, and spatial constructs in Lebanon and the wider Middle East. Joseph's (2001, 201) research points to how the privatized space of the family and tribal unit has historically been the preeminent site for conversations on, and interventions in, gender-based violence. In the forthcoming section, I examine the history of women's rights in Lebanon, drawing particular attention to Kafa's contemporary role in intervening in gender-based violence.

A brief history of women's rights

Following the imposed construct of modern nation states in the Middle East after World War I and the subsequent French mandate over the new state of Lebanon, the eighteen recognized religious denominations in Lebanon came together to form a confessional government—a sectarian-based religious allocation of representation—within a parliamentary democracy. According to the Constitution, a Maronite Christian holds the Presidency, a Shi'ite Muslim holds the position of the Speaker of the House, and a Sunni Muslim holds the position of the Prime Minister, with the Parliament proportionally divided between all 18 religious groups (Joseph 2011). There is ongoing contention regarding the power allotted to each confessional group, often resulting in sectarian conflict, such as the Lebanese Civil War between 1975 and 1990. Much of this conflict is associated with political power resulting

from sectarian belonging rather than religious disagreements. In Lebanon, religious denomination is as much a political identity as a religious one.

The confessional government in Lebanon allows each sectarian group to dictate a set of personal status laws for its members, resulting in disparities of human rights depending on each religious group's tenants. For example, personal status laws determine the rights of men and women regarding marriage, divorce, and child custody. In my interview with Maya, she stated that, 'As long as personal status laws are confessional and religious, discrimination against women will not stop'. Differing laws between confessional groups contribute to institutional discrimination against and among women, keeping women perpetually in a subordinate state to men. When I asked her why she thinks that personal status laws have not yet been modified in Lebanon, she said, 'No one ever really tried to address the issue in a big campaign with a very clear plan'. According to her, it is extremely difficult even to know where to begin to address the problem. She noted that attempting to address the problem could make a person 'feel paralyzed [because] who are you addressing? Who are you talking to? The State? Where is the State?' Here, Maya points to one of the fundamental problems with political change in Lebanon: the government precariously balances secular and religious pulls, confessional groups vying for power, and outside state influences.

Though political violence is not the only cause of domestic violence, a study (Usta, et. al 2008) that interviewed 310 women at the Ministry of Local Affairs to assess their exposure to various forms of violence during the 2006 War between Hezbollah and Israel found a correlation between the war and domestic violence. A high percentage of women in this sample experienced bodily violence through displacement, violence associated with armed conflict, and several types of physical abuse including hitting, pushing, kicking, being threatened with a weapon, and sexual abuse. Significantly, 33% of those interviewed experienced violence following the war, with 92% of these women coming from the group that had also experienced violence during the war. Participants noted that during the war, 'their husbands were highly irritable and edgy, under much psychological stress because they felt they had 'lost everything,' and that they tended to let out their stress on their wives' (Usta, Farver, and Zein 2008, 798). But, Lebanon does not now, nor has it ever, kept statistical analysis on domestic violence. The lack of statistics makes it difficult to surmise the full extent of violence women experienced during the Lebanese Civil War, for example, or other subsequent violent events. Studies such as these, however, illustrate the connection between wartime violence and violence in the home.

The current situation of political and national disenfranchisement and violence for women in Lebanon does not detract from the extensive history of women's rights in the country or the current human rights that they do

possess. The women's rights movements ostensibly began with Lebanese women's first recorded political activism in 1914. The movement's momentum, however, was interrupted during the state's bid for freedom from the French Mandate, which the Lebanese achieved in 1943 (Khalaf 2010; Maksoud 1996). This movement again gained momentum, peaking with the right to vote in 1953, until it was again disrupted during the fifteen-year Lebanese Civil War between 1975 and 1990. Both Khatib (2008) in 'Gender, Citizenship and Political Agency' and Accad (1992) in *Sexuality and Sexual Politics* note that during times of war, women's concerns become subservient to the notion of survival. Women focus on working or obtaining provisions in order to keep their family alive, not to further their rights in what could be construed as betrayal of the larger nationalist cause. Although women from varying confessions attempted to organize during the war to champion women's rights, eventually women became hesitant to discuss personal issues with women from other sects out of fear of weakening their own sectarian group's political position.

Following the Lebanese Civil War, the Lebanese government took steps intended to improve conditions for women in the country. In 1997, the government ratified CEDAW, with the National Committee for Lebanese Women's Affairs being founded in 1998 to promote women's rights and take responsibility for submitting subsequent reports to the United Nations regarding the current state of women in Lebanon. Lebanese women revamped their political organizing after the Assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005 and in this same year KAFA was founded in Beirut, Lebanon.

KAFA's work on gender-based equality is an antagonism to the very structures on which Lebanon's democracy rests. Although currently many Lebanese women have access to freedom of movement and dress, freedom to work, and political enfranchisement, these freedoms are granted through systems of law that privilege patriarchal kinship ties. Because the preeminent loyalty in Lebanon is tribal rather than national, the Lebanese government precariously balances national laws of equality and the constitutionally enshrined rights granted to religious sectarian groups. Thus, the public sphere in Lebanon amplifies the voices of wealthy Lebanese males and religious leaders by design. Sectarian leadership consented to the current Lebanese government so long as the government outsourced 'private' matters to religious court systems, codified as personal status laws. These personal status laws constrain women's rights, particularly in the areas of divorce, inheritance, and even in passing citizenship status along to children. Thus, KAFA's goals of creating legal recourse for gender-based abuses challenges religious leaders and introduces a secular citizenship role that is antithetical to Lebanon's national ideology. Perhaps the strongest testament to

this supposition is KAFA's struggles with the Lebanese religious leaders when proposing Law 293 to protect women and children from violence.

Rather than position KAFA as a counter-public, as Matar (2007) argued of a television show's traditionally private conversations in public space in her article 'Heya TV: A feminist counterpublic for women', I argue that KAFA's work expands civil society. This is what is so radically antagonistic about KAFA's strategies: the organization is building a support network across sectarian divisions to create a place within civil society, extend societal protections, and in effect dismantle the very system that dictates citizenship rights to their supporters. During KAFA's efforts to have Law 293 ratified in parliament, KAFA launched a 'Name and Shame' campaign to publicly call out Lebanese politicians who voted against Law 293, using television commercials and public transportation to advertise. While demonstrating to Lebanese citizens how to hold their public officials accountable, KAFA's media efforts that encourage people to intervene in gender-based violence transgress public and private politics of space.

KAFA continues to be an integral institution in resisting gender-based violence in Lebanon, notably for all women and not just native-born Lebanese citizens. For example, migrant domestic workers occupy a particularly precarious position in Lebanon, experiencing gross abuses in freedom of movement, abuse, sexual abuse, and victim blaming from even those claiming to support KAFA's goals for Lebanese women. Much of this violence results from the Kafala System—a MDW sponsorship program that human rights groups have described as tantamount to modern day slavery—in Lebanon and in countries across the Middle East (Pande 2012). Within this system, employers hire cheap domestic labor predominantly from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Ethiopia where the MDWs often rely on this money from their labor to support their families in their home countries. The employer recruits MDWs, pays for them to travel to Lebanon where the MDWs sign away many of their rights in an Arabic-language contract—which many MDWs cannot read—and then hands over their visas to their employer as collateral for the original travel fees. This exchange facilitates a situation where the rights and safety of the MDWs rely on the good will of their employers. Without a visa, MDWs cannot go outside of the home without fear of imprisonment, which also often leads to physical and sexual abuse in the prisons. KAFA has played an integral role in bringing state-wide attention to these conditions for MDWs and continually links the rights of native-born Lebanese citizens necessarily to the rights of all women residing in Lebanon.

In the following article, I examine how KAFA builds awareness across sectarian, national, racial, and socio-economic lines to promote intra-campaign support. Maya noted that institutional protection from violence for women has never been a priority in Lebanon but organizations like KAFA make it

increasingly difficult to ignore, such as when the organization broadcasts the parents and names of those killed by domestic violence in Lebanese news reports (Rustum Shehadeh 2011). Despite Maya noting that there is not a women's movement in Lebanon currently, KAFA both collaborates with other Lebanese women's groups and is growing, with 600 predominantly young people wanting to volunteer in 2014. And, although KAFA does not have the resources to conduct extensive media research, the organization notices significant increases in calls to its helpline following a commercial campaign.

Methods

This manuscript is part of a larger case study (Partain 2015) on the group KAFA. In this article I focus on KAFA's use of communicative measures, including physically and technologically embodied visual culture material, as well as its visual productions on other mediatized platforms on social media such as Facebook and YouTube, in its attempts to bring systemic gender equality to Lebanon. My work considers all of KAFA's campaigns since the organization's inception but relies on representative examples of KAFA's media strategies. During my original data collection (9/2014-5/2015), I had limited access to disenfranchised women living in Lebanon, which led me to structure my methodology according to a single embedded case study that uses a key informant as a guiding framework for my larger discourse analysis. My limited access was a result of KAFA's employees receiving threats from those disagreeing with its goals, a situation that Maya stated was all the more precarious for the women actually experiencing abuse. Due to this reality, KAFA kept their past and current cases anonymous. In recognition of the institutional violence that created this situation, I analyze my case study through a lens of power relations that position the state as upholding, and benefiting off of, marginalization (Fanon 1967; Foucault 2007; Foucault 2008; Said 1978, 1997; Said and Hitchens 2001; Sakr 2004). This lens is particularly useful for my examination of the role of news media, which has played a fundamental part in spreading information regarding gender-based violence despite its relationship to institutions that have traditionally maintained patriarchal systems.

The emissary: 'Oh my God, they hear her scream, but they did nothing'. –Maya

Two of KAFA's most-watched videos on Facebook are both candid-camera videos, similar in style to the 'What Would You Do?' US TV show. Whereas the 'Driving Change—a very disturbing taxi ride' takes places within a taxi, the 'Rai8e the Age' Campaign is filmed on the busy Burj—a walkway along the Mediterranean—in Beirut. KAFA's candid-camera style videos rely on the interplay between public and private-spaces, audiences, and social norms.

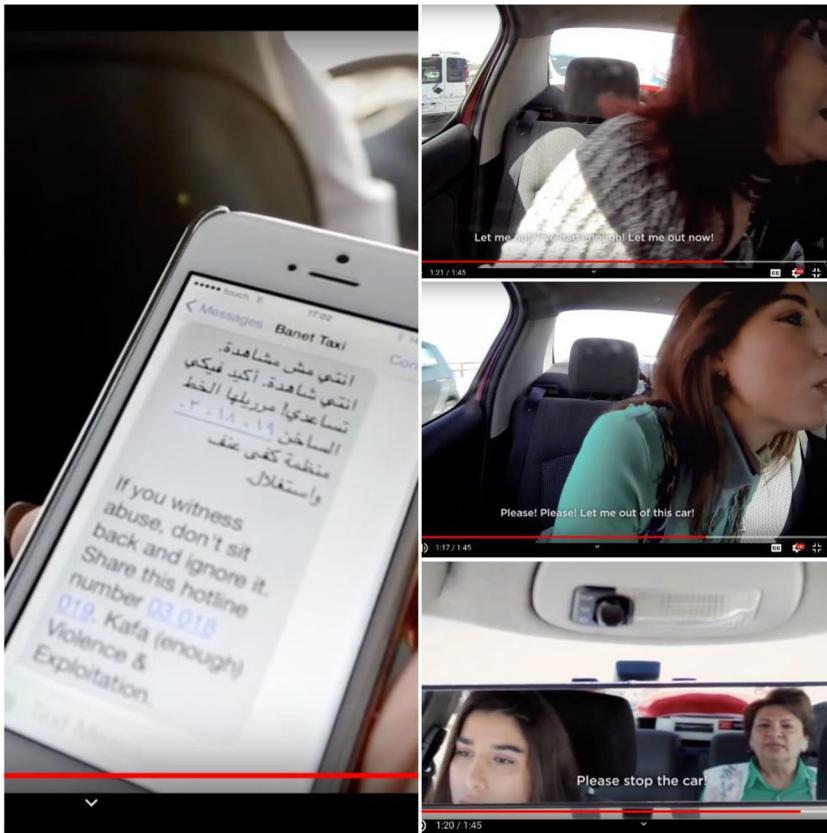


Figure 1. Points of discomfort during Kafa's 'Driving Change—a very disturbing taxi ride' video.

These storylines and multiple points of view provide an opportunity for audiences to observe other Lebanese citizens enacting different interventions, or lack thereof, when encountering situations of violence, in addition to foreshadowing the impacts of such interventionist strategies.

The Driving Change video moves from the GPS voice becoming agitated to shouting vulgar insults at the driver. Every rider is visibly uncomfortable at this drastic escalation in abuse (Figure 1). At the end of the video, mirroring the end of the taxi ride from hell for these women, Kafa sends a text message to the riders with the Arabic and English message, 'If you witness abuse, don't sit back and ignore it'. The text message also includes the Kafa hotline for help, asking the women to share it with victims of abuse. In the YouTube video, the audience views Kafa's request for a pledge of solidarity with abuse victims and the hashtag '#iwillspeakup' to indicate this pledge of solidarity. This video is a somber reminder that victims trapped in situations of abuse do not have the luxury to get off their own rides from hell.

Lasting two minutes and seven seconds, the 'Rai8e the Age' social experiment instead follows a wedding shoot of an old Lebanese man and a young

Lebanese girl on the Burj in Beirut, Lebanon. The camera operators, as well as the old man and young girl, are all actors performing roles in a moderately unusual, but still legal, marriage display. Cutting between different camera angles, the video captures a wide range of audience reactions. These audiences engage with the director of the shoot, the cameraman, and the 'bride' and 'groom' themselves. Although at first the video shows several instances of support for the supposed marriage that just took place, the majority of the video displays an increasingly concerned and upset audience that interrogates why and how this marriage could occur. In the discussion of these campaigns below, I qualify the very act of formulating gender-based violence as an issue necessitating public attention as political resistance because of the relationships between gender roles, the private and public sphere, and positions of power in Lebanon (Matar 2007; Pande 2012).

The literature on spatial resistance is helpful for understanding current roles men and women, religion, and legality play in navigating public and private spheres in Lebanon (Joseph 2011; Matar 2007; Pande 2012; Rustum Shehadeh 2011). When contextualized within Lebanese culture, however, private and public domains are not always clearly demarcated. Rather, private moments that occur in public space are often considered to still be private. By taking a social-media-campaign approach to these moments, KAFA is trying to reshape the very boundaries of private and public space in Lebanon to introduce meaningful ways of transforming public/private moments into public/public moments open to intervention.

Organizations like KAFA work to qualify women's rights as necessitating political representation by illustrating how laws *already in existence* protect men who oppress women; in particular, these illustrations focus on citizenship laws, divorce laws, and marriage laws, amongst others (Joseph 2011; Thompson 2003). KAFA highlights how the specter of women has been present in political debates through the legal absence of their voices and the laws protecting men in cases of abuse. For example, rather than women being absent from the citizenship laws in Lebanon that prevent women from passing their citizenship on to their children, they are the presumed negative to the positivist law guaranteeing that fathers will pass on their citizenship.

In much of Lebanon, and in other countries around the world, home spaces and cityscapes reproduce familial and social norms of the public fomenting male-centric power and the home relegated to female responsibilities (Bagheri 2014; Joseph 2001; Matar 2007; Thompson 2003). Many women's rights organizations and movements confront this normative arrangement as one of their foremost concerns because of the way in which the split between a public and private sphere facilitates continued oppression of women and children. Bringing attention to this private and public split seeks to establish women's issues in Lebanon, such as domestic

violence or citizenship rights, as politically relevant (Joseph 2001; Joseph 2011; Thompson 2003).

KAFA publicly launched their 'Driving Change—A very disturbing taxi ride' campaign to draw attention to domestic violence by using a set of fabricated circumstances in which bystanders reacted either by staying silent or confronting the situation of public abuse. KAFA put up the video documenting these interactions on YouTube on March 16, 2014, stating that the experiment was conducted with the permission of Banet Taxis of Beirut to utilize their services. Banet Taxis markets itself as a safe ride for women (*The Christian Science Monitor*, May 6, 2009). The video, lasting one minute and forty-five seconds, shows the interactions between seven women riders, three women taxi drivers, and one very irate British male GPS system. Taking place in the congested streets of Beirut, Lebanon, the taxi driver is expected to follow the GPS's directions for driving efficiency. Typical of KAFA's productions, the video is also subtitled in English to allow for a wider viewing audience.

KAFA's goals to garner nationwide support for their campaigns are evidenced in this Driving Change social media video. The women riding in the taxi vary according to age, appearance, and dress. And, particularly noticeable, the women speak a mixture of English, Arabic, and French, but with most code-switching into Arabic during moments of rising tension. Language is often politically charged in Lebanon, with these three languages embodying the different sectarian groups and socio-economic positions. Encompassing all three languages in one video not only ensures that the widest possible audience will have linguistic access to this campaign, but also points out that opportunities to confront violence do not discriminate based on one's social standing.

The Driving Change video embeds its social experiment in a unique location that itself queries the lines between private and public space. The taxicab occupies a liminal position between public transportation and private travel, with the Banet taxicab in particular promising a safe experience just for women. The video shows the woman shrinking into their privacy, staring out the window of the cab or using the time to continue their beauty regimes. This façade of private time, if not private space, is disrupted when the GPS admonishes the driver of the cab: 'DID YOU NOT HEAR WHAT I SAID? ... DUMB BITCH'. The puncture of this admonishment startles the passengers, with the spatial distance between the passengers and the driver diminishing all-the-more when the verbal abuse is met by silence. The passengers' apprehension to breach this traditional divide of the invisible driver and the paying customer shifts to the riders' anger at the GPS voice, and then their pleas to get out of the cab. Very quickly, this cab becomes a microcosm of private and public social issues in public space. Although the

women had reasonable expectations that this cab ride would afford them privacy, the small scale of the car emphasizes that the effects of domestic abuse reverberate through Lebanese society as a whole.

Driving Change garnered international support both for its message and artistic production, perhaps inspiring KAFA to produce another video similar in style, 'Say #IDon't to Child Marriage' as part of their 'Rai8e the Age' Campaign. This campaign, supporting a bill that went to Parliament in late March 2017, takes aim at the absence of a statewide legal age for marriage. Currently, Lebanon allows religious communities to rely on each religious sect's personal status laws, some permitting the marriage of young girls below the age of fifteen (Khatib 2008; Thompson 2003). KAFA released the video on its Facebook page on November 30, 2015, and on YouTube on December 1, 2015. As of June 2017, these two videos have a combined four million plus views, which is the approximate population size of the entire state of Lebanon.

The 'Rai8e the Age' social experiment uses the visual absurdity of a white-haired old man marrying a young girl, appearing eight or nine, as a gateway point into the conversation about child marriage. While not every child marriage is this apparent, KAFA's campaign points out that the lack of laws that would, for example, allow a seventeen-year-old girl to marry a nineteen-year-old man also facilitate the marriage of old men to young girls. Echoing concerns that audiences in the video clearly voiced, KAFA writes in Arabic with English subtitles a concluding message to its audience that these personal status laws must be confronted and directs its audience to a page on its website for further information.

Towards the end of the video, the camera appears to have trouble continuing to tape the 'wedding photos'. But, that is the point. The 'wedding photography' continues as usual towards the beginning of the video, when passersby congratulate, or more frequently, stare from afar or make a quick condemnation and move on. There reaches a critical juncture, however, when a man confronts the groom. He soon is joined by a crowd, and we can hear a woman from that crowd state, 'I am taking her with me! We are all going with her'. Beyond demonstrating differing techniques of intervention and their subsequent effects, this video illustrates the power of a unified movement. It is when the crowd gathers as one that this instance of gender-based violence is interrupted.

Although KAFA had not yet initiated the 'Rai8e the Age' campaign by the time of my interview with Maya Ammar, our conversation on the organization's inspiration for the 'Driving Change' video reasonably informs KAFA's goals for both projects. Having taken into consideration the intensely dramatic unfolding of the 'Driving Change' video, I asked Maya if the group intentionally used spectacle in its campaigns. Maya said that overall, the

group attempts to avoid pictures of battered women in order to challenge the preconception that abuse is always physical or visible. Additionally, she stated that they did not want to show graphic images of women, partially because many viewers do not want to see disturbing imagery. The taxi ride instead was a social experiment. Maya noted that in some cases, people say, 'Oh my God, they hear her scream, but they did nothing'. Kafa wanted to find out whether women would react if confronted with verbal abuse. In these candid-camera style videos, however, Kafa draws in its audience by portraying situations relating to common experiences in the private sphere in Lebanon and brings them into public spaces. The result is an instructional tool that not only illustrates the many forms of gender-based violence, but possible routes to intervention and its effects. Audience members have the opportunity to view different approaches to gender-based violence that precipitate a variety of outcomes, thus providing detailed examples of social modeling (Frerejean et al. 2016).

By providing corporeal representations of the violence, both in the form of the Kafa driver as well as the women in the Taxi in 'Driving Change' and the young girl in 'Rai8e the Age', Kafa's work creates a cognitive association between the images these videos portray and the often-invisible indications of gender-based violence. These cognitive associations are necessary given the general social mores in Lebanese society that discourage by-stander intervention into situations that a by-stander may deem private matters. For example, in Obeid, Doris, and Ginges (2010) 'Beliefs about Wife Beating-An Exploratory Study with Lebanese Students', the researchers found that university students supported 'social, governmental, and legal intervention' in instances of abuse over personal involvement. According to the authors, however, 'Lebanese students' reluctance to take direct initiative such as personally intervening or calling the police suggests a perception of [domestic violence] as a private matter, where getting involved directly by calling public attention would bring shame to the family' (705). Suad Joseph's (2011) work on political familism in Lebanon posits that the family structure rather than the individual is the basic unit of society; as such, intervention into private family matters, regardless if the occurrence is in public space, is seen as outside the purview of the bystander (159). In cases of domestic violence, family or neighbors are considered the only appropriate sources of intervention.

This sentiment extends to the public assistance sector as well, another apparatus that Kafa engages in separate campaigns, and becomes problematic in instances in which the Internal Security Forces (ISF) refuses to intervene in what it perceives as private matters within the home. In an unfortunate occurrence altogether too common in Lebanon, Nehme's article (*The Daily Star*, February 6, 2014) 'Teacher 'beaten to death' by her husband'

recounts neighbors' statements that the ISF chose not to come to the assistance of Manal Asi when her husband bludgeoned her to death with a pressure cooker. When Asi's husband, Mohammad Naili, blocked neighbors from saving Asi as she endured two-hours of his torturous abuse, they called the police, but to no avail. This situation did not occur in isolation but was the culmination of years of abuse. Asi's 14-year-old daughter contradicted neighbors' stories, who claimed that they had a generally happy marriage, instead stating that her mom had been subject to beatings since the daughter was three years old. KAFA's videos urge its audience to recognize that brief or minimal instantiations of violence frequently intensify to severe and lasting abuse or veil already-present situations of abuse.

'Driving Change' and 'Rai8e the Age' illustrate to an audience what the beginnings of a lifelong experience with violence can look like. Scholarship on intervention into situations of physical and sexual abuse show that onlookers are most likely to help victims when the incident occurs in public space (Hamby et al. 2016). Because gender-based violence largely occurs behind closed doors, audiences may have personally only met gender-based violence through banal moments of recognition. KAFA's videos brings these veiled moments into the spotlight, instructing audiences on signs of domestic violence situating minimized moments of potential violence within a larger narrative (Hamby et al. 2016).

Both videos offer representations of different audience positionalities inside the unfolding events; the audience at home sees how varying reactions to the situations may interrupt or facilitate further gender-based violence. As the narrative draws the viewer in, the open-endedness of the videos offer space for audiences at home to rehearse which role they could take in future situations in which they encounter similar cases of violence. Rather than a satisfying conclusion, the videos end with references to long-standing Lebanese laws that permit child brides and violence against women. These statements contextualize the videos in a narrative that points to the historical implications of such laws and how they are inherently imbedded in the public sphere (Joseph 2011; Thompson 2003).

Despite the impressive media footprint that these campaigns have left, both videos raise questions as to the politics of victimhood. Particularly in the Driving Change video, Benet taxi company agreed to participate in KAFA's social experiment, but according to the description of the candid camera video, the women in the taxi did not consent. Their panic as the video progresses is particularly evident in Figure 1 where they plead to get out of the taxi. While this illustrates the desire of victims to get away from their abusers, it also puts the subject of KAFA's gender-based work—women—into the very position KAFA is advocating against. It is possible that these women have encountered domestic violence in the past. An

experience such as this taxi ride could re-traumatize the victim. Although KAFA states that it tries to avoid using spectacle in its work on violence, the spectacle of these women's fear and discomfort again relies on some degree of women's suffering to convince viewers/voyeurs that this fear is meaningful.

The *delegate*: spreading the message

Part of KAFA's strategies to end gender-based violence relies on scaffolding techniques that rotate focus between social justice concerns. In our interview, Maya explained that by alternating between different campaigns, KAFA hopes that supporters of one concern would acknowledge the need to address all issues of human rights in Lebanon by participating in parallel campaigns. KAFA's media outreach emphasizes community involvement to build awareness on a nation-wide level.

Recognizing that it takes widespread support to implement gender-based equity on a legal and national level, I argue that KAFA mobilizes its audience to perform organizing tasks as *delegates* who function as a bridge between KAFA and passing along information or confronting politicians via mediatized prompts and platforms. As Joseph (2001) notes in her chapter 'Women and Politics in the Middle East', 'Studies suggest that women's roles do not necessarily change as a result of their political participation, nor does activism inevitably bring structural changes in their lives. A potential for feminist consciousness may not lead to feminist action' (37). During our interview, Maya explained to me that Lebanon was in the process of putting in place infrastructure and public knowledge to instigate such a women's rights movement someday. Without state structures in place to facilitate equal treatment of men and women under Lebanese law, Joseph's comment underscores the necessity of a women's rights group finding ways to translate thought to action.

The following campaign, 'Raise Shawwa's Voice', (2015) exemplifies how KAFA at times designs its mediatized portions of its campaigns to harness the labor capabilities of its audience by first instructing on new concepts or concerns and then demonstrating to its audience how to implement strategies to confront violence. These audiences become *delegates* for KAFA, spreading messages contesting forms of gender-based violence to its own audience on social media platforms. Many organizations encourage their supporters to share the organizations' message with friends and family, but part of the 'Raise Shawwa's Voice' campaign is designed so that the audience must share before they can know what she says. This strategy will become clearer in the forthcoming description of the video.

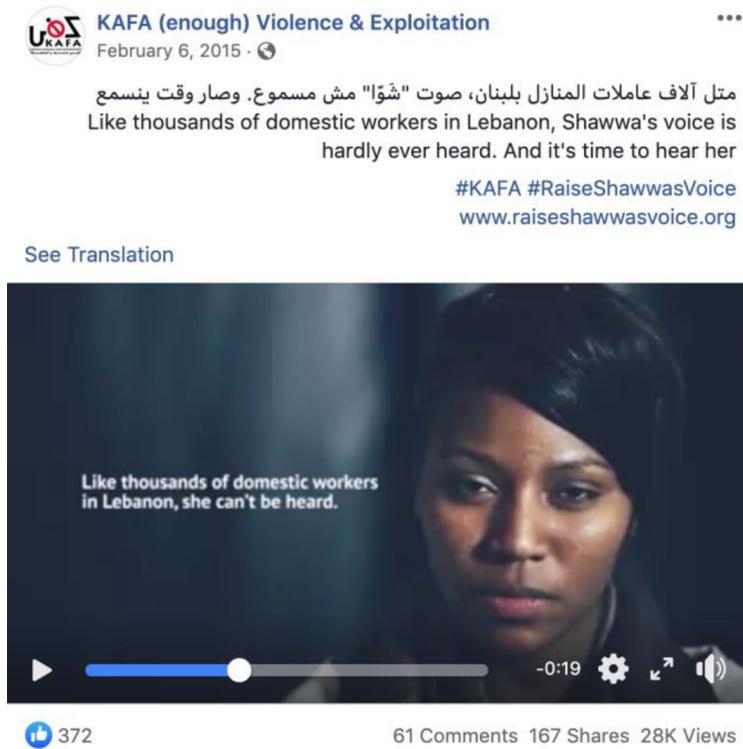


Figure 2. Still image from Kafa's 'Raise Shawwa's Voice' Campaign Video.

'Raise Shawwa's Voice', a campaign that Kafa launched on Facebook on February 6, 2015 and on its website on February 18, 2015, centers around a video of a woman and MDW named Shawwa. Both sites provide a link to a page with a video of Shawwa and her story. Unfortunately, the website itself is now defunct but Kafa's Facebook page (Figure 2) still has the main video posted. The website reveals little information about Shawwa; the viewer later discovers that she has been working in Lebanon for three years. She appears in her twenties and her location of origin is unknown, yet this fluidity in identity allows her to raise the voice of a more inclusive group of MDWs. What is perhaps most interesting about her story is that at first, we are unable to hear it. As the website supposedly downloads, it prompts the viewer to turn on her or his computer speakers.

Once the video loads, Shawwa begins moving her mouth in silence as if she is trying to speak but words cannot quite come out. The side of the website lights up and again there is an arrow asking the viewer to move a slider up the sound bar in order to hear Shawwa speak. Even after doing so, Shawwa's words still do not come; instead, the site brings up a broken notification saying, 'Can't Hear? That's because Shawwa, like thousands of domestic workers in Lebanon, can't be heard speaking up for their rights. Raise Shawwa's Voice. By sharing,

you will hear Shawwa and help spread her message'. Below this notification are two options to share her story on Facebook or Twitter. In order to hear Shawwa's voice, the viewer must participate in its dissemination. The automated message following the choice of Facebook or Twitter is: 'I helped Shawwa be heard and demand serious investigation into the deaths of domestic workers. #RaiseShawwasVoice www.raiseshawwasvoice.org'. Once shared, Shawwa proceeds to detail the procedure for MDW's trying to escape abuse. Her message is clear: only through those willing to lift up the voice of those without recourse will these terrible injustices cease.

Shawwa's website performing media delay builds anticipation for hearing Shawwa's story. From the website performing the more archaic visual representation of a screen loading its content to it asking the viewer to physically raise the volume bar on the screen, the website delays the gratification of 'resolution' in hearing Shawwa's experiences or an easily obtainable solution to the kafala system. This campaign educates its viewers on the specific campaign, but the very faultiness designed into the website functions as a larger pedagogical ideology whereby activists are responsible for their own learning and the instruction of others. As Kafa's history with activism has demonstrated, continued presence of its activists in the public sphere is necessary to institutionalize its goals.

Kafa walks a precarious line between exemplifying the institutional and everyday silencing of MDWs and actually silencing Shawwa; in any situation in which members of the hegemonic society represent a marginalized community, they risk centering their own voice and reinforcing structures that minimize oppressed individuals' voices (Aldous Bergerson 2003). Whereas other videos, such as the 'Driving Change' campaign video discussed above, largely found support and Facebook shares, many women used the comment sections to complain about their own MDW or perpetuate stereotypes. Of the seventeen campaigns that I analyzed for my case study on this topic (Partain 2015), two of the three posts relating to MDWs were the only campaign posts among the seventeen in which the negative comments outweighed the positive. There were seventy-seven comments overall, with forty-two out of the fifty-eight female comments being negative. To put this into perspective, among the other fifteen campaign posts, there were only two negative comments total from women. Shawwa's video, in contrast to other videos, combats audience viewership of Shawwa for voyeurism purposes. In light of negative reactions to 'Raise Shawwa's Voice', among other bigoted feedback to Kafa's MDW posts, the NGO directly confronted its audience on its Facebook page. Kafa likely was aware, however, of existing bias among its supporters; the campaign website for Raise Shawwa's Voice designed a confrontation into the media platform itself by Kafa asking its audience to go beyond education of the self to act as a *delegate* for Shawwa.

The proxy: 'Hello, my name is Zalfa'

On November 14, 2014, KAFA posted a picture (Figure 3) with a blurred-out woman on its Facebook page with the question, 'Who is Zalfa?' This question was the mysterious introduction to an avatar by the same name. Zalfa is an animated character created by the software company, SoftImpact, but she is the face of a domestic violence survivor in Lebanon. Embodying KAFA's messages on a variety of media platforms, Zalfa is in the organization's Facebook and Twitter Campaign, YouTube videos, which are also shown on news segments on the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI), and in informational pamphlets on KAFA's website. Zalfa claims no religious background, only that she is also a Lebanese woman who has experienced violence, prejudice, and discrimination because of her gender identity. She appears casual, without any particular socio-economic identifiers. Zalfa is designed to appeal to any woman, providing a safe space for difficult questions regarding violence and domestic abuse.

KAFA created the Zalfa avatar in response to Lebanese women's growing demand for information on gender-based violence. Maya noted during our interview that the KAFA organization is still small, unable even to find a place for all of their possible volunteers yet receiving a growing amount of calls to their organization for help regarding gender-based violence. She also stated that despite KAFA being too small of an organization to take on the additional burden of keeping statistics regarding their campaigns, they anecdotally receive a sizable increase in calls following a commercial campaign. This uptick in audience members seeking assistance is a testament to Sakr's (2004) work, and shows that, 'Moreover, precisely because gender inequalities are linked to a dichotomy between public and private spheres, visibility



Figure 3. KAFA introduces its Facebook audience to Zalfa, a key part of its campaign to end gender-based violence in Lebanon.

in the public sphere is a prerequisite for achieving change in the private sphere. Positive media exposure is thus central to unblocking the route to women's empowerment' (158). Breaking through the public/private binary necessitates the two-way interaction of KAFA bringing private matters into public spaces for discussion and then the subsequent result of audiences in the private sphere reaching into public space (KAFA) for assistance.

KAFA's media outreach creates the media exposure that Sakr deems necessary as a foundation for future women's empowerment, but the producers of such media here are then also an integral part of pushing this empowerment forward. An outside report in 2016 from Ipsos Marketing sponsored by the United Nations Population Fund, 'General Awareness on Family Violence in Lebanon: Perceptions and Behaviors of the Lebanese Public', shows that KAFA's campaigns are achieving results, with 77% of Lebanese knowing of institutions that offer advice and assistance regarding family violence and 97% of this group recognizing KAFA. Despite this growth in recognition, KAFA's goals conflict with its on-the-ground reality. The NGO campaigns to raise state-wide awareness about gender-based violence and implores its fellow Lebanese to both become involved in the organization and seek help from the organization when this audience faces violence, and yet, KAFA is unable to manage the overwhelming response it receives to its campaigns.

Recognizing this issue, Maya positions Zalfa as what I term a *proxy* for KAFA in her discussions with the Middle East news outlet Al Monitor (December 31, 2014), saying, 'Women are often scared to file a claim, but speaking up early limits the risks, [...] We hope that this approach will give them tools to pull through. Since January, 1,050 women have been supported by KAFA, which is much more than usual. We are overburdened, this is too much for a small center like ours'. Here a *proxy* becomes a stand-in for KAFA's human assistance via telephone or in person. Encouraging the active engagement of the public, Zalfa provides tools for both the victims of domestic violence and the witnesses to these abuses to begin the process of stopping violence. In addition to giving answers and legal advice to many common questions in situations of abuse, the campaign also encourages women to ask further questions through a messaging system at the end of Zalfa's discussions.

In her representation as an avatar, Zalfa simultaneously embodies and mimics both the role of the helpline consultant with realistic human mannerisms and the role of the informed victim of violence while also standing apart from any singular identity. Silvio's (2010) work in 'Animation: The New Performance?' explicates the differences of performances and animation. Performance being an embodiment or mimesis of an already existent performance and the animation being an othering of the self from the character, Silvio brings these worlds into collision through the figure of the avatar.

Zalfa is the remediation of KAFA's informational fliers, the performative role of the trained helpline advocate, and similar to the actresses and actors in KAFA's musalsalat 'KAFA TV'. As Frerejean et al. (2016) note in their work on modelling, an audience will have greater success performing a task on their own when the expert walks an audience through a particular process while explaining the process in great detail. Zalfa's question and answer sessions as well as the accompanying moving images that dive into greater detail regarding instances of gender-based violence, provide an example of modelling both for victims of gender-based violence and those wishing to intervene on their behalf.

Much like how the actresses and actors in KAFA's television show embed KAFA's materials within a fictional, yet very realistic, narrative of abuse—both drawing the audience in emotionally and providing extensive contextual information regarding instances of abuse—Zalfa's stories weave in animations that narrate how gender-based violence unfolds in homes, courts, and in public spaces. Yet, Zalfa's animation also others her from both the audience and any origin of identity; her character's narrative cannot be attributed to any outside identity of an actress playing 'Zalfa the character'. This othering ironically offers the opportunity for Zalfa to embody a blank slate on which audience members may recognize their own narratives.

Zalfa's simultaneous othering and identification offerings add an additional benefit to her media campaign: Zalfa performs human roles without necessitating personal information from her audience. Maya conveyed to me that those visiting the organization and its workers are always in a precarious security situation, and many women are afraid to seek help lest there be retribution at home. Zalfa's avatar instead allows users to tune in and out of the videos without missing information. They do not risk a phone call to the organization, which could be discovered by an abusive partner, but instead these videos can provide complete information whenever the victim has access to a computer. These media affordances are significant for audiences such as KAFA's at-risk population. Health communication scholar Lee's (2009) research illustrates that access to mediated health campaigns empowered audience members when they had low-access to interpersonal interactions. Zalfa allows for emotional connection between the audience and the avatar through its performative qualities while also maintaining a distance that offers safety for all those trapped in systemic gender-based violence.

Zalfa becomes the eyes through which an audience connects to an all-seeing and all-knowing wealth of information. She is the victim, the access point to assistance as *proxy* for KAFA, and brings together a holistic narrative wrapped into one animated body. Moreover, Zalfa is treated as a valid substitute for her human counterparts at KAFA. This becomes particularly noticeable when Zalfa makes appearances on Lebanese Broadcasting Company



Figure 4. KAFA's Zalfa 'beaming in' to her appearance on a Lebanese Broadcasting Company International news show.

International news shows (Figure 4). The news anchor gives Zalfa an introduction, and then transitions to Zalfa popping up in a Star-Trek-esque beamer transporter to become the approximate size of a real-life human. All focus goes to her as the human news anchor steps down, 'giving' the stage in a performative way to an avatar. Zalfa repeatedly appears on LCBI, her lectures coming from KAFA's outreach material featured on its social media platforms. Silvio (2010) concludes her discussion by surmising that 'we can begin to think of animation as more than an entertainment medium, as a possible mode of performative (real, social) world making' (434). Zalfa's transition from social media videos to TV performances takes her from beyond the creation of KAFA's organization to grant her a position of legitimacy for her association with a news program. By continually constituting Zalfa as a *proxy* for KAFA's human organizers, in addition to Zalfa's connections to news media rather than entertainment media, Zalfa as avatar becomes Zalfa as access point for both those experiencing violence and those organizing against violence to consume information and utilize it for on-the-ground change in Lebanon.

Conclusion and outlook

KAFA produces campaigns that go beyond informational strategies to function additionally as pedagogical tools that reconfigure spatial boundaries. Whereas previous research (Matar 2007) positioned mediated discussions of women's rights as a counter-public, I demonstrate the methods with which KAFA mobilizes its audiences expands the public sphere in Lebanon *as if* it always-already existed as a space for Lebanese women. KAFA's media campaigns expose audiences to gender-based violence at all levels of society while also utilizing open-ended narratives and underrepresented issues—such as violence against MDWs—to hail audiences as participants in deconstructing extant institutionalized inequalities.

KAFA's media work hailing audiences into the role of speaking *emissaries* redirects Liisa Malkki's Speechless Emissary—and more broadly the material representations of victimization—from a theoretical concept into a theoretical tool for deconstructing ideological systems of violence. Having excised

this trope from refugee studies to that of Lebanese women's rights, this article presupposes a comparison between the political status of refugees requiring a material representation of victimhood on the body—rather than narrative evidence—to the systemic apathy towards victims of gender-based violence in Lebanon. KAFA creates situations where a public performativity of excess violence—verbal abuse, predatory sexual actions—on stand-in speechless emissaries—the taxi cab driver, the young girl in a wedding dress—petition audiences to name the situations as abuse, thus speaking these narratives into existence as issues of public concern. This transformation from bystanders into *emissaries* undermines current societal structures that devalue victim's stories and instead instructs audiences to exist in a framework where a public is responsible for recognizing abuse rather than victims necessarily performing the proof of their own trauma. Consequently, KAFA's candid camera *emissary* media campaigns suture together larger storylines that contextualize narratives of domestic violence and provide space for audiences to query their own role in gender-based resistance.

In this article, I built upon the concept of the *emissary* to theorize the roles of the *delegate* and *proxy* as additional processes of pro-social pedagogy. Whereas the *delegate* media campaigns, such as the 'Raise Shawwa's Voice', model active audience learning and knowledge dissemination necessary to build a women's rights movement, KAFA's 'Zalfa' campaign exemplifies the *proxy* through an avatar that connects with women across Lebanon—who would otherwise not have access to information on gender-based violence—as a substitution to individual human-based interaction. Instead of only showing the experiences of victims of gender-based violence, these campaigns use media techniques that instruct and demonstrate intervention potentials to an audience.

This paper largely focused on KAFA-as-producer's intentions with its campaigns and the campaigns' possibilities for expanding the public sphere to precipitate institutional gender change in Lebanon. Future aspects in this research agenda include examining KAFA's media outreach to the growing number of refugees in Lebanon as well as analyzing KAFA's media's effects on its audience through survey and experimental methods. Whereas many organizations struggle to build lasting participation, KAFA has succeeded in bringing in more volunteers than they currently know what to do with, which Maya Ammar in part attributed to their increased media outreach. KAFA's campaigns, several of which have gone viral because of their content and setup, have contributed to the NGO becoming a meaningful force in Lebanese resistance to all forms of gender-based-violence.

On October 17, 2019, the Lebanese people took to the streets to protest in what many Lebanese are now calling a revolution to replace their government. What started as backlash against additional taxes on social media

phone calls has led to an expression of long-standing discontent with the government's failure to create jobs, stimulate the economy, reform the country politically, rebuild Lebanese infrastructure still in ruins from its Civil War, and create a working infrastructure for the approximately one million Syrian and Palestinian refugees living within Lebanese borders. While it remains unclear as to the future of this revolution, Prime Minister Sa'ad Hariri resigned on October 29, 2019 and Hezbollah is advocating for a quick replacement of government to avoid a power vacuum. Lebanese citizens have voiced discontent with the current sectarian divides in their government, attributing Lebanon's myriad socio-economic issues to institutional inequalities and government corruption.

Women are loud voices in these recent demonstrations, with a heavy presence on the streets of Beirut. A screenshot from a video of a woman high kicking a Lebanese minister's bodyguard, who was brandishing an assault rifle, in the groin has become the viral symbol of the revolution, conveying a discontented population with little regard for intimidation and a resolute readiness for widespread change. KAFA's own Maya Ammar spoke in a video where she raised questions as to whether these revolutionary actions against the government will translate into future revolutionary action in the home (Khalife 2019). With the potential reformation of the Lebanese government and perhaps a future that includes secular personal status laws, the time is ripe for a country-wide normalization of the rights of all women in Lebanon and a stand against gender-based violence.

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