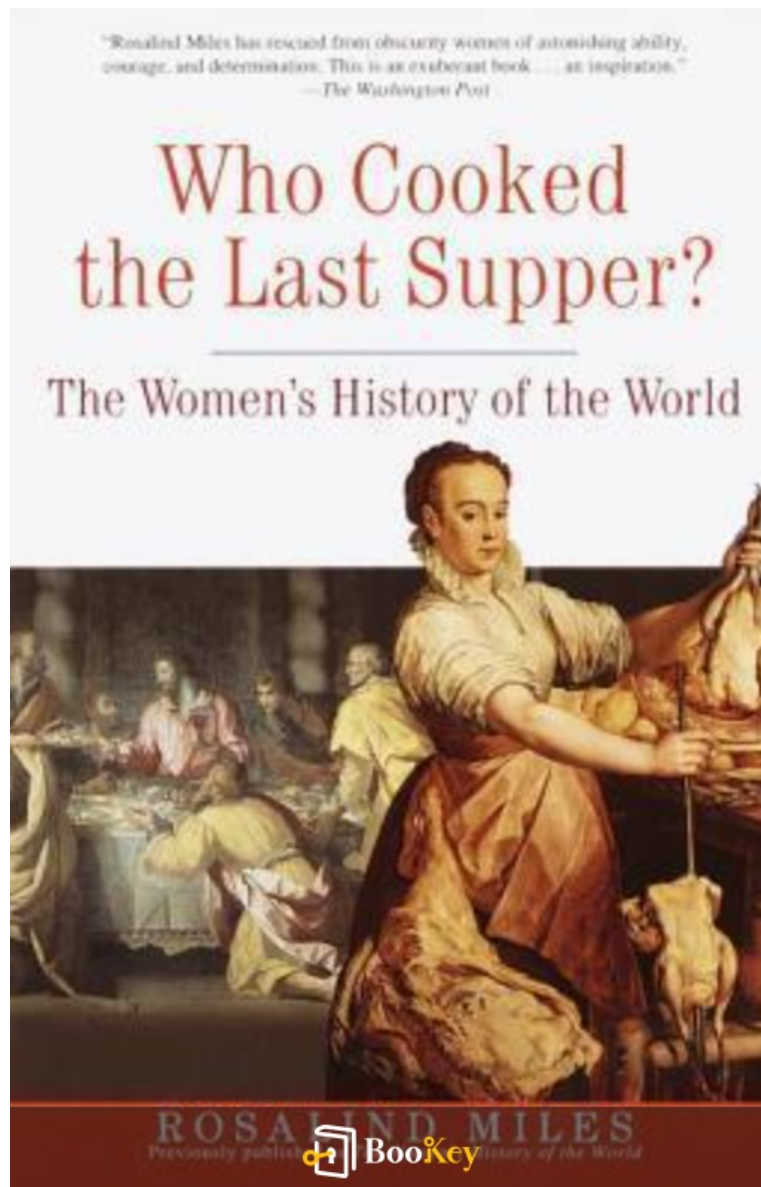


Who Cooked The Last Supper PDF

Rosalind Miles



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About the book

Book Overview: "Who Cooked the Last Supper: The Women's History of the World" by Rosalind Miles

Author: Rosalind Miles

Theme: Women's Contributions Throughout History

Format: Informative Summary

In her groundbreaking work, "Who Cooked the Last Supper: The Women's History of the World," Rosalind Miles takes readers on an enlightening journey, emphasizing the vital, yet frequently neglected roles of women throughout history.

Using a combination of humor and scholarly analysis, Miles critically examines the traditional male-centric narratives that have dominated historical accounts. She sheds light on the myriad ways women have been pivotal in shaping civilization, from developing the first tools and founding agriculture to driving revolutions and achieving artistic greatness.

By applying a feminist perspective to historical events, Miles aims to restore women's contributions to their rightful status, inviting readers to challenge pre-existing beliefs about history. This engaging book invites audiences to explore a rich narrative crafted from the experiences, efforts, and legacies of

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women.

Prepare to embark on a transformative reading experience that will alter your perception of history and elevate the stories of those who have often been in the shadows.

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About the author

Profile: Rosalind Miles

Occupation: Author, Columnist, Academic

Nationality: English

Overview:

Rosalind Miles stands out as a notable figure in English literature, recognized for her extensive body of work in both fiction and non-fiction. Her writing predominantly explores historical and feminist themes.

Education and Academic Contributions:

With a strong foundation in English literature, Miles has held esteemed academic positions, where she furthered her commitment to education and research in feminism and women's history.

Literary Contributions:

Miles is the author of many critically acclaimed books that spotlight the significant yet often ignored contributions of women throughout history. Her works not only entertain but enlighten, shedding light on the achievements of women in various fields.

Public Speaking and Advocacy:

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As a dynamic public speaker, Miles actively champions gender equality and advocates for the recognition of women's roles in history. Her compelling narrative style and rigorous academic approach bolster her reputation as a leading voice in contemporary feminist discussions.

Writing Style:

Her prose is marked by insight and eloquence, making her a respected figure among readers and scholars alike, further solidifying her role in the landscape of modern literature.

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1. Introduction: Understanding the Historical Context of Women's Roles

In "Who Cooked the Last Supper?", Rosalind Miles embarks on a profound exploration of women's roles throughout history, delving into the often-overlooked contributions of women to society, culture, and the very fabric of civilization. The introduction sets the stage for understanding how women's historical experiences have shaped the world as we know it, and why recognition of these experiences is critical in a contemporary context.

Historically, women's roles have been relegated to the private sphere, predominantly associated with domestic responsibilities and caregiving. This confinement not only obscured women's contributions to public life but also allowed patriarchal narratives to dominate the historical discourse. The phrase 'the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world' encapsulates how women have been seen as caretakers, with their influence often dismissed or trivialized. For instance, while many appreciate the nurturing role of mothers, few acknowledge that these foundational figures have also shaped the values and beliefs of societies.

The historical context of women's roles can be traced back to ancient civilizations. In cultures such as those of Mesopotamia or ancient Egypt, women held significant responsibilities that extended beyond the home—ranging from priestesses and craftsmen to traders and landowners.



Yet, as societies evolved, particularly during the transition to agricultural and then to patriarchal city-states, the societal value placed on women's contributions diminished. In ancient Greece, for example, women were largely excluded from public life, with their primary identity being that of a wife or mother, a trend that persisted in various forms throughout history. This transition to a patriarchal paradigm is significant; it positioned women as secondary figures in the annals of history, overshadowed by the achievements of men.

In examining the invisibility of women behind the great men of history, it becomes apparent that many notable figures had strong influences shaping their beliefs and accomplishments through their moral support and domestic roles. Consider the case of Queen Elizabeth I of England, who, despite being a powerful monarch, was constantly defined in relation to her male counterparts, navigating a world dominated by male rulers and advisors. Unlike her male counterparts, Elizabeth's legacy is often discussed in terms of her virginity and marital status rather than her political acumen or military achievements.

Additionally, Miles' work sheds light on the cultural narratives that have historically marginalized women's stories. Myths and traditions across different civilizations reflect the perception of women that prevailed in those societies. For example, in many Native American cultures, women often



held positions of significant power and influence, managing land and resources. However, Euro-American narratives frequently overlooked these contributions, instead portraying Native societies through a lens that diminished the agency of their women.

Moreover, the introduction emphasizes the notion that women's roles have not remained static. The progression of women's rights, from suffrage movements in the early 20th century to contemporary discussions around reproductive rights and workplace equality, illustrates an ongoing struggle for recognition and equality. The impact of historical contexts on current perceptions of gender roles is pivotal; as women continue to challenge historical limitations imposed upon them, the narrative is slowly but surely shifting towards a more inclusive understanding of their roles.

Ultimately, Miles' introduction calls upon readers to reevaluate the messages imbued in the history taught and the importance of uncovering the multitude of female narratives that have been obscured over time. By recognizing that women have shaped the world in meaningful ways, we can work toward a more inclusive understanding of history—one that values contributions from all genders equally. This recognition is not just a matter of historical accuracy, but also a critical step in advancing towards societal equality.

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Miles invites us to embark on a journey through time to peel back layers of historical oversight. Understanding the historical context of women's roles is not merely an academic exercise; it is a necessary precursor to appreciating the full spectrum of human achievement and the complexities that define our shared heritage.

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2. Chapter 1: The Invisible Women Behind the Great Men of History

The annals of history are replete with tales of grand achievements, monumental battles, and transformative innovations, most often narrated from the perspective of influential men who shaped the world. However, lurking in the shadows of this male domination are the countless women whose contributions were essential yet largely unrecognized. In "Who Cooked the Last Supper," Rosalind Miles takes readers on a journey to unveil the stories of these 'invisible' women who played pivotal roles behind the scenes, often relegated to the margins of historical narrative.

Miles argues that the conventional historiography not only minimizes the impact of women but also circumvents their agency. For instance, the majority of prominent figures in history—from kings and emperors to inventors and philosophers—have had women who supported them—be it as wives, mothers, or homemakers. Yet, their labor, often unacknowledged, underpinned these men's successes and legacies. This chapter expounds on the necessity of revisiting history to learn about these unsung heroines, illustrating how their influence molded societal structures and cultural developments.

One striking example that Miles provides is that of Cleopatra, not merely the seductress who captivated Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, but a ruler in her



own right who engaged in complex political maneuvers to protect her realm. Cleopatra was well-educated and multilingual, exhibiting remarkable diplomatic skills that were crucial in maintaining her kingdom against the burgeoning power of Rome. However, despite her intelligence and cunning, her image has often been overshadowed by the male figures with whom she was associated.

Additionally, Miles explores the lives of women in different historical epochs, emphasizing how their roles varied across cultures yet consistently contributed to the foundations of society. For instance, in ancient Greece, women were often confined to domestic spaces; however, their influence could be seen in the realm of religion and myth. The goddess Athena, representing wisdom and war, became a cultural touchstone that inspired many, yet the historical women of Greece largely remained invisible, their lives chronicled mainly through their relationships with men.

The chapter also addresses the significant impact of women in the family structures that surrounded many of history's great figures. Consider the role of women in the Renaissance, when it was often the nurturing and educational support of mothers, sisters, and wives that propelled the likes of Leonardo da Vinci or Michelangelo towards their artistic greatness. These women were not merely passive participants but were instrumental in fostering the intellectual growth and ambition of these luminaries.



Furthermore, Miles challenges the notion that greatness is solely achieved by individual accolades, insisting that it is often a communal effort. Women like Madame de Pompadour, the mistress of King Louis XV, wielded considerable influence within the court, shaping taste and politics through her patronage of the arts and her savvy political acumen, yet are frequently excluded from the mainstream narratives of the French court. Her contributions shaped cultural movements, yet history often relegates her to a mere footnote in the biographies of her male counterparts.

By excavating these hidden histories, Miles encourages readers to reevaluate the narratives they encounter. This chapter serves as a clarion call for the acknowledgment of women's contributions, urging society to reclaim the stories that have been suppressed and to appreciate the nuanced roles that women have played in shaping our past. Recognizing these invisible women not only enriches our understanding of history but also highlights the indispensable nature of women in the tapestry of human achievement.

In summary, Chapter 1 of "Who Cooked the Last Supper" delineates the critical yet oft-ignored roles played by women throughout history. As Miles illustrates, silence does not equate to absence. With poignant examples and an unabashed dedication to unveiling this crucial narrative, she lays the groundwork for a deeper appreciation of women's integral involvement

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beyond the shadow of their male counterparts.

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3. Chapter 2: Women's Contributions to Society and Culture Throughout the Ages

Throughout history, women's contributions to society and culture have been both profound and far-reaching, albeit often overshadowed by their male counterparts. Rosalind Miles, in her exploration of these contributions in "Who Cooked the Last Supper?", emphasizes that women have not only been active participants in the formation of society but have also been central to its cultural development and continuity.

From ancient civilizations to modern societies, women have played key roles in various domains. In ancient Egypt, women enjoyed a level of legal and social independence that was unusual for the time. They managed businesses, owned property, and could initiate divorce, which signifies a notable contribution to the structure of society. Prominent figures from this era, such as Hatshepsut, who reigned as pharaoh, highlight the capabilities and influence women held in governance and cultural leadership. Hatshepsut established trade networks and monuments that marked her reign as one of prosperity and stability.

Moving into the classical period, we witness the contributions of women in Greece and Rome, although they were often confined to domestic roles. However, women like Sappho, whose poetry celebrated female desire and companionship, established literary traditions that continue to resonate.



Similarly, in Rome, women played vital roles in the family structure and worked within the household economy, contributing to the commerce of daily life even as their individual identities remained largely unacknowledged.

In the Middle Ages, women became custodians of knowledge and culture, preserving texts through monastic work. Female figures such as Hildegard of Bingen not only contributed intellectual thought across theology, medicine, and music but also represented the intersection of spirituality and intellectuality in the medieval world. Her writings and compositions reflect the deeply rooted yet often overlooked fountain of feminine creativity during this time.

The Renaissance ushered in a period of greater visibility for women in the arts and sciences. Although still limited, women like Artemisia Gentileschi overcame societal barriers to become acclaimed artists, illustrating themes of female strength and resilience in their work. Likewise, figures such as Sofonisba Anguissola, a prominent portrait painter, broke through artistic barriers, demonstrating that women could achieve recognition in fields dominated by men.

As we navigate through the 18th and 19th centuries, the contributions of women in literature, politics, and the burgeoning feminist movements begin



to materialize more visibly. Writers like Mary Wollstonecraft stood at the forefront, advocating for women's rights and education, laying the groundwork for future feminist discourse. The suffrage movement saw women mobilizing, often risking their lives for the right to vote, demonstrating their commitment to societal change.

In the 20th century, women's contributions expanded significantly across all societal spectrums, as the world faced two World Wars. Women took on roles traditionally held by men, as they worked in factories producing war materials, served in various capacities in the military, and eventually contributed to the workforce in unprecedented ways during the post-war boom. Their perseverance and adaptability not only changed gender roles but also profoundly reshaped economic and social structures.

Moreover, the development of the women's rights movement led to transformative changes in laws and social attitudes around the world, further ensuring women's voices were heard in political and economic realms. Activists such as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem in the latter half of the century worked tirelessly to dismantle patriarchal structures and advocate for equality, demonstrating women's continuous contributions to societal progression.

Today, the influence of women persists in all walks of life, from politics

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with leaders like Angela Merkel and Kamala Harris to science with figures such as Marie Curie and Katherine Johnson, who made groundbreaking discoveries. Women across the globe continue to contribute to cultural, social, and political landscapes, although their stories often remain untold or underappreciated in mainstream narratives.

In summary, Rosalind Miles's "Who Cooked the Last Supper?" serves as a critical reminder of the essential role women have played throughout history across various domains. Their contributions, from ancient civilizations to contemporary society, have been instrumental in shaping the cultural and societal landscapes we inhabit today. Recognizing these contributions challenges the historical narrative that has often prioritized male achievements, urging society to reinvent its understanding of history as a collective tapestry woven by all genders.

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4. Chapter 3: The Myths and Realities of Female Existence in Various Cultures

In exploring the myths and realities of female existence across various cultures, it becomes increasingly clear that the gender narratives are as diverse as the communities themselves. While some cultures venerate and celebrate femininity, others confine women to rigid roles steeped in tradition, profoundly affecting their social standing, rights, and contributions to society.

Mythology often plays a crucial role in defining women's roles within cultures. In ancient Greek lore, for instance, goddesses like Athena exemplified female empowerment and wisdom, while others, like Pandora, symbolized chaos and temptation. The narratives surrounding these deities establish deep-seated cultural beliefs about women's nature and capabilities. They create an undercurrent of expectation that can liberate or limit the real-life experiences of women depending on the context.

Conversely, some cultures have produced myths that reinforce patriarchal structures. In many Native American tribes, for example, women traditionally held significant power and responsibility, often acting as leaders and decision-makers. However, as European colonization advanced, these roles were minimized. The myth of the "savage woman" emerged, characterizing Indigenous women as either hypersexualized or wholly



domestic, which misrepresented their multifaceted roles in their societies.

In examining the realities of female existence in modern contexts, one can see both progress and persistent challenges. Many societies have witnessed remarkable advancements for women in rights and representation. Countries in Scandinavia, such as Sweden and Norway, consistently rank high in gender equality, largely due to social policies that promote women's involvement in politics and the workforce. Here, women enjoy rights to equal pay, parental leave, and political representation.

Yet, contrasts exist. In regions like Afghanistan and parts of sub-Saharan Africa, women struggle against entrenched patriarchal systems that hinder their freedom, education, and health. Consider the case of Malala Yousafzai, a young Pakistani girl who defied the Taliban's prohibition on female education. Her activism highlights the stark disparity between the myth of gender equality in the modern world and the reality experienced by many women who face violent opposition for pursuing basic rights.

Furthermore, the impact of globalization and modernization has led to both empowerment and exploitation of women. In some Asian economies, women have entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers, gaining independence. However, this has often been coupled with precarious working conditions and exploitation in industries such as garment



manufacturing, where women make up the majority of the labor force. Their contributions to global markets remain undervalued, perpetuating the myth that women's work is less significant or worthy than that of men.

Beyond socio-economic factors, cultural perceptions also play a pivotal role in shaping women's realities. Even in cultures that advocate for female strength, pressure to conform to traditional gender roles persists. Japanese women, for instance, often grapple with the 'salaryman culture,' wherein societal expectations dictate their roles as caretakers and homemakers despite their educational achievements and workforce participation. This dichotomy between personal aspiration and societal expectation reveals the ongoing complexities within female existence in various cultures.

In conclusion, the myths surrounding female existence serve as powerful narratives that can either uplift women or confine them to stereotype and subjugation. Women's realities are complex, woven through layers of cultural narratives, socio-political environments, and historical contexts. By unpacking these myths and confronting the realities, we can appreciate the rich tapestry of women's lives and advocate for a future where these narratives empower rather than limit.

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5. Chapter 4: Rediscovering Forgotten Women Who Shaped Our World

In examining the narratives that have historically dominated our understanding of progress and achievement, we must also illuminate the vast contributions of women whose stories have been relegated to the shadows of history. Chapter 4 of "Who Cooked the Last Supper" focuses on the importance of rediscovering these forgotten women, unveiling their impact on society and culture across various epochs and regions.

From ancient civilizations to modern times, the narrative often centers around male figures, thus overshadowing the vital roles women played in numerous fields such as science, politics, literature, and social reform.

One powerful example is Hypatia of Alexandria, a mathematician and philosopher in the early 5th century. Hypatia taught astronomy and mathematics and became renowned throughout the ancient world for her intellectual rigor. Her work not only contributed to the preservation and dissemination of knowledge in a time when much of it was under threat but also embodied the struggles faced by women seeking academic recognition. Hypatia's tragic death marked the decline of classical scholarship, representing the loss of women's intellectual contributions that would resonate throughout centuries.



Equally significant is the role of women in the suffrage movement, where figures like Emmeline Pankhurst in the UK and Susan B. Anthony in the USA spearheaded campaigns that would eventually lead to women's rights to vote. Their relentless fight against societal norms, coupled with strategic activism, reshaped the political landscape of their respective countries. The stories of these women reflect a broader theme that, despite facing systematic oppression, women continually challenged the status quo, shaping political discourse in ways that have lasting consequences.

The influence of women is not only notable in the historical spectrum of governance and intellectual pursuit but is also seen profoundly in the arts. Women artists, writers, and musicians have often been overlooked despite their contributions. The works of Virginia Woolf, who advocated for women's intellectual freedom and creative opportunities in the early 20th century, are pivotal in understanding the intersection of gender and literature. Woolf's innovative narrative techniques and exploration of women's inner lives provided a voice for generations of women writers who followed. Similarly, artists like Frida Kahlo pushed boundaries through their work, using their art to explore identity, gender, and personal experience, influencing not only the art world but also feminism as a movement.

Moreover, the chapter emphasizes the importance of unearthing these stories to understand the full spectrum of human achievement. The

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acknowledgment of women like Ada Lovelace, often credited as the first computer programmer for her work on Charles Babbage's early mechanical general-purpose computer, illustrates how technological advancement has historical roots that are frequently ignored. By integrating the narratives of women into the broader historical discourse, we not only enrich our understanding of progress but also highlight the resilience and creativity of half the world's population.

In recognizing these forgotten figures, the chapter also reflects on the need for continued efforts to promote women's narratives in history. The quest for equality and recognition is still ongoing, as evidenced by contemporary struggles for women's rights across various cultures and societies. By bringing to light the stories of women who have shaped our world, we reinforce the idea that history is not merely a chronicle of men's achievements but a tapestry woven from the experiences and contributions of all genders.

Chapter 4 serves as a clarion call, urging readers to engage with the historical omissions that have led to an incomplete understanding of our past. It invites us to celebrate the women who have fought for recognition, those who have created and innovated, and those whose stories have been overlooked, ensuring that their legacies inform present and future generations. It reaffirms the notion that the struggle for visibility and

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equality must continue as we work towards a more inclusive historical narrative.

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6. Conclusion: The Continued Struggle for Recognition and Equality Today

In the compelling narrative of "Who Cooked the Last Supper?" Rosalind Miles meticulously unpacks centuries of women's contributions that have too often been overshadowed by their male counterparts. However, as the book draws to a close, it presents a powerful reminder that the fight for recognition and equality is not a relic of the past, but an ongoing struggle that resonates strongly today.

The struggle for women's rights has evolved significantly over the last century, yet many of the issues discussed in Miles' work still echo in contemporary society. Today, women are still vying for equal representation in politics, business, and numerous sectors typically dominated by men. For example, in the United States, women comprise roughly half of the workforce, yet they hold only about 26% of executive-level positions. This statistic not only illustrates ongoing inequality in the workplace but also highlights the systemic barriers that women continue to face in achieving leadership roles.

Furthermore, the global movement for gender equality still combats age-old stereotypes and societal norms that dictate what roles women can or should play. Cases such as the backlash faced by women in STEM fields, who often struggle against stereotypes that imply they are less capable than their male

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colleagues, highlight the pervasive nature of gender bias. Women scientists, engineers, and technologists continue to push back against these narratives, advocating for recognition of their contributions and achievements, a struggle reminiscent of those Miles highlights concerning women in history.

In literature, politics, and academia, women are still fighting to regain their rightful place in history. The profound lack of female figures in history books demonstrates how easily women's contributions can be erased from the public consciousness. For example, women like Ada Lovelace, who is often credited as the first computer programmer, and Rosalind Franklin, whose work was crucial to the discovery of DNA's structure, are frequently omitted from mainstream discussions about innovation. This omission not only diminishes their roles in history but also perpetuates a cycle where young girls do not see female role models in areas traditionally seen as male-centric, potentially discouraging their participation in these fields.

Moreover, the #MeToo movement serves as a modern reflection of the fight against gender inequality. Spearheaded by women's voices sharing their experiences of harassment and discrimination, it has sparked widespread conversations about sexism and power dynamics in various industries. This movement demonstrates that while women have made considerable strides since Miles' narrative, the quest for a safe and equitable society remains fraught with challenges.

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The fight for recognition is not just about acknowledging past achievements, but also about ensuring that the future is inclusive. The current focus on intersectionality within feminism emphasizes that women do not all experience inequality in the same way and that race, class, sexuality, and other identities intersect to create unique challenges. The necessity for dialogue that reflects the diverse experiences of all women is essential in this ongoing struggle. Initiatives that seek to highlight marginalized voices, such as promoting women of color in leadership roles or supporting girls from underprivileged communities in pursuing education, are vital steps towards fostering a society where equity is not just an ideal but a reality.

In conclusion, "Who Cooked the Last Supper?" resonates on many levels with today's cultural and political discussions surrounding the rights and recognition of women. While we have come a long way since the days of systemic exclusion and suppression, the journey toward true equality is far from over. Rosalind Miles' work serves as both a historical account and a clarion call, urging society to continue the dialogue surrounding women's contributions and to advocate for the recognition they so richly deserve. The call for equality, recognition, and respect remains a pivotal struggle, underscoring the importance of persistent advocacy for women's rights in all areas of life.

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