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## **Honor: A misleading concept among Arabs**

By Mira Ayman

### **About the Artist**

Mira attends the University of Wollongong in Dubai. Issues caused by conservatism and the patriarchy have always interested her, especially the impact of the patriarchal society on women and their rights. Recently, the lack of knowledge on sexual health, a basic and crucial feature of the human life that is not openly disclosed, has captured Mira's attention. In her previous research on *Women's sexual health rights in Egypt*, she created a digital art collage poster that contained symbols to raise awareness on the importance of sexual health and sex education. She wishes to continue down this path where she explores the violence that women face because of the traditions and customs of Arab cultures.

### **Description of the Painting**

Murder to cleanse family honor has been an embedded tradition of violence against women in many societies around the world. One of the most common reasons for honor killings is the husband and other family members suspecting the wife of adultery if she hasn't bled on the wedding night. This happens because society relates the family's honor to the sexual conformity of its female members. My project is a digital artwork of a woman's bleeding vulva done using only photoshop. The blood in my art piece indicates the misconception that Arabs have towards the hymen. The blood seen is believed to be the result of the hymen being *broken* with her first experience of vaginal intercourse (which is seen as proof for the lack of any previous sexual experiences). For Arabs, the importance of virginity is reflected in referring to the blood resulting from the first intercourse as "the woman's honor" or "sharaf" in Arabic. I add the sentence, "where is your honor?" in both Arabic and English to indicate that some Arab families fail to understand that the hymen does not have any biological purpose and is not intended to bleed if torn. Therefore, a woman is investigated if there are no "blood-stained bedsheets" to prove her family's honor.

