

**INTERVIEW WITH WRITER DJAILI AMADOU AMAL:
AN ACTIVISM DERIVED FROM WRITING**



Credits : Joel Saget - AFP

"If women are to get out of the patriarchal process that locks them up in the options that they have not chosen, education is the decisive factor to help them support their own life choices, thanks to this they become aware that they are the only owners of their life. Life and that no one has the right to impose such violence on them. " Djaili Amadou Amal.

A little about Djaili Amadou Amal

Djaili Amadou Amal is a Cameroonian feminist activist and writer. She is the daughter of a Cameroonian father and an Egyptian mother.

Married in 17 in the framework of a forced marriage, she has known what makes life difficult for the women of the Sahel. In 1998, Djaili Amadou Amal manages to leave her husband after five years of life together. Ten years later,

Djaili remarries where she is a victim of abuse. At the time of her breakup, he kidnaps her two daughters to punish her.

Djaili Amadou Amal does not give up. The one who dreamed of being a journalist works, thanks to her studies in business administration, she buys a computer, a table, a chair and begins to write. Her first novel "Walaande, the art of sharing a husband", published in 2010, gives her immediate fame. After its publication, he was awarded the Prince of Claus Foundation Prize in Amsterdam, which allowed him to have his work translated into Arabic and disseminated in the Maghreb and Middle East countries.

Her second novel, "Mistiriijo, the devourer of souls", published in 2013, confirms the talent of the writer. Her third novel, "Munyal, the tears of patience", appears in September 2017, definitely ranking among the safe values of African literature.

In March 2019, the work consecrates the writer who was awarded the 2019 Pan-African Press Prize for literature, which is awarded to her at the Paris Livre salon. Two months later, she won the first Orange Book Award in Africa.

The writer signs her entry in the French publishing house Anne Carrière / Emmanuelle Collas, which has published her since 2020. In September 2022 she publishes "Les Impatientes", with which she wins the 2020 Goncourt Prize for Students.

The work "Les impatientes" Djaili Amadou Amal, tells of the difficult situation of women in Cameroon, denouncing the daily violence suffered by these women and the polygamy that exists in that country.

AN ACTIVISM DERIVED FROM WRITING

In 2012 she decided to create the association "Femmes du Sahel" which aims to work for the education and development of women in the north of Cameroon. In particular, it carries out activities to promote the education of women and girls, to raise awareness against early and forced marriage and all forms of violence against women.

INTERVIEW TO DJAILI AMADOU AMAL

1) Besides being a writer, she is also a militant, and in 2012 she created the Association "Femmes du Sahel", an Association, whose objective is to work in favor of education and Development and to fight, in particular, against forced and early marriage and Violence against Women. What motivated you to fight against these practices? On the other hand, his struggle is also disseminated through literature, he has written Four Stories: what do they have in common? What did you write?

My social commitment derives from my commitment as a writer. Following the publication of my first novel in 2010, I founded the association "Femmes du Sahel" that works for the education of girls and the development of women in the Cameroonian Sahel. This evolution has been natural to the extent that my first novel, like all my other novels finally, deals with issues of discrimination made to women. This is the common thread of my intellectual and militant commitment to the service of women. The theme of violence against women is therefore essential in my texts, it crystallizes, so to speak, my conviction as a writer.

I had the opportunity to read since I was little and that made me realize that what was happening around me was not normal. As an observer, I quickly became a victim of it. All of this, and against all odds, has led me to be the feminist writer and activist that I am now.

2) His novel "Les impatientes" tells the story of two forced marriages. Can you first explain to us how the forced marriage procedure is developed according to the Cameroonian tradition? You use the term "marriage of persuasion", can you explain what it is? What does the local law say about it?

There is no proper procedure, as Cameroon has many traditions and ethnicities. The story of my novel "Les Impatientes" takes place in the Peule society of the North of Cameroon, a region dominated by the Sahelian culture. Here, forced marriage is subtle, either by emotional blackmail or by persuasion. The daughter is convinced that it is for her own good, it is the best option for her. She must listen to her parents who know better than she what is useful and fair for her, for her future. You must accept, otherwise it would mean that you do not love your parents, you do not obey them! At this point, as you can see, it is not about stopping the young woman, as happens in bad movies, and taking her in manu militari to the home of her suitor. Cameroonian law provides for a 5-year prison sentence and a fine of 25,000 to 1,000,000 CFA francs (38 to 1,525 euros), but the reality is very different.

3) Can you tell us about this "hierarchy" system that you relate in your book? Is it valid both between wives and between men / women / children?

Probably an African question! One of the criteria for ranking, undoubtedly the oldest there is, is age. A young man submits to his elders! A bride who finds a first wife in a concession submits to the latter, who is the daada saré, mother of the house.

4) Finally, more globally, do you think there is hope of being able to change this patriarchal system? Do you think that this practice is due to the presence of a legal vacuum, a cultural influence that is too deeply rooted in society or the pressure of religious dictates? In your opinion, how could a change occur (international aid, an internal legislative regulation)?

I do not think there is a legal vacuum here. There are laws. Although it is necessary to review and amend them, adapt them, it is important to point out that the situation of women in our societies is more affected by the lack of rigor in the application of these existing laws. Change is inevitable, in principle. But this change must be what we want and seek. A human society in which women play the main role that corresponds to them, an actor in society and willing, in perfect social complementarity with men and who enjoy the same rights as he. The struggle for this change is necessarily the product of the joint and determined efforts of intellectuals committed to the corresponding causes, by feminist activists, of international institutions and, of course, of the States. One of the key drivers of this change is, of course, girls' education. The higher the education of girls, the lower their propensity to submit, for example, to

forced marriage or to accept the practices imposed on them that do not take into account their aspirations for an emancipated and autonomous future.

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