This paper is based on first hand observations and interviews I conducted at a madrasha, a women’s Muslim Center in Mombasa, Kenya. This center seems to be representative of others of its kind. They have two functions--a public space for learning for all adults and a place of learning for children, mostly girls and boys up to the age of 12. It is a religious school so it is focused on the study of religion. I will discuss the context of public and private space, framed by a discussion of ritual, to explain women’s’ religious authority or lack thereof. As sacred safe space created by women for the use of women, it represents a degree of religious and social authority. I will problematize that with the public – private argument in an analysis of their two distinct spaces. I will also problematize it based on what one might privilege as an intellectual authority over a religious practice or busy work which is where the women seem to excel and find their purpose.