

**TOWARDS FEMINIST PAN-AFRICANISM
AND PAN-AFRICAN FEMINISM**



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Towards Feminist Pan-Africanism and Pan-African Feminism

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PREFACE

On September 25, 2019, Professor Sylvia Tamale delivered the 6th Nyerere Dialogue Lecture in the Assembly Hall of the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH). The lecture was fascinatingly titled *Towards Feminist Pan-Africanism and Pan-African Feminism*.

Nyerere Dialogue Lectures are organised by the Nyerere Resource Centre (NRC), or *Kavazi la Mwalimu Nyerere*, as we fondly call it in Kiswahili. The Centre was formally inaugurated by the former President of Tanzania, Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa in March 2015. It is the outcome of the Nyerere biography project which was sponsored by COSTECH. Professor Issa G. Shivji, Professor Saida Yahya-Othman and Dr. Ng'wanza Kamata, were given a grant to research and write a comprehensive biography of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the leader of the nationalist movement and the first President of Tanzania.

NRC had a two-fold mandate. One, to archive the documents and other material collected by the biographers and make them accessible to other researchers and, two, to keep Mwalimu's ideas alive by providing a forum for critical reflection on Mwalimu's thought and political practice. The first three volumes of Mwalimu's biography have been completed and the manuscript is with the publishers. The biography is scheduled to be launched in early 2020. Over the last five years NRC has organised numerous activities and events which have been veritable occasions for debate

and reflection. NRC has a significant number of publications to its credit, including some which have never been published before (see the Appendix).

Sylvia Tamale's magnificent lecture was a climax. It adroitly lays bare one of the appalling silences in the history of Pan-Africanist and nationalist ideas. Indeed, Pan-Africanism has been *his* story. Sylvia does not simply and mechanically transpose it to *her* story. She goes much further. Through painstaking research and perceptive analysis, she demonstrates the central role played by women in the very origin and development of Pan-Africanist thought. This is a remarkable contribution and NRC is proud to present it for wider circulation, reflection and debate.

Finally, friends of NRC will be sad to know that Sylvia Tamale's lecture is the last in the Nyerere Dialogue Lecture Series. In February 2019, the Board of Commissioners of COSTECH, in their wisdom, decided that NRC was no longer relevant to its activities and directed that NRC wind up its activities by 31st December 2019. NRC as an institution will thus cease to exist by the end of this year. But the ideas that gave it birth and the ideas it generated during its existence will continue to live, both in its publications and in the imagination and memories of the people who participated in NRC. It is unfortunate that in our political praxis institutions have a finite life span. Fortunately, though, our people archive and treasure ideas and memories which they creatively excavate in times of crisis. Mwalimu's ideas and memories are of such a kind. They are a beacon of hope that may be dimmed but never extinguished.

Issa Shivji,
Director, NRC
October 2019

TOWARDS FEMINIST PAN-AFRICANISM AND PAN-AFRICAN FEMINISM*

Introduction

This year, I took a sabbatical from my teaching duties to develop a feminist book on the Decolonization of Africa. I was in the thick of the research for this project when I received the following email from my friend Issa Shivji:

I have great pleasure to invite you to deliver the 6th Nyerere Dialogue Lecture on or around 25th September. If I may suggest a topic it would be 'Feminism in Pan-Africanism.' I'm sure it doesn't take you too far away from the subject matter of your book. (Maybe you could even have a chapter with that title in your book, if you don't already have it!). It will be a great honour for us if you accepted the invitation. Personally I'd be very delighted. (I'll not accept a 'No' (haha)!

As many of you may know, when you're writing you don't want to be distracted. Hence, my very prompt response to Issa was: "SORRY!!!" I had a tight schedule and self-imposed deadlines that I couldn't afford to miss.

But that was not to be. Those of you who know Issa well know how stubborn he can be! He wrote back saying, "I

assured my colleagues that Sylvia would not let me down! Yours will be the last lecture. So you can see how symbolic your presence would be—a kind of climax.” After a few more back-and-forths, I relented. And let me say that I am tremendously happy that I did! If truth be told, the book was only going to pay lip-service to the topic of Pan-Africanism. Now, I cannot imagine how I could have published the book without this chapter that Issa’s brutal insistence literally forced me to write. Preparing this lecture has not only been a delight but a real “light bulb” moment for me and I will forever be indebted to Issa for his stubbornness! It is still a work-in-progress and I really hope that it will eventually do the great Mwalimu Nyerere justice. Thank you Issa and your Centre for the invitation and thank you all for coming to listen to me.

I will open my remarks with an ancient African proverb that I find very apt for our topic this morning: *If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.* Almost all African cultures have variants of the wise saying. Others include: “Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable”; “One tree is not enough to build a fence”; “the teeth can only bite when they work together”; “many hands make light work”; “I am because we are.” The spirit of these proverbs is what informs the basic idea of Pan-Africanism. It is what took abode among those in the diaspora that spawned the idea. Mainstream history books mention men like WEB Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, George Padmore and Joseph Casely-Hayford. The tendency is not only to place the spotlight on

male pioneers, but also—in the typical style of Western liberalism—to delink the individuals from the social movement of which they were a part. This tendency ultimately denigrates the role of women in the Pan-African struggles. But with all the challenges standing in the way of uniting the balkanized states of Africa, the idea has endured. Today the spirit of Pan-Africanism, conflated with the concept of continentalism, seems to reside more in the realm of conservative political rhetoric than practice. As Mashupye Maserumule remarks, “Most African leaders are stuck in the sovereignty of their nationalism.”¹

Pan-Africanism is both ideology and praxis. It is also a socio-political worldview that seeks to restore the dignity and humanity of Africans—on the continent and elsewhere in the African diaspora—after centuries of oppression and exploitation. Primacy is given to the goal of uniting African states into a single independent federation that can garner and wield geopolitical power on the global stage, commensurate with the size and population of the continent. It is about African nationalism; it is about decolonization and reconstruction. Chigonzie Nnuriam makes it clear that Pan-Africanism “...is grounded on the doctrine that unity is essential to economic, social, and political progress and aims to bring and uplift people of African origin.”² As Issa Shivji insists, Pan-Africanism is about forging an African village within the so-called global village to fight imperialism.³ The urgency for African nationalism has never been greater than in this age of

neoliberal capitalism which has cast a long and poisonous shadow over the continent's progressive advancement.

The aim of this lecture is not to provide a chronological account of the development of Pan-Africanism as there is a wealth of literature on the subject. Suffice it to say that the evolution of the movement is generally divided into the pre- and post-World War II periods. The former was driven by diasporic Africans from the Americas, the Caribbean and Europe, while the latter is dominated by Africans from the continent. And while the proposals and methods of the two groupings may have differed considerably, they shared the common goals of uplifting people of African descent in their struggle for freedom from White imperialism.

The decolonization project for Africa cannot afford to have a piecemeal approach but must adopt a Pan-African course of action. Colonialism in Africa thrived (and still does) on the continent's disunity and ideological cleavages. At the 1884 Berlin conference, colonialists ensured that the continent was arbitrarily divided into numerous fragmented and impotent nations. A balkanized continent was less likely to successfully rise up against imperialism. The continent is further split into official language groupings based on colonial history, namely Anglophone (English speakers), Francophone (French speakers), Lusophone (Portuguese speakers) and Hispanophone (Spanish speakers⁴). Such colonial legacy is also responsible for inter- and intra-state tensions built on imported

religions. It erects walls where there are none; even today, it is not uncommon to hear Africans located north of the Sahara and south of the Limpopo remarking, "I've never been to Africa!" All these disparities pose serious challenges to the unified Pan-African effort to liberate the continent from neocolonial oppression and exploitation. The ideal behind Pan-Africanism was to dismantle the mess created in Berlin. That is, to integrate the homogenized and harmonized groupings into one socio-economic and political entity on the scale of the 50 states of the United States of America. Not only do the social, economic and environmental dimensions of the decolonization project require Africa to work as a bloc, but they also necessitate the continent to link up with the disgruntled masses in the global North to break the capitalist-patriarchal hegemony.

Unfortunately, the institutional face, the heart and the soul of the Pan-African movement was (and still is) largely masculinist and patriarchal. Despite sharing the liberation ideals of unity, freedom and justice, the Pan-African movement and the African feminist movements have been like two ships passing in the night, primarily following parallel paths with only tenuous points of intersection. Pan-African discourse may even be interpenetrative of the feminist one, but their practices are largely independent of each other. With this in mind, this lecture tackles the issue of Pan-Africanism in three strands. First, it offers a critique of the Pan-African movement for paying only lip service to the key issues of African feminisms. How can we forge

synergy between feminist struggles and Pan-Africanism on the continent? In the second part, the lecture discusses the limits of the Pan-Africanist ideology in African feminist movements and their implications for the decolonization project. How can feminists on the continent work in solidarity and transnationally to achieve their goals? Finally, the lecture concludes with a discussion of the related concept of renaissance which has emerged to replace Pan-Africanism. Some suggestions for how the Pan-African and feminist movements can work harmoniously are also offered.

Feminism in the Pan-African Movement?

It is difficult to associate Pan-Africanism with African women or even feminist issues. This is not because women made no contribution to this centuries-old movement but because, as is the case with political movements elsewhere, females are excluded from the spotlight and male-dominated narratives omit women's contributions. The fact is that alongside the familiar *forefathers* named in the *history* of Pan-Africanism, many *foremothers* contributed to the emergence and ideology of the Pan-African movement in significant ways. In the same way that colonialism sought to erase Africa's historiography, African women were constructed as "a gender without history". It is thus necessary to re-write the evolution of Pan-Africanism in order to include *her-story*, not only to bring to light the female trail-blazers who have been deliberately omitted from historical accounts of the movement, but also to surface the issues that they brought to the Pan-African table.

When women are given space in mainstream historical books, they are characterized as “movement midwives rather than architects.”⁵ And yet, to this day African women continue to actively engage in the anti-colonial struggle and the efforts to mobilize transnationally for Pan-Africanism.

David Killingway’s historical research reveals that the Pan-African movement grew out of the African Association in Britain—the principal architect of the inaugural Pan-African conference in London in 1900.⁶ Significantly, the initial stimulus for the African Association came from three young Black people living in the UK at the time: Alice Kinloch was from South Africa, Thomas J. Thomson was from Sierra Leone and Henry Sylvester Williams was of Caribbean origin. Kinloch served as the first treasurer to the African Association and, alongside other black activists, she addressed many gatherings in Britain highlighting the plight of her “fellow natives” in her home country. A letter written by Williams confirmed that, “The [African] Association is the result of Mrs. Kinloch’s work in England and the feeling that as British Subjects we ought to be heard in our own affairs.”⁷ Kinloch herself was unable to attend the 1900 conference as she had left London and returned to South Africa. It was at that conference that the Pan-African Association was formed.

Not only were women in the vanguard of the Pan-African movement, but they enriched it with significant feminist insights. Take the example of the Nardal sisters, Jeanne

(Jane) and Paulette, who were among the pivotal intellectuals to develop a counter-imperialist culture in former French colonies.⁸ Originally from the Caribbean island of Martinique, Jeanne and Paulette moved to Paris in the early 20th century and became writers and political commentators. They were the first two Black women to study at the renowned Paris-based Sorbonne and both their works expounded and laid the ideological groundwork for the Négritude movement and for Pan-Africanism. In Paris, Jeanne and Paulette were at the nucleus of the literary salon that met regularly to discuss conceptual aspects of Afro consciousness or Négritude with intellectuals such as the poet, Léopold Sédar Senghor (later to become first president of Senegal).⁹ Jennifer Boittin argues that the gender of the Nardal sisters helped to spread their influence as it “enabled them to cross boundaries which class, education and race might otherwise have upheld.”¹⁰ During the inter-war period, between 1929 and 1934, they facilitated the work of networking with other Blacks across the Atlantic in spreading the message of decolonization.¹¹

Both sisters worked at the popular bimonthly journal, *La Dépêche Africaine*, which Jeanne helped to establish in 1928. Through this outlet, Jeanne and Paulette published some influential essays on the topics of race consciousness, colonialism and identity. Jeanne’s essay, “Internationalisme Noir” (Black internationalism), for example, discussed race consciousness among the African diaspora and, according to Sharpley-Whiting, “provided an essential kernel of the

philosophical foundation for the literary and cultural movement, later celebrated the world over as *negritude*".¹² Jeanne wrote:

From henceforth, there would be some interest, some originality, some pride in being Negro, to turn oneself towards Africa, the cradle of the Negro, to remember a common origin. From these new ideas, new words, have come the revealing terms: Afro-Americans, Afro-Latin. They confirm our thesis, all in casting a new meaning on the nature of this Black Internationalism.¹³

Paulette—the older of the two sisters—is also credited for several critical essays. Her unpublished work on Black humanism (*Pour un humanisme noir*) provided a sketch for Senghor's first essay on "Humanism and René Maran."¹⁴ Paulette's essay entitled, "Pantinsexotiques" (Exotic puppets) critiqued colonial French exotification of Black women, calling upon Blacks everywhere to resist colonial Othering. Recall that Paris was one of the metropolises where Black women's bodies were blatantly commodified as evidenced in the public 1814 display of the Khoi-San woman from South Africa, Saartjie (Sara) Baartman (the so-called Hottentot Venus) on its streets. When she died the following year, Baartman's pickled sexual organs remained on exhibition in a Paris museum until 1974.¹⁵ Hence, Paulette's essay was right on the mark and indeed ahead of the times.

Other Caribbean female subversive writers of the early twentieth century included Suzanne Lacascade, Suzanne Césaire, Michele Lacrosiland Mayotte Capecia. They condemned racialism, individualism and inequality. Commenting on the historical oblivion to which female Pan-Africanists have been relegated, Maryse Condé writes:

Whenever women speak out, they displease, shock, or disturb. Their writings imply that before thinking of a political revolution, West Indian society needs a psychological one. What they hope for and desire conflicts with men's ambitions and dreams. Why, they ask, fight against racism in the world when it exists at home, among ourselves? There is nothing West Indian society hates more than facing the reality of color prejudice which reminds it of the days of slavery, of the time when to be black was a curse and to possess a fair skin was regarded as a blessing.¹⁶

The struggle for decolonization is as old as colonialism itself. Its roots run as deep as the anti-slavery and anti-racist projects, its activism sustained by Africans in the diaspora and on the continent. Diasporic Africans, particularly those in the Americas and the Caribbean spawned the idea of organized Pan-Africanism and African nationalism out of their desire to return to their African roots.¹⁷ Again,

mainstream historical tomes give credit for these efforts to an all-male list of comrade scholars such as Sylvester Williams (Trinidad), William E.B. Du Bois (US), Marcus Garvey (Jamaica), Paul Robeson (US), George Padmore (Trinidad) and C. L. R. James (Trinidad).¹⁸ Women who were involved in these processes were relegated to oblivion in the history books. Little is known, for example, of the contribution of Sarah Breedlove (better known as Madam C. J. Walker), the African-American entrepreneur millionaire who was involved in the formation of “The International League of Darker Peoples” (ILDP).¹⁹ Using this platform, Walker advocated for a transnational anti-imperialist movement. She later joined forces with Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), offering both political commitment and financial support towards the cause of Pan-Africanism.²⁰ The mouthpiece for UNIA was *The Negro World* newspaper, founded by Garvey’s first wife, Amy Ashwood Garvey, a Pan-Africanist in her own right. His second wife, Amy Jaques Garvey, was a prolific journalist and UNIA activist.²¹ Indeed, relative to other Pan-African organizations and despite its contradictions, UNIA proved to be a welcoming place for women’s empowerment. Ford-Smith credits the organization for being the training ground for many of the black feminists of the 1930s.²²

Five Pan-African congresses (PACs) were organized in Europe and the USA between 1900 and 1945. Although all were male-dominated, several African-American and Caribbean women participated in them.²³ Both Anna Jones

and Anna J. Cooper, for instance, delivered papers at the 1900 London congress. Others included Fannie Williams, Ella Barrier, Mrs. Loudin and Ms. Adams.²⁴ Addie Hunton and Ida Gibbs were also active delegates at the 1919 Paris congress. The third congress in 1923, which was held partly in London and partly in Lisbon, was attended by the Ghanaian journalist/writer, Mabel Dove Danquah, who went on to be the first elected woman in an African legislative assembly.²⁵ The 1923 PAC clearly exhibited the masculinist logic behind most PAC demands of the time: “In fine, we ask in all the world, that black folk be treated as men. We can see no other road to Peace and Progress.”²⁶

Sierra Leonean feminist and UNIA member, Adelaide Casley-Hayford helped organize the fourth Pan-African congress held in New York in 1927.²⁷ In fact, it was the “Women’s International Circle for Peace and Foreign Relations” that convened that congress.²⁸ Many more African women from the US and the Caribbean contributed to the international struggles against imperialism and colonialism—Jessie Faucet, Mary McLeod Bethune, Dorothy Hunton and others. Claudia Jones, for instance, was a communist revolutionary who articulated the concept of intersectionality in the early twentieth century.²⁹ Her approach to eliminating racism was fully integrated with anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal and anti-imperialist ideology. Together with Amy Ashwood, Jones was a member of the International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA) which was set up in 1935 to protest Mussolini’s aggression

against Ethiopia.³⁰ In her influential 1949 essay, “We Seek Full Equality for Women,” Jones tackled the intersecting oppression of race, class and gender:

[T]he triply-oppressed status of Negro women is a barometer of the status of all women, and that the fight for the full, economic, political and social equality of the Negro woman is in the vital self-interest of white workers, in the vital interest of the fight to realize equality for all women.³¹

But issues of class and gender were not fodder for discussion in the mainstream Pan-African movement. Having imbibed the Eurocentric ideology of the “Dark Continent” and “barbaric” Africa, the general sentiment held by the forefathers which informed these first meetings was to demand for diasporic Africans to participate in the emancipation and development of Africa. As Tunde Adeleke observed:

Having been westernized themselves, they embraced the Europeans as partners with whom they shared cultural attributes.... not only did black American nationalists embrace Eurocentrism, they also argued forcefully for the occupation of Africa, and the subvention of her independence. They appealed to Europeans for acceptance and cooperation as partners in the task of

civilizing “primitive Africa. ”They were more concerned with securing a place for themselves in the imperial schemes than with developing and strengthening the Pan-African nexus, a commitment they initially advocated.³²

What many diasporic Pan-Africanists did not fully appreciate was that the imperialist racist ideology did not differentiate between Blacks on the continent and those in the diaspora.

The representation of Africans from the continent in the first four congresses was only token and it was not until the fifth congress held in October 1945 in Manchester, UK that their presence was significant.³³ This was considered the most important of all congresses. Again, African women were conspicuous by their absence, or at least by an absence of any record of their participation and contribution. This means that women’s concerns and interests were also missing from the agenda; not a single female delegate from the continent presented a paper in Manchester.³⁴ Among the delegates from the continent were notables like Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Hastings Kamuzu Banda (Malawi), Obafemi Awolowo (Nigeria), Jaja Wachuku (Nigeria), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya) and Wallace Johnson (Sierra Leone)—all of whom went on to climb to the helm of post-colonial governance in their countries. All subsequent congresses

have been held on the continent—Dar es Salaam (1974), Kampala (1994) and Accra (2015).³⁵

Manchester was indeed a turning point in the Pan-African movement and it marked the watershed of Africa's decolonization. While previous conferences focused on reforms in the colonial administrative systems, demanding that Afro-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans take over the leadership reins in the colonies, the 1945 congress insisted on radical decolonization. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the earlier conferences planted the seeds of a new political science that concerned itself with the possibilities and principles of African self-government.³⁶ They also planted an embryonic nationalism which inspired young Africans who were students in the UK at the time, many with socialist leanings. Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, for example, were more outspoken in denouncing colonialism than W.E.B. Du Bois and his ilk. They were impatient with the patronizing, elitist attitudes exhibited by their brothers from the Americas and the Caribbean and, together, they founded the Pan-African Federation in 1946. Some accused the Negritude movement of being composed of "mimic men" whose worldview was no different from the Western postulates about Africa.³⁷ Ironically, those same African men who detested Du Bois' Pan-Africanism were quite content to live with excluding, minimizing and patronizing African women.

The spirit of Pan-Africanism was kept burning post-Manchester through the auspices of the All-African People's

Conference (AAPC). Its Accra-based secretariat organized three huge, albeit male-dominated, conferences in 1958, 1960 and 1961, bringing together political leaders and activists from across the continent. The main agenda item for all three conferences was to accelerate the decolonization process by granting formal independence to all African states. They also discussed ways that the continent could break itself from neocolonialism. As Nnuriam correctly pointed out, the ideology of Pan-Africanism informed and shaped all these political activities:

Throughout the 20th century, cultural Pan Africanism weaved through the political narrative—the Harlem renaissance, francophone philosophies of Negritude, Afrocentrism, Rastafarianism and Hip Hop, artists of African origin and heritage have found inspiration in and been drawn to exploring and communicating their connections with the continent.³⁸

So, issues of race and class featured prominently at the post-Manchester meetings but their resolutions remained silent on sexism and other -isms that adversely affected millions of minority social groups on the continent. Quite literally, “Black Brotherhood” remained the mantra of the Pan-African movement. Indeed, the Pan-African movement to-date is essentially robed in patriarchal garb busy espousing patriarchal values.³⁹

There have been considerable attempts to expand the contours of African historiography to include female nationalists.⁴⁰ Apart from the names already mentioned here, there were many other African female liberators and Pan-Africanists that mainstream history books have omitted. These include Bibi Titi Mohamed, Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Constance Cummings-Jones, Winnie Madizekela-Mandela, Wangari Maathai, Thenjiwe Mtintso, Djamila Bouhired, Huda Sha'arawi, Charlotte Maxeke, Albertina Sisulu and many others.

Aged 39 in 1913, Maxeke—the first female Black graduate in Apartheid South Africa—led her fellow women to protest against the racist policy that required non-Whites to carry identity passes. Five years later, she went on to form the Bantu Women's League, which continued to fight for freedom against exploitation and oppression.⁴¹ Huda Sha'arawi was a powerful feminist strategist who led veiled women's demonstrations in Egypt's 1919 revolution that partially removed the British colonialists in 1922. Through organizations such as the Wafdist Women's Central Committee (WWCC) and the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU), Sha'arawi championed radical nationalist and feminist calls for her country's liberation.⁴² Tanzania's Bibi Titi was a household name in that country's liberation movement and was well-known for her political mobilizing skills. She worked closely with Julius Nyerere in the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and tutored him in how to speak the colloquial Swahili that appealed to

wanainchi.⁴³ In 1997, Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma unveiled the biography of Nigeria’s formidable Funmilayo Ransome Kuti—the woman who fought for suffrage and equal rights in the post-World War II period.⁴⁴ She also played a very prominent role in the anti-colonial struggles of her country, so much so that the British colonialists denied her a passport in 1956 to curtail her efforts to “influence women with communist ideas and policies.”⁴⁵

The story of Algeria’s resistance against the French would be incomplete without the brave exploits and hardships endured by Djamila Bouhired. She was central to the success of the Battle of Algiers in the 1950s war of Algerian decolonization.⁴⁶ Kenya’s Wangari Maathai was the first Professor of African Renaissance Studies and the founder of the *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies*.⁴⁷ The intellectualism of this ecofeminist was fiercely channeled into preserving nature and challenging the neocolonial exploitation of the earth—pursuits for which she received the Nobel Prize in 2004.⁴⁸ And Africa’s liberation history is usually warped when it comes to the South African giant, Winnie Mandela. Her heroism, bravery and legacy is undermined, even eroded against that of her iconic husband, Nelson Mandela. Mainstream narratives prefer to dwell on the inevitable mistakes that she made under the severely oppressive and complex conditions of apartheid.⁴⁹ Political narratives about Winnie Mandela are usually framed in gendered and vilifying terms:

She is the 'bad mother', acting outside of the valorised forms of political motherhood, and is sometimes contrasted with Albertina Sisulu, her close friend and another 'mother of the nation', whose actions are read, by contrast, as the epitome of political dignity. In these kinds of analyses, Winnie Mandela is severed from the people, her actions seen as hers alone, bearing no indictment on the political party or the community from which she was previously indivisible. The binary of good mother-bad mother, however, contains Winnie within a narrative of a fallen women rather than understanding her within a political landscape that both shaped her and that she shaped by her words and actions.⁵⁰

Thus, we see that in many ways, women have been at the heart of political struggles on the continent despite history's glossing over their stellar legacies. The tidy narratives that dominate male political legacies work to deliberately gloss over the messy patches.

African women did not just look on as their male counterparts elbowed them out of mainstream spaces where the politics of their continent was being discussed. Frustrated with the lip service that men in the liberation

movements paid to their plight, women established the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO) in 1962.⁵¹ Under the leadership of Guinean politician, Jeanne Martin Cissé, women in the African independent movements organized an All African Women's Conference in Tanganyika.⁵² Hakima Abbas and Amina Mama captured the levels of frustration that African women felt at the time:

[T]he fact that class oppression was often given primacy in the false 'hierarchy of oppressions' points to a level of expediency that may be unsurprising given that nationalist movements predate contemporary understanding of the manner in which multiple vectors of oppression interact, to facilitate colonial divide-and-rule. So while there was no material basis for neglecting to challenge the oppression of women, male domination of Africa's liberation movements commonly foiled women's liberation by treating 'the women question' as divisive. The conservative import of this discourse became evident with the establishment of nation states that re-institutionalised colonial exclusions of women. The new ruling elites unashamedly re-entrench patriarchal power, so leaving it to feminist movements to pursue the liberatory

principles of a Pan-Africanist vision of an Africa that works for all African peoples.⁵³

PAWO worked hard to build cross-nation solidarity among African women. For example, during the anti-apartheid struggle, it connected women in the African National Congress (ANC) to influential women such as Nigeria's Ransome-Kuti.⁵⁴

By the mid-1960s, when most African states had gained formal independence, the Pan-African movement had run out of steam. Its political agenda shifted to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) formed in 1963 by African heads of state. The vision of its proponents was to forge a United States of Africa (USAf). But the mapping of the means and route to transform the continent into USAf had always been fraught with contentions, tensions and contradictions. In fact, the OAU itself was a product of a compromise between conflicting blocs which poisoned the very spirit of Pan-Africanism. On the one hand, there had been the so-called Casablanca bloc led by Kwame Nkrumah which advocated for the immediate formation of the USAf.⁵⁵ Under USAf, countries would immediately surrender their national sovereignty for a Pan-African continental sovereignty. On the other hand, the more moderate Monrovia group which clustered around Léopold Senghor, preferred a gradualist, step-by-step approach to African unity.⁵⁶ These splinters threatened to fragment the continent into warring regions. Hence, from the get go, the OAU was forced to tread the thin

line and delicate ground between the pioneering history of radical and reformist influences. It has caused massive moral and ideological indigestion for the organization. Nevertheless, the formation of the OAU should be considered as one small step forward in the quest for Pan-Africanism.

However, hardly a year into the formation of the OAU, it took ten steps backwards at its first ordinary summit held in Cairo. Ghana tabled a proposal for the establishment of a union government of Africa.⁵⁷ Not only did the summit refer the proposal to the specialized commissions of the organization for further scrutiny (read “kill it”) but it also passed a resolution declaring, “all Member States pledge themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence.”⁵⁸ There is little doubt that the heads of states, whether Casablanca- or Monrovia-leaning, were conflicted by their own internal contradictions of state power, privilege and democratic legitimacy in the era of neocolonialism. Many of the “founding fathers” had become prisoners of the red-carpet trappings and the siren fanfare associated with their presidential office. President Nyerere’s story about a colleague in the aftermath of the second OAU summit held in Accra in October 1965 is telling:

Once you multiply national anthems, national flags and national passports, seats of the United Nations, and individuals

entitled to a 21-gun salute, not to speak of a host of ministers, prime ministers and envoys, you would have a whole army of powerful people with vested interests in keeping Africa balkanized. That was what Nkrumah encountered in 1965. After the failure to establish the union government at the Accra Summit, I heard one head of state express with relief that he was happy to be returning home to his country still head of state. To this day, I cannot tell whether he was serious or joking. But he may well have been serious, because Kwame Nkrumah was very serious and the fear of a number of us to lose our precious status was quite palpable.⁵⁹

Undoubtedly, the dampening effect of the OAU compromise reduced the spirit of Pan-Africanism to mere political rhetoric, with a sole focus on consolidation and not unity. Leaders kept Africa “divided so that they can remain big fishes in the tiny ponds bequeathed to them by colonialism.”⁶⁰ It was becoming increasingly clear that the OAU “Boy’s Club,” dubbed the “Dictator’s Club,” was ever going to deliver pacification, let alone unification of the continent. In an attempt to rejuvenate, streamline and rationalize the OAU and African economic communities for the twenty-first century, it was disbanded in 2002 and rebirthed as the African Union (AU).⁶¹

The OAU may have acquired a new lease on life but its old spirit of state consolidation was carried over to the AU, which on paper supports regional cooperation and seems to have shelved the idea of federal unity. The Abuja Treaty of 1991 which recommended the creation of the African Union, the Pan-African parliament (PAP) and the African Economic Community (AEC) was also meant to be part of the gradual approach towards unity.⁶² The regional economic communities⁶³ are all perceived as an incremental step by those that subscribe to the gradualist Sengor/Nyerere school of thought.⁶⁴ As a matter of fact this is simply regional balkanization and even within those blocs there are tensions which defeat the goals of free movement, political federation and economic growth.

Regional economic cooperation is narrow and limited in its scope as state economies are still based on colonial-era economic policies which do not promote integration. Gambari correctly observed that the shield of non-interference was kept intact: "The AEC Treaty is suffused with provisions which cover matters and subjects hitherto regarded as remaining only within the competence of each sovereign Member State."⁶⁵ So, what the AU basically did was to institutionalize and freeze the ideals of Pan-Africanism.⁶⁶ But today, unionist leaders under the Nkrumah school of thought are few and far between; Libya's late Muammar Gaddafi, for example, advocated for a federated structure of USAf, albeit mostly driven by personal ambitions to become its first president.⁶⁷

At the sixth Pan-African congress held in Dar es Salaam in 1974, women's issues continued to be marginalized, only appearing as tokenistic resolutions whereby the congress pledged, in general terms, "total support to the political struggles for equality undertaken by Black women" and promised "to tackle the problems of the oppression of women thoroughly and profoundly."⁶⁸ The discourse of the OAU's bureaucratic "talking shop" largely continued to ignore the plight of women. Women's rights did not factor anywhere in the Cold War politics that played out at the continental level or in the Anglophone-Francophone alliances that often divided OAU proceedings. Indeed, without the push and pull from national, regional and international women's movements, it is unlikely that the progress in the gender normative framework of the AU would have been realized.⁶⁹ While the regional normative framework is essential, it must be noted that most concrete achievements in terms of equality and gender inclusion seen in various African states of recent have been registered "in spite of" not "because of" the AU.⁷⁰ The Pan-African Women's Organisation (PAWO), which was run by state officials, did not pose a serious challenge to patriarchal power. Indeed, as an arm of the AU—comprising mostly first ladies, female cabinet ministers and other high-ranking officials—PAWO has been largely impotent beyond organizing annual congresses.⁷¹

By 1994, when the seventh congress took place in Uganda, African women were much more organized. They held a pre-

congress meeting to discuss strategies of how to integrate their issues into the congress agenda.⁷² The result was a total of seven workshops at the main congress that dealt in-depth with gender-specific Pan-African issues that were pressing African women.⁷³ Interestingly, at the vanguard of breaking through the traditionally masculinist PAC agenda was the first lady of Uganda, Janet Museveni and other female politicians, who are not the most compelling figures in the pursuit of feminist issues. Grassroots women were invited from across the continent to share their experiences. Zaline Makini Roy-Campbell noted:

Out of the workshop discussions emerged the recognition that African women internationally face similar forms of oppression, so women must organise and build networks internationally that will expose and do away with unjust conditions inflicted upon women. This recognition informed the discussions of the proposal to build a Pan African Women's Liberation Movement. At its conception, the Pan African Women's Liberation Organisation was seen as an umbrella organisation that could oversee and coordinate all issues related to the emancipation of women from all forms of oppression. The necessity for networking and building mutual solidarity

across diversities and barriers was emphasised.⁷⁴

Unlike PAWO, membership of the newly launched Pan-African Women's Liberation Organisation (PAWLO) extended to African women in the diaspora.⁷⁵ The idea was to build local chapters in individual African states to fully engender the Pan-African processes.⁷⁶ However, the fact that PAWLO was a top-down organization, resembling its distant cousin PAWO, made it flawed from the outset.

As we have already seen, the ideal of Pan-Africanism cannot be achieved within the institutionalized framework of state politics. Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, the General-Secretary of the Pan-African secretariat, who led the organizing of the seventh congress, reported the continued guarded attitudes that African governments had towards Pan-Africanism. The congress had to be postponed from December 1993 to April 1994:

Though there was understandable disappointment and demoralization in certain organizing committees, the delay was quickly converted into an opportunity to carry the message to places and people we had not yet reached. The rescheduling also gave us the opportunity to clarify further our objectives to some African governments who were suspicious of the

congress. Some of them had feared that the Congress, because of the prominent participation of opposition activists, was going to be yet another government-bashing event.⁷⁷

Indeed, the majority of government officials stayed away from this important Congress, signaling that nothing had changed from the 1965 OAU summit held in Accra.⁷⁸

Nevertheless, the Seventh PAC, which represented a robust revival of the Pan-African spirit on the continent, historically remains the most vibrant in accommodating the women's agenda. Congress Resolution No.8 on "Women in Pan-Africanism" was quite comprehensive, laying a firm ground for women's future integration in the movement.⁷⁹ But a clear lesson learnt from the Seventh PAC was that Pan-African feminism will not be achieved through workshops or one-off programmes, but through political organization at the level of the *wananchi*. Hence, PAWLO was dead in the water even before it hit the ground.

There is another dimension to the approach to Pan-Africanism via the framework of African states or their regional organizations. The African Union has former colonial and contending world powers to grapple with. Afrocentric unity would, of course, pose a serious threat to imperialists. Therefore, at every turn, they do everything possible to thwart its success. They create alliances with

former colonies, support despots and dictators, foment and instigate insurgencies and unrest and generally maintain sufficient chaos on the continent that allows them to maintain the neocolonial project. A McCarthyist-type surveillance of serious efforts towards a Pan-African federation sweeps across the land and either appropriates or thwarts them. They maintain a presence at critical spaces such as the AU, including the construction of a swanky multi-storied AU headquarters in Addis Ababa by China. Handed over to the AU in 2011, the building is maintained by the Chinese government.⁸⁰ The hegemonic surveillance drive is also maintained by military outfits such as the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) under the guise of anti-terrorism efforts.⁸¹

Another threat to Pan-Africanism lies in the UN-led sustainable development goals (SDGs). Ironically, the only ever elected African female president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who led Liberia between 2006 and 2018, played a significant role in the processes of developing the SDGs as co-chair of the High Level Panel on the post-2015 development agenda.⁸² Nigeria's Amina Mohammed—the current deputy UN Secretary General—was also a lead facilitator of the process.⁸³ The SDGs, which are the epitome of neoliberal strategies to achieve “developmental” goals, do not dovetail with the political economy of Pan-Africanism. For example, adopting the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) framework to finance infrastructure deficits in Africa will not promote the interests of the continent but those of

finance capital. The third international conference on Financing for Development held in Addis Ababa in July 2015, specifically assigned the role of financing SDGs to the private sector.⁸⁴ This involvement of the private sector in public service provision is the latest guise of neoliberal globalization, and does not portend well for Pan-Africanist ideals.⁸⁵

Raising awareness about these issues is key to Africa's survival. It is also imperative for all social movements on the continent. Activist/scholars such as Guyanese Walter Rodney, who taught for several years at the University of Dar es Salaam, were key in providing a clear-sighted pathway to Africa's liberation.⁸⁶ For Rodney, such liberation would not be achieved through a romanticized afrocentricism but rather, through a critical analysis of the continent's political economy.⁸⁷ Pan-Africanism for him needed to move beyond race to class analysis, to be as critical of Western imperialists as with neocolonial domestic exploiters.⁸⁸ His 1972 book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, is a classic exposition of a historical-materialistic analysis of the continent's economies.⁸⁹

During the colonial period, it was impossible for Africa to act as a bloc in its fight against colonialism. So, the pushbacks against colonial forces of power prior to formal independence were atomized, uneven and underpowered. Today, Africa's pushback against globalized neocolonialism is even weaker, thanks to its unviable states that are

commandeered by imperial powers and their African comprador enablers who benefit from the system. Former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere referred to African nations as “mini-states” because they have no substantive presence at the global table of geopolitical influence.⁹⁰ Tajudeen Abdul Raheem elaborates:

Already in most of Africa the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank are in control of major economic decisions with elected parliaments having little or no influence over national budgets and the allocation of resources. How can democratic (constitutional) control be exercised over institutions and corporations that are so influential in our lives yet are unelected and unaccountable? Most African states are not viable and therefore cannot stand in the way of this globalizing roller coaster, but as bigger units regionally and continentally they may be able to manoeuvre politically.⁹¹

Historically, the ideology of nationalism has always been deployed to mobilize popular unity. Pan-Africanism was no different. A fictitious unity of diverse peoples is forged and imagined in the rhetoric of Blackness and imperialist colonization. It is sealed with the rhetoric of symbolic references alluding to an Africa with feminine features and

the life-giving, nurturing qualities of women (e.g., “Mother Africa”). It invokes “natural” love for the nation, similar to what one would supposedly have for one’s mother. But Africa is increasingly experiencing the effects of narrow chauvinistic nationalisms at the expense of continental nationalism. At the core of these “nationalisms” one finds not the disenfranchised masses of Black people but rather, a small circle of mostly elite men who have been “dusted over with colonial culture.”⁹² Needless to say, there is a definitively gendered and patriarchal nature of these nationalisms, typically springing from what Cynthia Enloe describes as, “masculinized memory” and “masculinized hope.”⁹³ Feminist scholars have generally analyzed the problematic of nationalist ideologies, exposing the gender power of patriarchy that informs them.⁹⁴

At the 50th Anniversary AU summit in Addis Ababa on June 28, 2013, Amina Mama addressed the AU heads of states with these cautionary words:

The date tells us our celebrations are due, but the data caution us. I appeal to you to stay alert to the discontents of women, youth, and many millions of marginalized others, inhabiting mining areas, oil drilling areas, our great savannah lands, forests and deserts, coastlands and highlands... Honourable leaders please do not ignore the African Spring, and so imperil the future we seek... I respectfully submit that

the secret of African resilience is something we take so much for granted that we too easily overlook it, and fail to value and cherish those who have thus far sustained us, at our peril. I speak of the quiet power of African women...⁹⁵

The 8th PAC held in Accra in 2015, passed a resolution to strengthen global solidarity and amplify the voice of the Pan-African women's movement. It committed to "Recognizing and appreciating the inherent linkages, inseparability and complementarity between the struggle for women's emancipation and gender justice and the struggle for Africa's liberation and development." Significantly, the Congress resolved to:⁹⁶

1. Commit to addressing structural barriers that keep half of the pan-African constituency subjugated and unable to access freedom, justice and dignity.
2. Commit to the documentation and preservation of women who have made immense contributions to the Pan-African movement and commit to ensuring they form part and parcel of the collective memory and public imagery of dominant/mainstream narratives of pan Africanism.

3. Call to memory and demand the immediate release and rescue of the over 200 girls who were abducted in Chibok, Nigeria close to a year ago and still remain abductees, and to ensure provision of socio-psycho and material support upon their return.
4. Stand in solidarity with and call for the immediate freedom for women and girls and the peoples of Sahrawi Democratic Republic (Western Sahara) from colonization and patriarchy.
5. Call for universal and immediate ratification and implementation of existing gender responsive instruments (Maputo Protocol, Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality Agenda, CEDAW, Beijing+20, 1325, 1820) as well as ensuring accountability for non-compliance as a way to further ideals of pan-Africanism.
6. Commit to strengthen healthcare systems and volunteerism to prevent and effectively respond to crises such as Ebola.
7. Recognizing that we cannot afford to sustain practices that are harmful to the dignity, respect and freedom of women and

girls, including FGM, child/early/forced marriage, widow inheritance, breast ironing, indentured servitude, especially in the Middle East, and thus contrary to ideals of pan-Africanism, we call for their immediate abolishment.

8. Push for equal access to, control over and ownership of Africa's resources (between men and women) – ensure progressive land policies and secure access to land rights for African women.

9. Address all forms of violence against women and girls, the radicalization of violence and sexism in both private and public spheres, religious fundamentalism and extremism that threatens progress and freedom.

10. Address illicit financial flows, ensure tax justice – progressive taxation, remove VAT on essential products and direct these as well as other funds to finance the African women's movement as a means to further the cause of pan-Africanism.

11. Effect a policy on IDPs and their treatment and their human right to dignity.

12. Ensure inter-generational mentoring, exchange and learning takes place; that young women will have a place in discussions, deliberations and decision-making spaces.

13. Reach out to and create linkages with existing structures, networks and platforms including the African Feminist Forum, for greater synergy and impact.

14. Must put to an immediate stop the plunder, not only of mineral resources, but most importantly of human resources, the women and their bodies (DRC).

15. Address the burden of unpaid care work that falls largely on women and girls and has resulted in the large number of women affected by Ebola.

16. Establish as a principle of 50% representation of women in decision-making within 8th Pan African Congress structure (Interim processes, International Planning Committee and Governing Council).

17. Ensure the convening of a women's congress prior to the second phase of the 8th Pan African Congress, and the

resuscitate the women's desk and congress.

18. Define and celebrate the African woman. Her image as defined by the African women, her color, Her Strength, Her Creativity. Alleviate the burden on the African woman. Change the depiction of African women and celebrate the African woman in all her diversity.

19. Support the creation of a reparation fund that is tax free and 60% directed to the status of the African women.

20. Recognize the political rights of women and must be promoted and protected, in terms of attending meetings, voting rights etc.

Some may dismiss the twenty segments of this resolution on African women as merely symbolic on the part of the male-dominated PAC. However, the symbolic value of these comprehensive commitments should not be underestimated. Indeed, women can always return to these resolutions in demanding action and accountability from the Pan-African movement. For example, the reference to sustainable land policies found in part 8 above is extremely important for an agrarian Pan-African continent and resonates with calls such as those by the Pan-African

Programme on Land and Resource Rights (PAPPLR) to regenerate local economies through mass-driven initiatives.⁹⁷ The resolution is certainly a far cry from the generic commitment dished out of the 6th PAC in Dar es Salaam.

The Pan-African movement was given a monumental boost in January 2019 when the AU adopted the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in Africa.⁹⁸ The Protocol envisages that the creation of free movement across a continent with seamless borders will promote economic, social and cultural development on the continent.⁹⁹ The reality is that African *wananchi*, in their day-to-day existence, hardly respect the made-in-Berlin borders; just as global finance capital does not respect borders when exploiting and dominating African states. As Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem observed:

You will see the peasants, petty traders carrying their wares across the boundary on *panyapanya* roads [informal roads] parallel to the formal border roads, while those of us with passports are waiting to cross over on either side in our vehicles. These peasants just carry on as good Pan-Africanists, ignoring the tarred road and officials.¹⁰⁰

What is important to note is that the majority of these informal traders who crisscross borders via *panya* routes

are women.¹⁰¹ Thirty out of the 54 African states signed on to the Protocol and it needs 15 ratifications to come into force. However, the two economic giants on the continent, namely Nigeria and South Africa, have not yet signed up, highlighting the challenges that the continent still faces in transcending narrow nationalistic sentiments. South Africa's reasons for its reservation to sign the Protocol include issues regarding securitization, harmonization of policies and legislation, and a preference for a phased approach to free movement of persons.¹⁰² For Nigeria's part, Gambari expressed his skepticism about the successful implementation of the Protocol, when he observed that, "experience elsewhere, including ECOWAS, has shown that this is a particularly difficult provision to implement as the natural and rational tendency is for Community citizens to migrate from poorer to richer Member States."¹⁰³ Are there lessons for Pan-Africanism to be learned from the millions of "border-blind" African women who engage in cross-border trade around the continent? How can the "panyarization" of Africa be achieved? It will take tremendous political will on the part of those at the helm of power and economic statecraft to achieve this daunting strategic objective of the African Union.

Pan-Africanism in African Feminism

African feminists are extremely wary of the Pan-African strategy that prioritizes the achievement of state power before tackling other oppressive structures. Kwame Nkrumah's famous words, "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all things shall be added onto you" epitomized

this empty promise. The benefit of 20:20 hindsight has allowed feminists to understand that heteropatriarchal-capitalist power is all pervasive and that social inequalities have only increased after half a century of formal independence. Such skepticism was captured by Hakima Abbas and Amina Mama responding to the 2013 AU 50th anniversary rhetoric: “There is a troubling irony in the sudden ‘discovery’ of African women by the AU, multinational corporations and development agencies, half a century after women actively participated in independence struggles and contributed significantly to African liberation movements.”¹⁰⁴

The third UN conference on women which was hosted on African soil in 1985 helped to rally African women into transnational organizing. In the post-Nairobi phase of African feminism, several Pan-African organizations and initiatives took root to ensure that the interests and concerns of African women did not fall by the wayside. Among these was the establishment of the African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) in 1988. A Pan-African non-governmental organization designed to facilitate women’s rights activism across state borders, FEMNET played a crucial role in coordinating the passing of the Protocol to the African Charter on the rights of women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).¹⁰⁵ Founded in 1990, Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) focused on women’s engagement with the law. The African Women Lawyers Association (AWLA) with chapters in

several countries is devoted to pursuing the rights of women and children. The regional network, Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR)—a coalition of over 40 women's organisations around the continent—plays an active role in placing African women's rights firmly on the AU agenda. SOAWR plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the Maputo Protocol is ratified and domesticated around the continent.¹⁰⁶ The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) is a Pan-African women's grant maker at the cutting edge of social justice and women's rights philanthropy on the continent.¹⁰⁷ AWDF has enhanced the capacity of African women's movements and supported their programmes through its innovative grants, making its mark at the AU.¹⁰⁸

The African Feminist Forum (AFF) is a biennial conference that brings together African feminists to strategize on the advancement of women's rights and ensure that the achievements are not rolled back.¹⁰⁹ Other regional organisations and networks actively working on the issue include Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL), African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA) and Women Living under Muslim Law Solidarity Network (WLUML). The Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) is a Pan-African network that was established way back in 1977 undertaking and supporting research, training and advocacy for promoting African women's socio-economic and political rights. Indeed, African feminism has been operating *san frontiers* (without borders) for decades,

constructing bridges across the complexities of cultures, languages, religions, skin tone, educational status and generations.

Despite all these achievements, transformational Pan-African feminism is heavily restricted by a myriad of challenges. Firstly, African feminists, like all social justice activists, are being pushed into an ever-shrinking civil society space where operating safely and legally nationally, let alone transnationally, is becoming much harder. Authoritarian state polities maintain a stranglehold on any work that threatens their socio-political and institutional power. Secondly, is the scarcity of financial resources available for executing the costly Pan-African work in conditions of poor infrastructural facilities such as transportation, communication systems and itinerant power supply. This means that the bulk of this work is dependent on donor funding, which is unreliable, unsustainable and always comes with strings attached.¹¹⁰ Thirdly, are the multiplicity of languages—both indigenous and colonial—which act as fortresses that block African people from linking up with each other. Language politics create barriers between and within countries, between the urban and the rural, the educated and those who are uneducated, among sub-regional enclaves, across cultures and so forth. Finally, any transformative activist agenda requires a great deal of personal sacrifice and voluntarism—attributes that often lead to women’s overload, burnout and adverse mental/physical health outcomes. While all

activists, regardless of gender, face similar challenges, for women juggling feminist engagement, activism (whether frontline or intellectual) and unpaid family/community care under neoliberal pressures stretches the limits of human capacity and endurance. All these problems take a heavy toll on African feminist attempts to build strong and strategic networks and to multiply the impact of their work across the continent.

Despite the challenges, somehow, African women always come out on top and sustain their communities. Feminists may remain invisible in mainstream spaces and discourses but they impact societies. In many ways they are “superwomen” when it comes to creativity and adaptability in all their work. They have seriously been intellectually engaged with Pan-African politics. The journal *Feminist Africa*, launched in the year 2000, devoted two of its issues (numbers 19 and 20) to the topic of Pan-Africanism. Hakima Abbas and Amina Mama reported:

The feminist movements on the African continent are shaped by Pan-Africanist visions, yet they pursue a critical engagement both with the bureaucratic and political structures of the African Union, and with the broad range of political and civil society formations, calling them to account in numerous ways, thus continuing the more progressive possibilities that pan-

Africanism offers Africans in contemporary times.¹¹¹

Pan-African feminist organizing reached its peak in 2006 when AWDF organized the first ever African Feminist Forum (AFF) in Accra, Ghana.¹¹² Significantly, Accra remains the city where the Pan-Africanist political fervor still flows, decades after Nkrumah's demise. Over 200 delegates from all corners of the continent attended this important conference where they adopted the *Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists*. The preamble to the Charter boldly declares:

We define and name ourselves publicly as Feminists because we celebrate our feminist identities and politics. We recognize that the work of fighting for women's rights is deeply political, and the process of naming is political too. Choosing to name ourselves Feminist places us in a clear ideological position. By naming ourselves as Feminists we politicise the struggle for women's rights, we question the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated, and we develop tools for transformatory analysis and action.¹¹³

The Charter has been translated into Kiswahili, Wolof and French.¹¹⁴ Three subsequent AFF convenings have been held

in Uganda (2008), Senegal (2010) and Zimbabwe (2016). The regional forum has created important national spin-offs in various countries around the continent, including Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Senegal, Liberia, Mali and Rwanda. Many other countries have organized related activities at national and sub-regional levels.

African feminists have been shaped by African women's diverse experiences interacting with and within patriarchal structures, systems and social relations. The Preamble to the Charter demonstrates UFF's nuanced understanding of the complexity of patriarchal control:

Patriarchy varies in time and space, meaning that it changes over time, and varies according to class, race, ethnic, religious and global imperial relationships and structures. Furthermore, in the current conjunctures, patriarchy does not simply change according to these factors, but is inter-related with and informs relationships of class, race, ethnic, religious, and global-imperialism. Thus to challenge patriarchy effectively also requires challenging other systems of oppression and exploitation, which frequently mutually support each other.

As we have seen, African women activists have always maintained linkages with African liberation movements. They have also operated transnationally in all spheres of their lives. But, while Pan-African feminism is clear in its political and ideological struggle against patriarchal-capitalist power, it has been quite peripheral to the mainstream Pan-African movement and made little effort to integrate its perspectives into that movement.

African feminism has been influenced by but not based in the Pan-African movement. Much more needs to be done not only to push the feminist agenda into Pan-Africanism, but also to work hand-in-hand with all sectors of grassroots African civil society and *wananchi* to resuscitate the limping Pan-African movement. Feminist intellectuals have a duty to create a knowledge base that will inform a transformational Pan-African movement. Research organizations such as AAWORD and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) present significant Pan-Africanist opportunities for deepening transdisciplinary research and networking. Such efforts would foster a critical convergence of the two movements. Studies on these issues need to adopt a multi-dimensional approach to Pan-Africanism beyond the economistic one that dominates current efforts.¹¹⁵ The aim should be to re-articulate and reinstitute the disrupted space of Pan-Africanism in this era of neoliberal globalization with the feminist principles of inclusivity, community, dialogue, social equity and accountability.

An example of the route such struggles should take can be found in a critical review of the Renaissance Monument unveiled in Dakar, Senegal in April 2010 by then-President Abdoulaye Wade. As if in a conscious effort to will Africa's rebirth into existence, "Le Monument de la Renaissance Africaine" was unveiled in a ceremony coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the country's formal independence from French colonial rule. Standing 49 metres high, the gigantic bronze monument is the tallest statute on the continent and cost a total of USD 27 million. The statue depicts three figures—a man, a woman, and a child—emerging triumphantly from the interior of a jagged volcano (see figure 1 below).

Atlas Obscura described the monument as "a towering piece of brutal Stalinist machismo."¹¹⁶ To demonstrate the emptiness of Pan-African consciousness and vision that undergird this symbolism, the monument was designed and constructed by non-Africans. To top it all, President Wade laid claim to monetary royalties from the tourist earnings generated therefrom.¹¹⁷ This is despite the fact that: he conceived of the idea in his capacity as the state president; the land on which it is erected is public land; and the funds that constructed it were taxpayers' money.¹¹⁸ But most disturbing about the monument and its resignification of Africa is its reproduction of colonial discourses about African women's bodies and sexuality.

Figure 1



In her compelling feminist analysis of the monument, Ayo Coly reveals at least three broad contexts that the half-naked female body invokes for Pan-Africanism. First of all, it re-enacts the colonial trope of the sexually promiscuous, shameless and over-sexed Black woman. The public gaze that the scantily dressed female body is reminiscent of the privileges of the empire and the savage imagery of the natives. Coly notes:

As a colonial gesture and discursive production, the unclothed African female body aligns with the 'unclean' African body and the 'unwell' African body in simultaneously constructing a body in need

of intervention and legitimising the colonisation of African bodies. The seminal gesture of unclothing the female body made possible the subsequent gesture of clothing, both colonial gestures seizing the African female body to denote Africa's proximity with civilisation, morality and normalcy... Indeed, clothing the African female body became a justificatory metaphor for the colonial project of reforming Africans.¹¹⁹

Secondly, the female body in the monument serves as an index for globalization:

In light of the narratives about the gender politics of Moslem societies..., unclothing the African Moslem female body or exposed African Moslem female flesh convert into ideological, political and cultural currency on the global stage. If the monument, in the words of the Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, represents the new Africa, the unclothed female body serves as a rhetorical trope for that new Africa. The spectacle of the unclothed female body for the global stage performs a 'palatable' Islam and modern Africa by projecting the image of an emancipated

womanhood. The liberation theme is compounded by the fact that the woman is unburdened. She is carrying nothing, not even her child.¹²⁰

And finally, her body is used as a symbol of male-led liberation of African women:

Ultimately the unclothed female body is a rhetorical accessory of modern African masculinity. The unclothed and unburdened female body speaks to and serves to showcase an emancipated African manhood. Hence the gesture of carrying the baby is carefully chosen to project a man who liberates his mate from the burden of motherhood. In other words, the nation, meaning postcolonial men, has liberated its women. Men take credit for the liberation of women. But that gesture of liberation falls short as the baby is carried as a prize, as an achievement, a symbol of masculine virility. The position of the three figures also undermines the projected message of female liberation and emancipated manhood. The man has a central place in the visual narrative. He leads the action and is the exclusive head of his modern Western-style nuclear household.¹²¹

Coly clearly shows how, through this monumental landscape, the deep-seated colonial and patriarchal stereotypes are reinforced, symbolically pervading the *mindscape*s of all those partaking of its massiveness. Indeed, the Renaissance Monument stands like a gigantic facet of the hegemonic discourses of masculine neoliberal globalization, spitting in the face of the struggle for a genuinely progressive and feminist African future.¹²²

Developing a New Pan-Africanism in the Era of Globalization

When Pan-Africanism was first conceived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the phenomenon of globalization as we currently know it had not taken root. What does neoliberal globalization portend for Africa's desire for continental unity? Can an African renaissance come to pass against the backdrop of Western socio-economic and cultural universalization? Is a postcolonial state-based struggle for Pan-Africanism even viable? We all know that the sovereignty and power of states around the world have been greatly undermined by the forces of globalization. This negative development can actually have some positive outcomes for Africa. In the first instance, it cracks open the door of optimism by having the potential to strategically coalesce the weakened states in order to galvanize for a federated Africa. Secondly, globalization has reawakened the anti-imperialist consciousness around the world manifested in the anti-capitalist movements against the World Trade Organization and the G-7.¹²³ There is

considerable global disillusion with the results of the neoliberal machinations which have characterized the first two decades of the 21st century. Africa can take advantage of the crisis faced by capitalism and act towards Afrocentric self-determination.

On the negative side, however, neoliberal globalization has flung open the doors for new avenues of exploitation that undermine the Pan-Africanist agenda. Today, the “globally hegemonic neoliberal discourse dominates African economic policies.”¹²⁴ Moreover, unconscionable colonial pacts that were signed as pre-conditions to flag independence are still intact today, maintaining the lopsided colonial politico-economic relations and further complicating the extrication process.¹²⁵ Most significant is the agreement signed between France and twelve of its former colonies plus Guinea-Bissau and Equatorial Guinea, which turned the latter into the *chasse gardée* (private hunting ground) of their former colonial master.¹²⁶

According to Wadada Nabudere, Africa is trying to reimagine and reinvent itself in the twenty-first century through the concept of the African renaissance.¹²⁷ But to be successful such renaissance must be rooted in African cultures. In other words, the same anti-imperialist struggles that Africans exhibited against colonial acculturation processes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries should be reignited to engender African nationalism. Not to be mistaken for a tribalist, Nabudere explains:

Culture and ethnicity are constructed differently by the different social classes on the continent. The African elites utilize ethnicity in form of neotribalism and neo-traditionalism to maintain their power in the post-colonial, neocolonial states. On the other hand, the African people have utilized ethnicity and cultural revivalism to survive the effects of modernization and globalization in the form of post-traditionalism. Thus in the emergence of the African renaissance, the same phenomenon can be observed.¹²⁸

He expounds further on the nexus between African renaissance and Pan-Africanism:

In our view, a true understanding of the origins of African reawakening and rebirth leading to freedom and liberation must be traced to its source in the enslavement of the African people who were taken to the “New World”. They now constitute the African diaspora. The awakening has also to be traced to the colonization of the African people on the African continent itself as well as their resistance to both those two “moments”. These two struggles is [sic] what produced the concept Pan-

Africanism which enabled mobilization of the people on the continent in the liberation of South Africa and the rest of the continent.¹²⁹

The cultural revivalism that would act as a catalyst to Africa's renaissance would have to re-center African languages.¹³⁰ However, scholars like Issa Shivji are not impressed with the idea of an African renaissance. He argues that Africans need to rise above the rhetoric of renaissance and recognize what is really at stake, pointing out that:

Soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall imperialism mounted a frontal ideological attack on third world nationalism. Whatever was left of African nationalism, even of its territorial variety, was discredited, if not destroyed, in the rhetoric of globalization... SAPs moved from the realm of economics to politics, from policy to ideology, from adjusting our economies to accommodating theirs. Masses, who we once said were the prime subject of history, became the object of poverty reduction strategy papers or PRSPs. Country SAPs combined with PRSPs and became the continental NEPAD (New Partnership for African Development). Forward looking African nationalism, which traced its

genesis to Pan-Africanism, was displaced by the African Renaissance, a spurious echo of European history.¹³¹

Indeed, the language of “African renaissance” has been appropriated and propagated by Western imperialists. The IMF, for instance, has suggested initiatives that will lead to an Africa’s renaissance. These include, *inter alia*, international partnerships:

[I]t goes without saying that Africa cannot take on these huge tasks alone. The IMF can help—and is helping—through advice and technical assistance designed to strengthen administrative capacity and institutions. Furthermore, I am pleased to note that the IMF has put the ESAF, our concessional lending facility, on a permanent footing, so that it can continue to support the reform efforts in low-income countries, especially in Africa. Let us now reflect on the role for Africa’s other international partners. *This is a role that is both important and significant to continuing the African renaissance.* In addition to extending concessional financing, Africa’s partners must provide appropriate and targeted technical assistance, and assist in the transfer of the

necessary technical and managerial skills.¹³² [emphasis supplied]

Hence, according to the IMF Deputy Director, Africa is already on the renaissance path. African analysts of political economy have convincingly demonstrated how the continent's relations with the multilaterals have only entrenched conditions of dependency and underdevelopment.¹³³ The Bretton Woods institutions also welcomed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) launched in 2001 as Africa's blueprint for accelerating its rebirth.¹³⁴ NEPAD's neoliberal orientation has been heavily criticized by several regional think tanks such as the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) and the Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI).¹³⁵ These multilateral institutions are expert sites for "naturalizing" neoliberal ideologies. Instead of offering tools to develop a new ideological and political agenda for Pan-Africanism, IMF's counsel simply reinforces the neoliberal status quo. Instead of delivering African people from the legacy of colonialism, it sinks them deeper into colonial structures. If we are to extricate ourselves from neocolonial bondage, we must heed Samir Amin's call for new anti-capitalist imaginaries that would end imperialist monopolies in Africa.¹³⁶ In this quest, Africa must build more egalitarian alliances with other regions in the global south.

The Pan-African movement and the African feminist movement need to find a nexus between their agendas. Each movement has lessons for the other. Feminists have transcended imposed state borders to reach out to various women across the continent. Their organization and mobilization has focused on African women and not African states. The Pan-African movement on the other hand has largely been driven by state leadership which is mostly made up of compradors who have the currency to maintain centres of power or, as Catherine Boone argues, “who passively collect ‘rents’ generated by foreign capital and the state.”¹³⁷ Pan-Africanism needs to be driven by non-state actors, particularly the *wananchi*. The bourgeoisie running the states have the least to gain from the continent’s unity, while African *wananchi* have everything to benefit from it.

Conclusion

At the end of the day, the spirit of Pan-Africanism was broken by two major fault systems. The first was that which gave birth to Africa’s fragmentation in the nineteenth century, namely, colonialism. The myth of “postcolonial states” must be debunked as Africa continues to live under the same “colonial power matrix” that it was subjected to prior to flag independence.¹³⁸ It is not in the interest of Western imperialist powers for Africa to transform into a strategic bloc and augment its position on the global politico-economic stage. Therefore, they will do everything within their power, directly and indirectly, to sabotage any such efforts. Africa’s counterweight to this reality must

commence with a mental and intellectual rapture of its people. Like Nabudere, Ama Biney points out that it would necessitate:

[A] cultural, psychological and intellectual revolution in thought, vision, values and action that seeks to awaken a comatose African people from the deep-seated impact of enslavement, colonization and neo-colonialism disconnecting African people and continues to alienate them from their historical memory and potential.¹³⁹

Ikaweba Buting also observes correctly that, “The absence of functional Pan Africanist institutions and Pan African political culture has left a vacuum that has been filled with a potpourri of ideas formulated under the rubric of Pan Africanism. What materializes is an amalgam of values, notions, ideas and dogma that are perplexing or contradictory to Pan Africanist purpose and ideology.”¹⁴⁰ Africa must move away from Western models of liberalism that (mis)inform its governance, laws, human rights, development and intellectualism.

The second fault line that Africa must address in order to revive the Casablanca spirit of Pan-Africanism is the scourge of patriarchal domination which pervades Africa’s political landscape. Since independence, the continent has largely been led by unethical patriarchs who have ruled

autocratically, *à la* Machiavelli. Prior to colonization, Africa's version of patriarchy was what Deniz Kandioti describes as "negotiable patriarchy," juxtaposing it with the "classic patriarchy" introduced from the imperial metropolises.¹⁴¹ Under negotiable patriarchies, African women's forms of subordination left immense flexibility and "wobble-room" for slippages, subjectivities, deviations and dialogue. Today, the kind of patriarchy we are fighting is borne out of the Western hegemonic worldview that constructs the generic human subject as male. Its institutions and ideologies are male-dominated, pushing more than half of the continent's population into the margins of social existence. The decolonial turn away from colonial constitutive politics, towards Pan-Africanism must reject patriarchal structures of domination and discrimination. We must develop governance structures that are rooted in pluralism and socio-economic justice, for the greater good of the continent.

So it is quite clear that the ideal for Pan-Africanism cannot be achieved by postcolonial heads of states. The contradictions of nation state formation in countries that were moulded by colonial powers for their own interests spill over into any attempts to achieve continental unity. Such contradictions and their ensuing fragilities have been clearly demonstrated by the highly fraught examples of the United Republic of Tanzania (the only surviving example of a political association of African sovereign states) and Nigeria's Biafra secessionist movement.¹⁴² Neither will continental nationalism be achieved by the elite politicians,

bureaucrats and academics who have vested interests in maintaining the status quo. In this era of even sharper inward-directed nationalism, the journey to USAf is fraught with many pitfalls. Our only hope lies with the *wananchi* of Africa. The oppressed masses that suffer the worst depredation of capitalist imperialism—workers, women, the youth and the impoverished. Only a people-based struggle will get us there. Africa's *wananchi* need to create horizontal cooperation with all the world's dominated, a people-to-people movement that counteracts global domination. Ajamu Nangwaya put it plainly: "A Pan-Africanism of liberation should be based on the labouring classes as its principal constituency and, as such, must be an anti-capitalist, feminist, anti-imperialist and anti-racist movement."¹⁴³

Coupled with the organized intellectual assault against the divisions which abound on the continent, a pro-people struggle for Pan-Africanism must be backed up with a solid ideological, political and organizational foundation. As Shivji argues:

It must be a political ideology, not a developmentalist programme. It must provide a vision, not simply set out a goal. It must inspire and mobilise. While African unity is undoubtedly the rallying cry it must unite us to struggle and inspire us to struggle to unite.¹⁴⁴

The uniting ideology must be anti-imperialist, anti-patriarchal and anti-militarist. It must jealously safeguard the interests of those who suffer from intersectional oppression on the basis of their gender, social status, ethnic and cultural origin, sexuality, disability, age and other grounds. The global Pan-African struggle should tap into existing Pan-African initiatives to build a united, integrated and progressive USAf. Despite all the challenges, the spirit of Pan-Africanism is still alive both on the continent and in the diaspora which provides a firm basis for rebuilding the movement. Finally, the Pan-African ideology should reject all intra-continental imperialism and hegemony. The decolonization agenda is closely bound up with the Pan-African one. Therefore, if Africa is ever going to realize its decolonizing vision, it must consciously revitalize Pan-African nationalism outside state structures and mainstream institutions. A Pan-African movement divorced from statecraft and patriarchal politics. Only then would Africa breathe life into the symbolic date of May 25 –African Liberation Day.

* This lecture was delivered on September 25, 2019. It is based on a chapter from the author's forthcoming book, *Decolonizing and Reconstructing Africa: An Afro-Feminist-Legal Critique* (2020).

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- ¹⁰ Jennifer Boittin, "In Black and White" Note 8 at p. 120.
- ¹¹ T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Femme Négritude*, Note 5.
- ¹² T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, "Femme Négritude, Note 5 at p. 13.
- ¹³ Quoted in Sharpley-Whiting, *ibid.* at p. 8, 14.
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APPENDIX: LIST OF KAVAZI PUBLICATIONS

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

1. Mashairi Teule ya Mwalimu Nyerere: Kunakucha Kulichele na Kulala Kukomele - Mwl.J.K. Nyerere (2015).
2. Uanazuoni wa Mwalimu Nyerere-Saida Yahya-Othman na Bashiru Ally(2015).
3. Insha Tatu za Kifalsafa-Julius .K.Nyerere. (2016).
4. Ghettoisation of Basic research in Higher Education- Chachage Seithy L.Chachage (2016).
5. Azimio la Arusha Majibu kwa Maswali (Maswali yalioulizwa na Wabunge katika kikao cha Aprili 1967

NYERERE DIALOGUE LECTURES

6. Mwalimu Nyerere: Pan African Nationalist or Nationalist Pan African? (Nyerere Dialogue Lecture II,2015)
7. Higher Learning Education and Africa's Development Agenda-Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (Nyerere Dialogue Lecture III, 2016).
8. Capitalism, Socialism and Petty Production-Prabhat Patnaik(Nyerere Dialogue Lecture V, 2016).
9. Toward Feminist Pan-Africanism and Pan-African Feminism, Prof. Sylvia Tamale Nyerere Dialogue Lecture VI, 2019).

SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS

10. Simulizi za Azimio la Arusha - Bashiru Ally na Issa Shivji (2017)
11. Barua kwa Mpenzi wangu Azimio- Issa Shivji (2017)
12. The Arusha Declaration and Tanu's Policy of Self-Reliance (2018)

KUTOKA KAVAZINI SERIES

13. Tukate Mirija ya Unyonyaji (Hotuba ya Mwalimu Nyerere akipendekeza azimio la arusha kwa wajumbe wa Halmashauri Kuu ya Taifa ya TANU,26 Januari 1967. (2017)
14. Uchumi wa Viwanda na Uchumi wa Kitaifa:Dhana,Maana na Uzoefu wetu. (2018)
15. Mazungumzo na Kingunge wa Itikadi ya Ujamaa: Kingunge Ngombale Mwiru. (2019)