

Joseph Stiglitz in his book titled, “Globalization and Its Discontents” focused on the devastating effect that globalisation can have on developing countries especially the poor within those countries. Stiglitz asserts that imbalances in contemporary international trades and power relations are responsible for the backwardness of poor countries especially Africa and Asia. He however, observes that a balanced international trade and power relations have the potential to enrich everyone in the world, particularly the poor. He concludes by contending that the application of the principles of globalisation has to be reconsidered in order to benefit the rest of the world.

From the literature reviewed, it is clear that researchers and experts often attribute the difficulties of African development to long history of western capitalist accumulation and self-interested exploitation of Africans and their resources, imbalance of contemporary power relations, primitive accumulation of the commonwealth by African elite and misrule by their leaders, and of course the misapplication of the principles of globalization among others. Unfortunately, these scholars have obviously ignored the significant impact of African women in the entire development process thus their overbearing oppression and discrimination is so often neglected or overlooked. Para-Mallam (2010:24) Corroborates this points that, “Masculinity – notably hegemonic masculinity remained largely unproblematized in the leadership literature. This is quite remarkable given the volume of empirical evidence in sociological research linking masculinity to certain patterns of anti-social behavior.”

Furthermore, studies such as the survey by Agbaje et al. cited Para-Mallam demonstrate different leadership style of male and female with implications for organizational culture and policy with reference to Nigeria. The study, from the opinions of the sample population, attributed male leadership as courageous, foresighted, fearless, energetic, and powerful, and female leadership as

exemplifying humility, honesty, passion, sympathy, and zealousness. In spite of the latter qualities, 61% of the survey respondents (consisting of 64% male and 34% female, indicated a preference for male leadership, which the report concluded was because, Nigeria is a male dominated society, people are socialized to believe that leadership belongs to male (Agbaje et al. 2003:18) in (Para-Mallam 2010:24).

This is of course one of the key factors responsible for the backwardness of African development. Therefore, the thesis of this paper advances that overcoming the oppression and discrimination against women and consequently, their involvement in the entire development process is a panacea to development in the 21st Century Africa.

Thomas Isidore Noël Sankara and Early Beginning

Born in December 1949 in Yako, a town north of Burkina Faso, Sankara was an ordinary child like every other in his younger days. His sense of right and wrong and hatred for injustice right from when he was young was what made him distinct. These virtues were inculcated in him by an attentive mother, who worked so diligently to promote strong moral and ethical code in her children, with modesty and humility high on her list (Pondi 2016) in (Murrey 2018:8). She urged her children to be proud of themselves and strive to become the best at what trade they chose to do (Pondi 2016) cited (Murrey 2018:8). His family home was characterized by the “‘normalised rural poverty’ of people in the villages and towns of the Sahel” (Benamrane 2016:17) cited (Amber 2018:8). Thus his lifestyle was depicting of a simple personality. He attended primary school in Gaoua (Benamrane 2016:17) in (Murrey 2018:8). His parents wanted him to be a priest but he opted instead and joined the military. Hence, in 1966 Sankara entered military school. He proceeded for Officers training in the Madagascar in early 1970s (at the age of 20), where he

witnessed a popular uprising of students and workers that ended by toppling the government. He also witnessed a form of revolution in the Cameroon. Thus whenever there was something that reconciled with his personality and conviction, he took that on board (Murrey 2012:3).

Pathfinder reports that Upper Volta, as formerly called, a former French colony had a population of more than seven million, and was one of West Africa's poorest countries at the time of the popular uprising on August 4, 1983 (Pathfinder 2007:15-16). Further statistics according to *Pathfinder* reveal that the country then had the world's highest infant mortality rate of 280 deaths for every 1,000 births. Attendance in School was around 12% and was even lower for girls. Challenged by this state of underdevelopment, Sankara, having been greatly influenced by the uprising he witnessed in Madagascar and the Cameroon as pointed earlier, he returned to Upper Volta. At this time, he had developed a radical anti-imperialist worldview, and had strong respect for the power of the grassroots. This put him at great controversy with the ruling party of Upper Volta, which resulted to his imprisonment in 1983 (Pathfinder 2007:15-16).

On August 4th, 1983, Blaise Compaoré and some 250 soldiers mobilized the people in mass to protest Sankara's arrest and eventually secured his freedom (Pathfinder 2007:8). Then, Sankara took over as President at the age of 33. He formed the National Council for the Revolution (NCR) in order to roll out his policy plan. A year later the people of Upper Volta embraced a new national name called Burkina Faso, meaning the land of upright men (Murrey 2012:3; Pathfinder 2007:15). He reigned from 1983-1987 and was among the most vocal anti-imperialists of the late twentieth century. His life and political ideology have remained significant in inspiring anti-imperial and Pan-African youth activism and resistance across Africa and beyond Murrey (2012:1). He was assassinated on October 15, 1987 in the belief that it could extinguish the exemplary life he set for African youth and progressive forces (Dembele 2009:1).

Feminist Ideology of Sankara and Oppression of African Women

This paper analyses the feminist ideas of Thomas Sankara - his resistant struggle to overcome discrimination against women, which he considered crucial to achieving African development. The thesis of this paper is that women's rights struggle is not synonymous with efforts to incorporate them within the patriarchal system(s) they totally reject. Hence, Naomi Wolf's "Power Feminism" encourages women to seek empowerment from the perspective of strength, will help to understand Sankara's feminist thinking which opines that women empowerment is not just a women's emancipation discourse but rather efforts of overcoming all manifestations of patriarchal subordination of African women.

Africans, regardless of gender difference are struggling to survive, and in some cases prosper within those constraints that global capitalism has imposed on their societies. But women typically face more disadvantages and exploitation because the global capitalist system is patriarchal in nature. Consequently, the patriarchal narrative, that gives men undue privilege, has continued to dominate African societies from the family level up to the state. In addition to this malaise are forms of patriarchy from Western nations that dominate, globally Nkenkana (2015:5). For instance, Nkenkana (2015:11) observes that Western ideas about the sexual division of labour and gender relations are being introduced in Africa. Corroborating this assertion, Sankara notes that the patriarchal system that challenges the future that limits the true liberation of women, is enshrined in the global power structure in which African future is generally entrapped (Nkenkana 2015:4). Having displayed profound understanding and active solidarity with women's struggles, Sankara understood it as struggle belonging to all humanity (Murrey 2012:4). He identified the following as the root cause of women oppression in Africa:

European colonialism and unequal social relations of capitalism and capital exploitation, and emphasized the significance of equal mobilization for women. He mobilized Burkinabé women into revolutionary action as respected, equal partners in the revolution for the wellbeing of the nation (Murrey 2012:4).

Jean-Pierre Pondi (2016) in Murrey Amber attests that the attention Sankara paid to gender justice could be linked to his strong and early relationship with and respect for his mother and older sister, Marie. His older sister, Marie had contracted meningitis in her younger days and never fully recovered. When his father beat and ridiculed Marie, attributing her disability to 'stubbornness', Sankara, by the age of eleven became greatly annoyed and would not engage with his father for periods of time (Murrey 2018:8). With this ugly picture in mind, Sankara understood that the struggle to uninstall the corrupt patriarchal operating system, installed in African men right from birth required radical approach. In other words, for African men to continue to operate within the patriarchal power structure, the continent stands the risk of reproducing the same future it tries to address as far as gender transformation is concerned (Nkenkana 2015:4).

Hence, the patriarchal system and its corresponding global power structure must to be eradicated so that Africa will experience transformative development. Corroborating this point, Sankara asserts that to understand patriarchy and its corresponding systems is to first comprehend the logic and philosophy surrounding them (Nkenkana 2015:4).

He questions the African society where men have dominated women and challenged that jobs be given to the women. This corroborates his belief that women must be given the means to earn honest and decent living. He became one of the first head of states in the world to promote

women's rights and fought to get rid of all feudal practices (Dembele 2009:1). He challenged the traditional education system that gave undue privilege status to male child over the female child, especially at school when girls are pregnant, the school expels them but nobody wants to find out if the partner responsible for the pregnancy is by any chance in the same class or not. And even if he is, no penalty is mated on him. Thus this encourages the boys to provoke as many pregnancies as they want. They can start having kids up until they get to grade six (6). But girls, once they are pregnant, they are expelled from school.

Therefore, Sankara implemented policies that raised the rights of women and their dignity as human beings in Burkina Faso's traditional society. In achieving this, he condemned practices such as; forced marriages, excision, and the all-powerful mentality of men over their families. This is a demonstration of the indispensable space of women in African society.

African Development and the Involvement of Women

Condoleezza Rice, former US Secretary of State contents that it often takes the effort of one woman to make a difference. If that woman is empowered with information, training, or microloan, she can lift up her entire family and contribute to the progress of her community. Furthermore, if the impact of that woman is multiplied by a hundred or a thousand, and perhaps a million lives can change (Ernst and Young 2011:7)

The population of women in Africa is over 50% but their systemic under-representation is unprecedented (Ernst and Young 2011:7). This must be addressed if Africa is to leverage fully on the potential that this population holds. Although, much of the economic contributions of African women are in the informal sector, it is nonetheless considerable. In *Lions on the Move: The Progress and Potential of African Economies* (McKinsey and Company, 2010) cited Ernst

and Young (2011:7), it is estimated that in Africa, 70% of the informal economy is controlled by women. Corroborating this assertion, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization confirms that African women are responsible for 70% of crop production, 50% of animal husbandry and 60% of marketing. Nearly 100% of food processing activities are undertaken by women, in addition to child care and other responsibilities in households (Ernst and Young 2011:7).

The Africa Gender Equality Index (2015:17) has observed that among the effective ways of promoting development is to invest in women and girls. Buttressing this assertion furthermore, a long recognized assertion maintains that investing in the human development of women, particularly the education of girls, yields a dual dividend: It improves the quality of life of women and enable them to be more productive members of society. It also enables them to promote human development in both their families and respective communities. James (1999:3-6) in Makokha (2014:111) corroborates that the measure of a nation's development is the treatment of women. The improvement of their children's welfare and life opportunities has a multiplier effect that extends to future generations. Conversely, social problems that disproportionately affect women, such as high maternal mortality and violence against women, destroy human capital. Hence, with illiteracy among women, poor health and little control over their fertility, and their children will have to pay the price. These of course are not just women's issues; they are the bottlenecks to African development (*Africa Gender Equality Index 2015:17*).

African women are significant contributors to African growth story (Ernst and Young 2011:7). Hence, creating opportunities for women to participate in the economy will improve their earning potential, reduce poverty at the family level and contribute to the nation's development. Therefore, Sankara's feminist revolutionary foundation was situated within the scope of "power feminist" thinking. He understood clearly that if Africa must deliver on its development agenda,

women must not be alienated but have equal participatory space in the entire development process. Also, it should be considered as a well-deserved opportunity for women to contribute to nation building in equal status with the men.

Conclusion

African women have rarely been given audience to voice out or to be listened to. This implies that the entire African development process that yarns for a better Africa rarely includes the opinions of women. It is therefore, pertinent to assert that the fundamental problem that provides the blurred future of African development is precisely its inheritance of the system that is repressive to women. Consequently, it is emphatically obvious that the future of African development remains bleak should there be no deliberate action to abolish the age long discriminatory system. Only deliberate and radical change of this social configuration that dominates and discriminates against women will promote development in Africa.

Recommendations

The problem of patriarchal domination can be solved by the men resorting to treat women as their counterparts, and not as second class citizens, both in domestic and formal settings. The already mentally colonized women should also decolonize their mindsets, and support the twenty first century African woman in the struggle to gain freedom because a liberated woman is commensurate with a more productive African society. For she will perfectly bridge the gap currently experienced in African leadership, dominated by African men that predisposes the continent to a retrogressive state.

Hence, in this 21st Century, as a matter of deliberate arrangement, African leaders must bridge the unequal gender gap and provide equal opportunity for participation in the entire development

process across. Giving this space, women will be able to speak out, to save themselves and prepare a viable future for their children. Makokha observes that this will arrest the vicious cycle of suffering, poverty and oppression that is the lot of majority of the African people (Makokha 2014:111).

The continent's economic space should encourage full participation of women. This will increase the GDP, promote good governance within political structures and improve performance as a result of organizational leadership within in the continent. At the community and family levels, the benefits are: improved nutrition and health, the intergenerational effect on education within a family, and supportive communities among women. Hence, creating opportunities that will foster the full participation of women is a potential contributor to the future growth and development of Africa. It marks the beginning of the move away from poverty (Ernst and Young 2011:25).

Basic infrastructure development will make the difference to those women who are the breadwinners of their family. Access to micro-finance, education, support, and resources, will encourage entrepreneurial women to grow their own businesses rather than developing a subsistence approach to life. Likewise, creating opportunities within organizations to retain vital and essential qualifications from the continent's educated female workforce like providing leadership opportunities and work/life balance flexibility will help to build tomorrow's role models (Ernst and Young 2011:25).

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