

Land, Gender and Ethnicity: A Feminist Critique of Land Distribution and Identity in Uganda?

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ABSTRACT

In many African states, such as, Uganda, access to and control over land are a deeply politicized and gendered issue. This paper explores the historical and structural forces that have shaped this reality. In the contemporary context, it is “who you are” that determines whether you have access to and control of land. Why? Because Land distribution today is structured around identity markers such as gender, ethnicity and tribe, religion. Class and age too especially regarding financial ability to acquire land given its exposure to market forces, although these are not the focus of the paper. Rights to land in Africa stem from many different sources, such as first settlement, conquest, allocation by government, long occupation or market transaction (Toulmin 2009). This paper employs feminist historical materialism as both method and lens to trace how colonialism, capitalism and state power jointly structure exclusion of control over land. The approach foregrounds material conditions through narratives relating to land tenure, birth and inheritance systems and how these intersect with gender and ethnicity to reproduce inequality. Addressing gender inequality in land access requires decolonial framework and thinking that centres social justice, privileges and prioritizes access over exclusion and emphasizes collectivity over individualism.

Colonial Legacies and Gendered Politics of Land

The advent of colonialism coupled with the introduction of capitalism played a pivotal role in constructing exclusionary identities, particularly in determining access and control over land. The colonial legacy of land distribution in Uganda is foundational to understanding gendered exclusions. Colonialism institutionalized social and economic hierarchies, effectively creating a divide between the landlords/“the haves” and the “have-nots” through the establishment of the Mailo land system. The Mailo Land system is an outcome of the signing of the 1900 Buganda Agreement between the British colonial administration and the Buganda Kingdom, represented by the Kabaka’s regents led by Sir Apollo Kagga and other selected chiefs. This agreement was a major legal mark for land redistribution based on gender, social status, and individualistic motif. The control of land shifted to individual ownership with the creation of the Mailo land system, which crystallized a gendered form of landholding. The vast majority of the land allocations in the 1900 Buganda Agreement were granted to men, with notable exceptions of the official grants to Lubuga (Kabaka’s elder sister) and Namasole (the Queen mother), both significant female figures in the Buganda Kingdom. Women as a result were largely excluded from formal land ownership, subjected instead to domestic roles and subordination with fewer rights to land, which is a tool of power, economic prowess, and industriousness. Land as a link to power, economic agency, and productivity became a domain of male privilege. The agreement entrenched patriarchal control by granting Mailo titles almost exclusively to men. Contemporary legal frameworks are still struggling to reverse this constructed gendered political economy, thus highlighting the enduring impact of colonial systems.

Women’s experiences have been a critical vantage point for theorizing and explaining circumstances that are lived in the day-to-day. Many lived experiences are a social construction and remain in materialism, which is a major critique by scholars like Ossome, who problematize the materialist orientation of certain feminist frameworks. Materialism has limitations that remain within the day-to-day activities, the lived experiences, and what Ossome terms “acts.” In this essay, I use a feminist historical materialist methodology to explain the structural influences of colonialism and the state on the deprivation and exclusion of women from land ownership. I draw on the famous phrase originally articulated by Carol Hanisch and later echoed by several scholars like Audre Lorde that “The personal is political,” to emphasize that everyday experiences are essential to informing knowledge production.

Addressing the gendered politics of land ownership in Uganda requires a decolonial feminist lens, as the issue is deeply rooted in colonial legacies that continue to shape social and political institutions. Why does women's exclusion from land ownership persist? I argue for the need to decolonize through the deconstruction of gender binaries and identities that perpetuate exclusion. This should be accompanied by the embrace of a feminist political approach that envisions a neutral society that prioritizes communal well-being, human dignity, and social justice for all citizens over identity-based hierarchies. Land, as a critical resource, should be accessible for all, and women ought not to be marginalized from matters concerning land. Amadiume (1987) argues that the notion of gender as understood through a Western binary framework did not exist in many African societies prior to colonial interference. Rather, colonialism imposed the dichotomized understanding of sexual difference. Systems of power and land access were not inherently masculinized or feminized, revealing the imposition of gender constructs as a disruptive force in African sociopolitical organization.

Everybody is born as human being into the world which then starts to mould and define this human being. Everyone is equal and is born as a creature of God, in a state of neutrality, neither man nor woman, but simply God's creature.^[1] Social construction has evolved all over the world and in Africa, the precolonial society order is marked different from the colonial and post-colonial order. Most precolonial African societies were fluid with "self-determination as a value for adults, male and female"^[2] In the contemporary era, binaries have become dominant and the traits of the bifurcated state stand out. Today's society is marred with fixation and traditions that privileges patriarchy. The Social construction of identity begins at birth. What was once neutrally exclaimed as "a child is born!" has turned to affirmations and preconceived identities of: "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" . It's a he/she! from the moment one conceives some begins to wonder whether the unborn child will be of their "desired" sex. The ritual announcement at birth instantly transforms an "it" into a "he" or a "she" ^[3] Mothers especially middle and high class then use colours to dress boys into blue and girls into pink giving no room, no chance for a baby to define itself from infancy to childhood and adulthood. Simone de Beauvoir famously stated, "One is not born but made woman."^[4] People are conditioned into gender roles by social norms that dictate what is deemed acceptable according to gender, which then define their position in society, what they must or must not have, own, do.

Africa has continued to be shaped by externalities and the increasing frameworks of degradation and dependency. Remarkably, the colonial era marked a significant shift that transformed a once fluid and dynamic African social landscape to a static rigid structure.^[5] This transformation intertwined gender identities with ethnicity, tribe and religion fundamentally altering pre-colonial systems. The effect of colonialism on Africa's previously flexible gender system was therefore destabilizing because women found themselves excluded from participation in the newly imposed social, political and economic order.^[6] Using an imperialistic lens Oyeronke Oyewumi critiques the subordination of women and describes the colonial, imperialist system as "a set of hierarchical relationships between and among nations , peoples, cultures and regions."^[7] This section focuses on domination and oppression through gender and ethnicity by interrogating the social construction of womanhood, her identity and placement as part of an ethnic group and tribe. Sometimes imagination gives way to critical thinking and pondering. Reflecting critically, one can imagine a world without binary of sexual identities, who then would be superior to the other, even when placed in ethnicity and tribal identities? Such hierarchies would lose their foundation. What would determine who is a rightful land owner or holder of power? Historically it was easier to join a clan and gain access to land in the precolonial but today, joining a clan as stranger is rarely explored and was rendered unattractive. It is difficult to gain access to land. Such shifts continue to reveal why women especially in Africa are deprived of property rights and inheritance ,acts of exclusion are structurally framed. Conflicts over private property often escalate to domestic violence and disputes amongst people who would otherwise have enjoyed cordial relationships, what Pamela Scully refers to as "household violence," and which, in a broader analytical framework is understood as gender-based violence stemming from struggles over land and oppression of women.^[8]

Beginning with an analysis of gender as a social construction provides a foundation to critique the structures of oppression that subordinate women, rooted in the colonial era politicization of identities. The categorical identity of "woman" catalysed by the colonially traditionalised, politicised ethnic and tribal identities. This categorical identity woman is shaped and constrained by patriarchy, capitalism, social norms, religion, ethnicity. In many African society where land symbolizes power, the women are largely deprived from it by deprivation from inheritance, often in the favour of the boy and preference to male heirs, re-inforced with practices such as inlawism. The structure of patriarchy, capitalism that were aggravated by colonialism and

ongoing neoliberal policies continue to domesticate women and impose social, political and economic oppression. Colonial systems that separated customary law located in tradition and creation of civil law affirmed women's inferiority and vulnerability to male violence because they were privileged over women.^[9] Furthermore, debates on land tenure reveal that neoliberals' proposals for security of tenure often fail to provide the promised security but rather aggravates domestic violence, household violence and gender-based violence. Addressing the problems of women and land in African societies like Uganda requires thorough deconstruction of the understanding of gender constructions especially gendered political economy, possibly embracing alternatives such as Ifi Amadiume's "male daughter" and "female husband" mechanism. How would practical decolonization of look like in society today? Could the answer lie in the formation of coalition of feminists using Audre Lord's intersectionality aiming to build alternative feminist structure rooted in social and political justice that promote the wellbeing of all individuals. The vision of decolonising feminism can help eliminate dismantle ethnicized and gendered binaries as well as end discrimination based on politicized gendered identities.

Usually many activists focus on human rights which deters them from transcending essentialist tendencies. Many activists today speak against oppression of women and demand for their land rights but their demands do not explain or understand the problem structurally which limits them to solving acts rather than to providing structural and theoretical alternatives and theories. While they are critiqued it makes it of importance to transcend materialism. Lynn Ossome argues that the feminist emancipatory position is relevant because it offers a starting point from which to understand the nature and dynamics surrounding women's lives.^[10] A critique of feminism is also that it prioritises the oppression by patriarchy by focusing on masculinities. When this is done, then the oppression that women face through their lived experience is not captured. It is important therefore to consider women's daily experiences into account and thereafter adopt feminist framework to theorise. Bell Hooks asserts that her feminist theory emerges from personal experiences henceforth making feminist transformation possible because the making of theory resonates with the daily social lives of the scholar and their non-scholarly audience thus theory is liberatory. It is from the concrete that theory emerges according to her.^[11] I acknowledge that Bell Hooks is critiqued for using her own experience which is non-scholarly, but she uses it to expound theory. A personal experience can speak to the lives of many who are facing it especially if other literature has cited similar case studies as will be used in the case of Nalule in comparison to Ifi Amadiume story of Nwajiwuba.

Ossome(2018) uses the concept of mapping to explain the ethnicized aspect of gender that was produced during colonialism and that the gendered subject made indirect rule possible by becoming agents of anti-colonial resistance. The women became subjectified by the forms of identities that were created by colonial masters and it is this process that Ossome refers to as "mapping". Women were domesticated and kept to the private sphere which made them reproduce labour and make indirect rule a possibility. The men would go to work and women's role was to reproduce. Using a historical analysis, Lynn Ossome locates women in a historical context as well as understanding material and lived realities. She explains the kind of state that Kenya is in the presence which shows that post-colonial Kenya lives in the colonial Kenya and therefore women are pitied. She shows how women were treated before colonialism, during and after. Ossome "was not limited by acts of violence" uses the lived experiences to explain their structural form of the colonial which enabled her to critique the structure. Ossome used the feminist historical materialist methodology to expose the limits for feminist emancipatory politics. The analysis helped her to critique the notion of democracy and offers a possibility for a more radical form of democracy imaginatively. Ethnicity is key in understanding the gendered oppression of women because it is key in establishing the native authorities which were key in administering the rule of law in its customary nature "Masculinisation of the state and politicisation of ethnicity were two sides of the same coin"^[12] When access to resources like land is ethnicized and gendered then as Ossome asserted, "to critique ethnicity is therefore also to critique ways in which gender has been violently subjected through a historical process of mapping."^[13]

This is a narrative that defines some of the incidents that girls and women experience in society because of their identity. As a child born to an extended family in Africa, Uganda, Buganda Kingdom, Kyadondo county, Nalule was blessed with a plot of land by her grandfather. The norm is that, it is only the male who benefit from their fathers because they continue the male lineage, but her grandfather offered a piece of land the girl child, Nalule. Whereas all the other land that he gifted was to his male sons because the male were and are still considered the true descendants of a clan as John Roscoe asserted that "Descent was reckoned through

the male line.”[14] But why ignore the matrilineal lineage? Wasn’t this a colonial assumption of patriarchy in the African setting that undercooked the role of women and considered the man as ultimate and superior. The grandfather Mr. Lule, had a special bond to this one grand-daughter. Land was the wealthiest he could offer, he gave a piece of land to this child. However, because she was a girl, a female society starting with the rest of the family did not find it worthy for a girl to own land. This is because land is wealth, land is power and to their understanding, both power and wealth belongs to the male gender. Women are supposed to be subordinated, should not own land for land is power and power belongs to men. The more reason to oppose such land acquisition is a girl is not considered as a full part of the clan because when she gets married, she belongs to her husband and the children that she gives birth to will also belong to the husband and his clan. It is also worse that this would be another clan but worse when aspects of tribalism are incorporated. It would mean that when Nalule gets married to another tribe then the land will then be considered for another tribe because everything is considered to be owned by the men. This therefore means that the children are also belonging of the man’s tribe together with their mother. Land therefore will have left ownership by one tribe to another which is problematic according to tradition and largely refuted. This is where a critique ethnicity and subsequently the politicised nature of tribe. The tribal identity is therefore a category that exacerbates the problem of land ownership by a female in Uganda. Nalule having land shouldn’t be a problem because after all she is a child of the son of Mr Lule and belongs to the same clan too. Her heir according to culture will be of the same clan, the oppression she faces is therefore because women are considered unworthy, unfit to own and informed by tribalist tradition that subordinates women. Infact, ethnicity and tribe in precolonial was inexistent because any one would become a Muganda through raids, through blood brotherhood and people were given clans which made them have access to land, even females had access to land since they could be allowed into clans. One did not have to be one’s descendant in order to have access to land.

Nalule, I argue, is implicated first of all because she is a girl, a woman, a female yet these are social constructions that would otherwise not have occurred if the world and its societies considered each other as persons and not identified in the binary form of male and female. Also, since ownership of land is a wealth asset, it is not in order for a woman to be wealthier than the man, thus for a woman that holds land in her possession is considered “big-headed” uncontrollable or what Nakanyike Musisi would call “bad woman” a woman who would stand against patriarchal control.[15] Nalule was made a “man” and by this a “bad woman”. Husbands expect obedient wives and may enforce their authority with physical violence. Her own parents will be very reluctant to interfere, even if they suspect their daughter is being ill-treated. It is assumed that when a woman owns land then they will have wealth and power and cause her to disobey her authority.

A woman, lost her clan when she married and her children respected her totems, avoided them till when they grew up and adopted those of the father forgetting the mother’s.[16] He said that the Buganda have a deeply rooted objection to women rulers and that there has never been a queen who sat on the throne. Sometimes these I will argue were assumptions that were instilled with the strategy of production of knowledge which although referring to Yoruba society also applied to Buganda, Oyeronke Oyewumi argued that a first step toward mapping the cultural logic of an African society...,conceptual categories and theoretical formulations that derive from Western experiences had to be unpacked.[17] Hence, whereas the West has the binary of King and queen, in Buganda there is only one title and that is of Kabaka. It is not gendered and therefore listings of the Kabaka. The same Roscoe noted that the Queen translated as lubuga performed all the rituals that the King performed and took the coronation oath. She lived at a hill adjacent to the King with her own chiefs, she held her own courts, tried her own people and had full power of life and death. She had claim to the title Kabaka. A woman therefore had access to power, land but this notion only changed with colonialism and interpretation using the western lens. This is why it is necessary to decolonize knowledge and adopt a decolonial feminist strategy. But what exactly is this decolonial strategy with the diverse feminist strands and theories in place?

Ifi Amadiume discusses the aspect of gender fluidity and the relationship between gender and land. She dismisses the anthropological formalist approach that “women did not own land”[18] she uses the same to analyze the notion of gender because a woman who did not own land was at the same time of economic importance and therefore it is important to appreciate the flexible gender system in relation to rules governing land and inheritance in the Nnobi culture. She critiques the notion. The ownership of land was both communal and individual and meaning it was distributed from the community down to lineages and to the family unit. Those with individual land had to be alive and own male descendants who were also male daughters and if the owner of the land dies without these descendants then the land would revert to the extended family. A female

acquired the status of a male son if she lived in the house of her father and was able to inherit the father's property. Although she did inherit her father's property, it was challenged by society especially the male and after a court ruling that affirmed her as a rightful successor, most of it had already been taken by the male members of the family. In addition, there is always witchcraft and interpretations of misfortune which make women who occupy such positions uneasy and anxious because the positions are normally filled by men. This is similar to the case of Nalule, who also faces oppression and outright opposition by the male patrilineal family members because she owns land in a patrilineal setting.

Although the aspect of male daughters was of importance and significance in gender fluidity in relation to land ownership. The women are generally subjectified. They till the land but do not own it. Sons and male daughters inherited land while the daughters inherited woven cloth, some trees and home utensils. But on other note, they owned all the produce that yielded and marketed it. They controlled the market space in monopoly meaning that they were economically powerful. Female in the precolonial were industrious, they could hold positions usually male dominated and this signified power and authority.^[19] However with colonialism, Christianity and civilizing mission, women lost their grip. They lost control of their control over the market. The difference between the female control was that she did it on behalf of the husband and they shared proceeds fairly and understandably, it wasn't a matter of domination but for the male dominated market, women lost their personal relations with their husbands^[20] despite the significantly important contribution of women to society, their status in most African post-colonial societies does not reflect the sacrifices they make. They are still rendered powerless and subordinated

In Buganda, Bataka who were clan leaders held land as power although their power was usurped by colonialist who privileged chiefs over them. My question however is not necessarily connected to colonial effect, but it is perplexing why all literature never spells out any name of a woman that held land as a mutaka. Is it a distortion of literature, or women were deprived from political participation? But Roscoe discussed above highlighted the role of the queen and queen mother who I believe might have had a council of elders too. Are we certain that there were no female Bataka or chiefs or we need to decolonise the knowledge?

In Buganda, the Clan chiefs-Abataka who had large tracts of land under their control were replaced by administrative chiefs in the colonial era and these although responsible to the King and to the council – Lukiiko were also tagged to the colonial masters. They were more of political elites than the clan chiefs who ensured that both male and female clan members had access to land. The administrative chiefs locally known as abamasaza were in colonial setting and thus worked in promotion of patriarchy. John Roscoe wrote that, "men held the land from chiefs on condition of doing work for them." However, It is the women who mainly cultivated land and fields at home while the men worked for their master elsewhere. Roscoe also asserts that all the land belonged to the King alone and yet he also mentions that "the midwives to the King's wives lived near the royal enclosure on land which was the private property of the king's wives. Where then did the notion of women not owning land start? Why is there a distortion in Roscoe's literature? Land cannot be owned by the King alone and at the same time be private property for the Kings wives yet in Buganda all women are the King's wives. Roscoe further argues that the major role of a wife was to cultivate her garden and to cook. Peasant women had large plantain garden to keep in order. They weeded roads, helped their husbands in constructions and Roscoe refers to them as "a hardy strong race."^[21]

Just like the Bataka, no record of woman is mentioned as having been an administrative chief, It is only recently that the Kabaka of Buganda, Ronald Muwenda Mutebi has considered county chiefs as women. These are the very first since colonial era and whereas this is a significant step, the women are just two against the 16 others who are all male. This is the kind of oppression and inequality that feminists seek to nullify and aim at equality on the table. But also, it should be noted that the power to control land is no longer in the hands of the chiefs anymore. It shifted from Bataka to chiefs and from chiefs to Buganda land Board although they are involved in some of the procedures they are merely custodians with no power over the land. It might therefore be easier to appoint women because after all the power to control land is not vested entirely in the hands of the chiefs

The Shift to Individualism

Friedrich Engels in his discussion about the origins of the family discusses how the ancient form of family contradicts the system of consanguinity. There is notable transition from one form of family to another. This

shows that family has undergone change. But why then traditionalize it and why does it seem like nuclear family and monogamy are the rule? If family evolved, it can still revolve from patriarchy to equality. Some families take on monogamy, others polygamy and others polyandry. Some have a mix of polygamy and polyandry at the same time and the children become common to them all but with time such families undergo change end up in monogamy. Change narrows the circle of people comprised within the common bond of marriage until it includes only a pair which is the commonest and more dominant form of marriage today.[\[22\]](#)

Some of the factors that affect family forms are jealousy. Jealousy as a characteristic is also evident when one owns property and the other does not. Whether it between brother and a brother in the case of a nuclear family or whether it's a sister. This means that the aspect of individual ownership needs to be carefully considered

According to Frederick Engels, the family transforms from group family to the establishment of marriage by capture, a sign of transition to monogamous marriage. Group family culminated into the pairing family and later monogamous family which developed with the overthrow of the mother right between the upper and middle stages of barbarism. It is a sign of the beginning of civilization and is based on supremacy of the man and whose purpose is to produce children of undisputed paternity. The children are their fathers' property and his natural heirs. Monogamous marriage exalts the man, gives him the authority to dissolve the marriage, the right of conjugal infidelity. The women were free and respected in the past but monogamous marriage subjugates one sex over the other and announces between sexes which was not the case in pre-historic times. Engels argues that prosperity and development for some is won by the misery of others. The antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage coincides with the first-class opposition. He relates monogamous marriage to slavery and private wealth ownership because both involve subjugation of one over another. Baclofen believes transition to monogamy was brought about through women because with the development of economic conditions there was consequent undermining of communism and women had greater longing of marriage with one man. Marxists like Engels further explain the development of private ownership of property, breeding herds and as wealth increased, it made man's position in the family more important than the woman's

The Concept of Patriarchy

Patriarchy is central to subordination of women. It is a structure that stems from the Roman patriarchal system where man was powerful over women. It ensures that women are kept in subordination as wives, mothers, daughters, sisters or widows. This position of subordination renders women vulnerable to violence. Power is denied to a woman by keeping away from political participation, by depriving her from land ownership as seen in the case of the Ibo and Baganda colonial times, with no control and decisions regarding the marketing of her produce as discussed by Amadiume which renders her economic development ability weakened. Wealth is considered an aspect of power and therefore women are deprived from economic development which is left largely to the male. The inferior position of women according to Engels is attributable to the emergence of private property. It diverted matriarchal settings which Oyeronke refers to as mother right because it is what was dominant in precolonial Africa and only changed with imposition of colonialism.[\[23\]](#) The mother rights were overthrown. Religion too has a role it plays in maintain patriarchy. Jews, Mohammedans and Christians among others believe that man is master by divine right. The fear of God therefore will repress any impulse towards revolt in the down trodden female.[\[24\]](#) This alludes to the analysis that it's not "acts" that should be a focus because but there is a structure that informs the acts and experiences of women that perpetuate oppression.

More recently, the term 'patriarchy' has come to be used around the world to describe the situation of male dominance over women and children within the family and the extension of this into male dominance in all other areas of society. With patriarchy, men hold power and consider themselves as more important than women. They claim or are given the important roles in society while subordinating women and depriving them of the same privileges and access to power. But borrowing from Foucault's theory that wherever there is power, there is resistance, feminists realise that women have been subordinated and speak to alter the position that they have been domesticated too. The implication for feminist movements and arguing against patriarchy is that it is embedded in capital and the state. How best then can women tackle an issue that is embedded in the structure of the state. It is not just the acts and experiences that they need to resolve but a super structure that has organised its self strategically to maintain the domination of the male.

Feminist Thought

Judith Butler suggests that feminist critic ought also to understand how the category of women who are the subject of feminism is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought. She argues that if it is possible to speak of man as a masculine, it is then possible to speak of man with a feminine attribute. That would still be gender. Why then is gender restricted to binary of male and female which usually denotes heterosexuality? Butler asserts that gender is not a noun but is performative. One's actions can imply what gender they are. "Gender is a doing" but should not be attached to a subject because there is no being behind a doing.[\[25\]](#)

Denise Riley argues that "women" is a historically and discursively constructed identity. Women in their collectiveness is not a subject that can be relied on yet a woman is individual and is not constant to provide ontological foundation, why then dwell on women as the founding category for feminism? True feminist would be one where an announcement is made that "there aren't any women" because if not then the historical tendencies of looking at feminism as a matter for women suffices.[\[26\]](#) From then on anybody that would pronounce themselves with a gender identity or define gender with a neutral ground would then have a feminist undertaking. I argue that within the current problematic of patriarchy, a focus on women is necessary because it is with a coalition and intersectional movement that women can then organize themselves to change the structures of power and then declare no identities with power in their control.

According to Riley, the history of feminist thought is a history of the "refusal of the hierarchical construction of the relationship between male and female ...and an attempt to reverse or displace its operation" Gender as an analytic category then maintains the binary it is critiquing. What unique theory have feminist created that encompasses all the problems that oppress women? Is the only problem the hierarchical construction? A fusion of feminist history and political history makes me find the disregarding of man and woman as the more suitable approach as Scott states that we should recognize that "man and woman are at once empty and overflowing categories"

According to Muthoni, women's identity is linked to their relationship to men as daughters, wives or mothers and non-mothers. The characterization of woman as either good or bad depends on their conformance to the patriarchal norms of Kenyan society.[\[27\]](#) Bad women are also discussed by Ifi Amadiume and Nakanyike Musisi and these failed in the wifely role and maternal duties and sentiments. A good character was that which is industrious. Although Muthoni elaborates the practical experience of subordination of women, these subordinations have to be theoretically explained because they do not just come to be. There is always a structure. She dwells on the particular but a platonic approach would suffice especially in written works in order to expound on the sensitization goals and not just dwell on Aristotelic empiricism to change the image of girls and women that is portrayed in the literature. In their conversation, much reference is given to structural adjustment programs, individualist rather than collective working all of which are outcomes of theories. Alternative theories that inform the practice should be formulated. Indeed, Nalule's story is not simply that the male are against her holding land. There is a structural explanation that starts with the construction of gendered binaries, the domestication of women under the structure of capitalism and colonialism. It is important to also focus on collective gain than individual gain. Social justice is key.

There is a relationship between gender and land in its ownership, use and distribution and control. Has land always been distributed by gender identity though? What happened to land for communal ownership and use without particular regard to gender identity. Has it always been the case? Using Ifi Amadiume study of the Nnobi, there was a flexible gender system on rules governing the inheritance of land. Land was re-distributed with a principle of individual ownership of land that applied in the family as long as the owner was alive and had male descendants or male daughters to inherit the land. The institution of male daughters was however manipulated. Nwajiuba became a male because her father did not have male relatives so she was called from her marital home to occupy the house and inherit it with the status of son. A female was turned male by action as Butler suggests that gender is a doing. This rule out the constructs of being male by biological reasoning. Nwajiuba's story of inheritance of land showed the unease and tension caused when women occupy positions that are sought for and normally filled by men. Women in Nnobi did not inherit land but only had access to it through marriage or by being a favorite daughter to her father or they owned land by becoming male daughters. Gender relations affect the women in social, economic and political realm. There was a degree of tolerance

for women in all aspects of life but all these practices were condemned under colonialism. Under the church, the practice of female assuming male roles was considered pagan and anti-Christian. The Ekwe title was banned. Woman to woman marriage was banned without considering its use amongst the Africans, it was misinterpreted by the anthropologists who did not write innocently but to favor the civilization mission and thus colonialism. Colonial practices and laws changed the relations of women and men and their relations with land and farming.

CONCLUSION

If gender is a social construction that engenders human beings then changing the norm requires transformation in the structures so as to enable dismantling of patriarchal systems that are catalyzed by identities. This critique challenges the traditionalised notion of gender binaries and tribal identities. It raises important questions: How can we redefine these socially constructed binaries to embrace diversity? How can African societies reconstruct tribe free societies? With reference to Ossome(2019) methodology in which she used historical materialism as a vantage point for her to critique the structural, I also use empirical experience not just as a mere “act” of observation but as a tool to assess the structural subjection inferred to women whether consciously or unconsciously. The actions of those who oppress women are constructed and thus shaped by systemic superstructures. A girl, a woman, a female is innocently constructed by the generation today just as the male is, because concepts of gender and feminist subjectivity are largely absent in early childhood knowledge until higher levels of education. As a child, I never had choice, perhaps I’d never have identified myself as a “she” so that when given land like Nalule, there would be no problem since then, it would belong to a “he”. Well, today challenging such gendered assumptions can attract social and legal penalty. This critique unravels the absentia of feminist and gender knowledge in everyday socialization.

How then can knowledge about sex and gender identities using a feminist framework be incorporated into the everyday knowledge? A key part of the solution lies in incorporating sex and gender education through a feminist framework into the broader cultural and educational fields. Gender must to be constructed solely based on biology, and instead be re-imagined through the lens of economic roles, social contribution, or individual talents. One can be identified according to economic activity that one does. This would mean that one is called or referred to as a person or a child until the age of eighteen and thereafter identified according to their preferred economic role or talent. For example, instead of being referred to as Cissy the “woman” one could be known as “Cissy the artist”, “Cissy the farmer” or “Cissy the teacher” and not Cissy the woman. This approach offers a more social and neutral identity, non-gendered, non ethnicized and tribalized identity. “Cissy the woman” can easily be deprived of her access to land. The description can be changed to avoid the marginalization of women from resources like land. Such redefinitions can contribute to dismantling the constructions that marginalize women from accessing resources such as land.

Simone de Beauvoir argues that true liberation for women requires a revolution not individual struggle. She critiques women who try to fight alone. She asserts that the liberation must be collective, focusing on the economic emancipation of women. Grounded in solidarity, there would be need to establish feminist movements that organise themselves to implement a revolution that will turn the traditionalised institution of patriarchy around. This raises critical questions for feminist movements today: How should feminists organize to challenge and transform the state and colonial legacies that deeply entrench the institution of patriarchy? Should women form political parties, mobilize mass support, and demand for systemic change through formal political power? The power to make change will then be in feminist transformational hands. Or should change be driven from the grassroots through community led action? How would a global feminist strategy meaningfully translate into the daily experiences of women in different parts of the continent? Should the change in structure target national level reform or should it target regional community-based systems?

While the questions remain complex, clarity seems to be around the need for genuine transformation that requires the decolonization of gendered and ethnicized political system. When a revolution happens and when the gendered and ethnicized society is decolonised then a political structure that aims at justice for all, with a good constitution that does not discriminate or favour individualistic tendencies but aims for good welfare of all its people should be developed. A just political structure must emerge. One rooted in equality, non-discrimination and collective welfare, rather than individualism. If the problem is rooted politicised gender, ethnicity and tribe then the problem has to be solved through a political framework that will tackle issues

around gender, education, economic empowerment for all among other virtues that lead to ultimate good, justice being paramount. Ultimately, because the struggles for land and gender equity are related to power, then any lasting resolution should confront and redistribute power, questioning who owns it and with a target that privileges majority wellbeing across gender, ethnic and class lines rather than individualist frameworks which enhance inequality, conflict and gender-based violence. This would build a more just and peaceful society.

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FOOTNOTES

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