



GENERAL ASSEMBLY ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE ASSEMBLEIA GERAL جمعية عمومية

#CODESRIA14

Creating African Futures in an Era of Global Transformations:

Challenges and Prospects

Créer l'Afrique de demain dans un contexte de transformations mondialisées :

enjeux et perspectives

Criar Futuros Africanos numa Era de Transformações Globais:

Desafios e Perspetivas

بعث أفريقيا الغد في سياق التحولات المعولمة :

رهانات و آفاق

No African futures without the liberation of women:

A decolonial feminist intervention

Akhonba Nkenkana



CODESRIA

08 - 12 June / Juin 2015

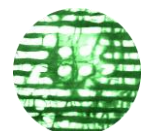
Dakar, Senegal





Abstract

Coloniality of gender speaks to the perennial question of liberation of women from various forms of oppression. The modern world system and its global orders have remained fundamentally patriarchal. This means that any initiative aimed at creating African futures has to address the fundamental question of the liberation of women. Liberation of women does not speak to the incorporation of women within the patriarchal system. The first step as argued by Thomas Sankara is to try to understand how the patriarchal system functions, to grasp its real nature in all its subtlety, in order then to work out a line of action that can lead to women's genuine emancipation. Decolonising gender therefore becomes a necessary task so that answers to what should be done are formulated from the perspective of asking correct questions. Decolonising of gender as defined by Maria Lugones is to enact a critique of racialized, colonial, and capitalist heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social. As such it places the theoriser in the midst of people in a historical, peopled, subjective/intersubjective understanding of the oppressing- resisting relation at the intersection of complex systems of oppression. To a significant extent, it has to be in accord with the subjectivities and intersubjectivities that construct and in part are constructed by the situation. This paper deploys the decolonial feminist ideas of Thomas Sankara to push forward the frontiers of the struggle liberation of women as a constitutive part of initiatives of creating African futures. Its central argument is that women's liberation struggle should not be reduced to efforts of incorporation of women within the patriarchal/colonial/imperial modern system/s women seek to reject. The analysis will be within the theoretical framework of what Maria Lugones termed "The modern/colonial gender system." This way we are able to understand that the instrumentality of the colonial/modern gender system is subjecting, both men and women of colour in all domains of existence and therefore allows us to reveal that the gender transformation discourse is not just a women's emancipation discourse but rather efforts of both men and women to overcoming the colonial global structure that is subjectifying in different ways.





Introduction

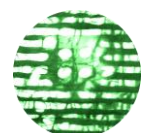
The central assertion of this paper is that the creation of futures of Africa entails the liberation of African women. It posits that the course of gender transformation has remained the weakest in the drive for African futures and this is as a result of the unchanging global power structure which Africa is imbricated in that is marked by hierarchies on the basis of gender, race, religion, class, and so forth. The paper further problematizes the manner in which the discourse of gender transformation is pursued in general and Africa in particular as it remains deeply embedded within the patriarchal snares where ultimately the efforts are mainly incorporate women in the same patriarchal system rather than pursuing radical transformation that seeks to destroy the systems and structures of patriarchy. A question this article poses is that of what are the possibilities of creating African futures without the liberation of women in Africa?

The African Union in its efforts of determining and defining her futures has come up with a document envisioning African futures known as Agenda 2063. The background note of Agenda 2063 states that this agenda is a call for action and a strategic framework and roadmap to achieve continental development goals. It represents a collective effort and an opportunity for Africa to regain its power to determine its own destiny, and is underpinned by the AU Vision to build an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, an Africa driven and managed by its own citizen and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.

Gender equality, especially the rights of women, occupy an increasingly important place in the global and African political discourse and, by implication, has significance for the development discourse as enshrined in the ideals of the futures and visions of Africa. However, very little is known on how the gender instruments adopted by the AU and domesticated by member States and possibly are used in pursuit of Agenda 2063 have brought or will bring about social-economic development as envisaged in the futures of the continent. Therefore, the realisation of African futures through gender equality remains quite blurred.

Arguably, Olga Martin (2013:7) notes that the growing recognition of the leadership role of women in all spheres of development, including their participation in decision-making at the international, regional and national level, is reflected in the creation of platforms of action related to gender. It is in this context that the AU has developed a gender policy and other instruments that focus on addressing gender inequalities and adopted a new resolution in 2011 that calls on countries to take concrete steps to increase women's political participation and leadership and report back to the United Nations (UN) Secretary General in 2013.

Despite the fact that Africa, its organs of state and governance have put efforts together towards women emancipation, efforts ensuring that African futures are shared by all Africans, men and women equally. These efforts observed through numbers in parliaments, high positions of States and governance have not translated through the authentic liberation of





women with which African futures lie. The results of these efforts instead are transpiring as efforts of incorporation of women within the patriarchal system they reject or a process of menisation of women whereby men and his role in society are used as a benchmark to measure the transformation of women. The extent to which women perform a “man’s job” will then be deemed emancipated women.

I have asserted elsewhere that the clarification of the question of gender is not only important but fundamental too, that its fundamentality lies in the clarification of gender transformation beyond the numbers game that sort to distort the fundamental problem of gender and women oppression. That effort of gender transformation must seek to answer a fundamental question whose efforts is to understand the order that define the oppression of women for it is in the understanding of such an order that a possibility of chanting alternatives therefore better futures could be explored.

A further contention is that coloniality of gender speaks to the perennial question of liberation of women from various forms of oppression. The modern world system and its global orders have remained fundamentally patriarchal. This means that any initiative aimed at creating African futures has to address the fundamental question of the liberation of women. Liberation of women does not speak to the incorporation of women within the patriarchal system.

Thomas Sankara (2007) noted in a commemoration of international women’s day on the 8th of March 1987 that;

Posing the question of women in Burkinabe society today means posing the abolition of the system of slavery to which they have been subjected for millennia. The first step is to try to understand how this system functions, to grasp its real nature in all its subtlety, in order then to work out a line of action that can lead to women’s total emancipation Thomas Sankara (2007).

A further analysis I have made elsewhere on this position by Sankara is that Sankara makes a direct connection between a subjugation of women in post-colony and the slavery period, thus suggesting that colonial rule was just a phase in a long duration in the making of the global matrices of power we call coloniality. This is a useful observation because it brings into sharp relief the connections between coloniality of being and coloniality of power (both economic in slavery and political in colonial rule) in the making of a world and nation without women Akhona Nkenkana (2014). He notes this connection of coloniality of being and coloniality of power in his reflections when he says;

We must understand how the struggle of Burkinabe women today is part of the worldwide struggle of all women and, beyond that, part of the struggle for the full rehabilitation of our continent. The condition of women is therefore at the heart of the question of humanity itself, here, there, and everywhere (Sankara (2007).



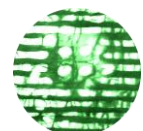


In this quote Sankara correctly locates the gender discourse within the broader system that defines it. He argues that in order that gender transformation is made possible, it should understand how the system functions, to grasp its real nature in all its subtlety, in order then to work out a line of action that can lead to women's total emancipation. Therefore an understanding of the manner in which gender is defined, particularly its transformation within the broader system Sankara is alluding to, is to precisely understand the global power structure with which gender is contextualised, structuralised systematised and defined.

What is important, essential to grasp as we understand, systematically the fundamental problem of gender is in the relations of oppression, is that both men and women are the products and the victims of the society that created and educated them Iman et al (1997:39).

The patriarchal system that gives challenges to a future that limits the true liberation of women is enshrined in the broader global power structure with which the African future is generally entrapped in as Thomas Sankara notes. The dynamics of power structure across the globe as underpinned and shaped by the colonial-androcentric-neo-traditionalist matrices of power that were described by Grosfoguel (2007:220) as colonial, racial, patriarchal and hegemonic, continue to hamper initiatives aimed at achieving gender transformation. In functioning within such a structure of power, identity and knowledge, Africa face a very high risk of reproducing the same future that is trying to address in as far as gender transformation is concerned. The challenge of gender transformation is imbricated in power, knowledge and notions of being shaped by colonial and patriarchal orders. This is why this conceptual and theoretical framework begins with fleshing out the architecture of power structures that Africa has inherited and continues to function within. Therefore an analysis on what Thomas Sankara is talking about in as far as the understanding of the patriarchal system and its details would be to begin to understand the logic and the system with which the patriarchal system is functioning on.

Decolonising gender therefore becomes a necessary task so that answers to what should be done are formulated from the perspective of asking correct questions. Decolonisation of gender as defined by Maria Lugones is to enact a critique of racialized, colonial, and capitalist heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social. As such it places the theoriser in the midst of people in a historical, peopled, subjective/intersubjective understanding of the oppressing- resisting relation at the intersection of complex systems of oppression. To a significant extent, it has to be in accord with the subjectivities and intersubjectivities that construct and in part are constructed by the situation Maria Lugones (2010: 746-747). Therefore, conceptually and theoretically, this paper is informed and underpinned by decolonial feminist theory as defined above by Maria Lugones. Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2011) decoloniality is not a singular theoretical school of thought, but a family of diverse positions that share a view of coloniality as the fundamental problem in the current modern age. Maldonado-Torres (2007) explained coloniality as global power structure that is related but different from colonialism.





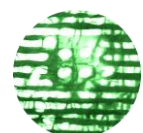
It is against the above mentioned background therefore that this paper deploys the decolonial feminist ideas of Thomas Sankara to push forward the frontiers of the struggle liberation of women as a constitutive part of initiatives of creating African futures. Its central argument is that women's liberation struggle should not be reduced to efforts of incorporation of women within the patriarchal/colonial/imperial modern system/s women seek to reject. Maria Lugones's theory of modern/colonial gender system will assist in debunking decolonial feminist intervention in pursuit of equal African futures. This way we are able to understand that the instrumentality of the colonial/modern gender system is subjecting, both men and women of colour in all domains of existence and therefore allows us to reveal that the gender transformation discourse is not just a women's emancipation discourse but rather efforts of both men and women to overcoming the colonial global structure that is subjectifying in different ways.

The Logic of systems and structures that define futures of Africa

The problematic raised in this paper in as far as gender transformation and the logic of systems and structures that define futures of Africa is that the manner in which gender transformation is articulated and pursued in Africa is imprisoned within a global patriarchal power structure and system that is not amenable to the full success of such an agenda. The asymmetrical architecture of global and African power structures and their patriarchal tendencies therefore continue to impact on the course futures of Africa are being advanced. It is for such reasons that this article grapples and pushes for a decolonial and non-patriarchal agenda for pursuance of the futures of Africa with which both men and women are equal part of including its construction. The unquestioned systems and orders that define African futures remain a fundamental problem to advance the course of liberation of women and a just society in Africa. The reason these systems and structures should be question is precisely the fact that their logic is found from the historical logic that has created the unequal world we are dealing with today.

Therefore, a historical conceptual context giving logic to this paper is advancing as highlighted by Maria Lugones an understanding of the dichotomous hierarchy between the human and the non-human as articulated at the central dichotomy of colonial modernity. Capturing well the need for a historical context when looking at the discourse of gender transformation Maria Lugones states that;

The reason to historicize gender formation is that without this history, we keep on centering our analysis on the patriarchy; that is, on a binary, hierarchical, oppressive gender formation that rests on male supremacy without any clear understanding of the mechanisms by which heterosexuality, capitalism, and racial classification are impossible to understand apart from each other. The heterosexualist patriarchy has been an ahistorical framework of analysis. To understand the relation of the birth of the colonial/modern gender system to the birth of global colonial capitalism—with the



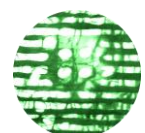
centrality of the coloniality of power to that system of global power—is to understand our present organization of life anew Maria Lugones (2007:186-187).

This history as captured by Lugones helps us to understand the legacy and the depth of inheritance of the colonial system that Africa and its futures continue to grapple with today. Toyin Falola (2005) broadly and captures well the state of Africa and its predicament of inheritance of colonial development. Toyin Falola augmenting Maria Lugones on the importance and justification of understanding the historical context of current phenomenons in Africa notes that;

Contemporary Africans have a right to be angry, but they must also probe into the reasons for institutional failure, the roots of which lie in colonial past. They must question the inherited forms of government, economy and relations between Africa and the West. They must situate the African condition in a global context: a poor continent supports the industrialised West with its labour, raw materials, markets and service payments on debts, among other mechanisms that transfer wealth abroad. They must situate African politics in the context of colonialism: modern political institutions are derived more from the colonial past than the precolonial... The postcolonial seeks its roots in the colonial, alienated from the precolonial and established local traditions. The modern country was modelled after the 'colonial country': black governors merely replaced the white ones... We must also raise the issue of power and autonomy in the global context: to what extent can Africa self-develop? Africa was self-developing before the colonial intrusion. With violence, colonialism created new frontiers, developed new political and economic objectives, and ordered people around. When colonialism was over, Africa began to think about development in colonial, Western terms (Toyin Falola 2005:4).

Toyin Falola together with Maria Lugones therefore captures the problematique with which this paper is centralised in. That the fundamental problem that provides the blurred future particularly in as far as gender transformation is concerned is precisely its inheritance of the system and structure that is oppressive to its fundamental liberation therefore its futures. Emphatically is that the futures remain affected if the system and structure inherited from history have not changed in Africa. There is quite a number of empirical evidence to such assertion and some of this evidence is presented in this article. It is the change of system and structure that is patriarchal that will bring about possible equal futures for women in Africa.

Augmenting Toyin Falola and Maria Lugones, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) and Maldonado-Torres (2007) argue that the fundamental challenge of Africa the African reality is that since the time of colonial encounters, Africans have not yet been able to take full charge of their own fate although they are not completely at the mercy of global imperial designs, in place since the time of conquest. Africa and Africans have been at the crossroads since the time of





colonial encounters in the 15th century. Going against the global imperial designs of domination, exploitation, and racism, has proven to be a lifetime struggle for Africans.

The essence of African struggles as articulated by Fanon (1968) has been to forge new categories of thought, construction of new subjectivities and creation of new modes of being and becoming. Such a vast struggle cannot be fought in one site (as if it were political theatre only) but in various domains and realms simultaneously, simply because global imperial designs and colonial matrices of power have permeated and infiltrated every institution and every social, political, economic, spiritual, aesthetic, and cognitive arena of African Life (Maldonado-Torres 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:3) captures the predicament of Africa and Africans in a term 'postcolonial neocolonised world.' The term, he argues captures the structural, systematic, cultural, discursive, and epistemological pattern of domination and exploitation that has engulfed Africans since the conquest. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) argues that the new postcolonial nation is historically male-constructed space, narrated into modern self-consciousness by male leaders, activists, writers, in which women are often than not cast as symbols or totems, as the bearers of tradition.

Therefore, as articulated by Maria Lugones, Toyin Falola, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Maldonado-Torres on the inheritance rather than transformation, the manner in which the system and structure of Africa's future is configured limits the articulation and pursuing of gender transformation. These inherited structure produces hierarchies with which the world in general and Africa in particular functions and among such hierarchies is the hierarchy of patriarchy. The patriarchal structure which is found across systems of power in Africa provides an incredible challenge of ever achieving the gender transformation required. The concept of coloniality is very useful when dealing with the understanding of the global power structure in Africa. This concept enables ex-colonised peoples to understand why the present hierarchies of power of the world system continues to be constituted on a cultural criterion whose origins lie in colonial encounters and colonial relations and therefore a very important concept for unpacking the systematic structure that remains a barrier for Gender transformation.

Oyewumi (1997:7) argues that from the ancients to the moderns, gender has been a foundational category upon which social categories have been erected. Hence, gender has been ontologically conceptualised. The category of the citizen, which has been the cornerstone of much of Western political theory, was male, despite the much-acclaimed Western democratic traditions. The argument that gender is caught up in the global power structure that perpetuates the hierarchies that sort to be a barrier in the systematic transformation of gender in this proposal is found in the concept of ontological conceptualisation of gender as Oyewumi has outlined. Therefore an authentic gender transformation is yet to be realised especially in Africa.

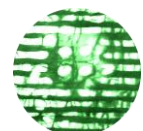


Understanding the place of gender in pre-colonial societies is pivotal to understanding the nature and scope of changes in the social structure that the processes constituting colonial/modern Eurocentred capitalism imposed. Those changes were introduced through slow, discontinuous, and heterogeneous processes that violently inferiorised colonised women. The gender system introduced was one thoroughly informed through the colonality of power. Understanding the place of gender in pre-colonial societies is also pivotal in understanding the extent and importance of the gender system in disintegrating communal relations, egalitarian relations, ritual thinking, collective decision making, collective authority and economies. And thus in understanding the extent to which the imposition of this gender system was a constitutive of the colonality of power as the colonality of power was constitutive of it. The logic of relation between them is of mutual constitution. But it should be clear by now that the colonial, modern, gender system cannot exist without the colonality of power, since the classification of the population in terms of race is a necessary condition of its possibility Oyeronke Oyewumi (2011:10).

Oyeronke Oyewumi makes a very fundamental argument when she notes that in identifying gender as a colonial category, the concern is not so much to displace culpability for contemporary male dominance to the British colonizers, but rather to begin to recognise and tease out the ways in which the colonial legacy has been internalised and is being reproduced. The degree to which colonial categories have been internalised and have become very much a part of everyday life, even as the culture itself refuses to recede completely but continues to assert itself, is an interesting issue Oyeronke Oyewumi (2011:11). Therefore liberation of women in Africa is caught up in what Maria Lugones termed the darker side of modern/colonial gender system. What aspects of gender are shown depends on how gender is actually conceptualised in a particular model Maria Lugones (2008:4).

The misinterpreted systematic and structural fundamental question of the liberation of women in Africa

Having pointed out the systematic and structural problem with which gender is imbricated in, this paper proceeds by proving to a greater extent empirical evidence of the mis-defined problematique of gender in Africa. This evidence is provided through ironing out the systematic and structural fundamental question of the general gender transformation discourse in Africa. A fundamental problem resulting in this misinterpretation of systematic and structural conditions perpetuating gender inequalities is a focus on women as the subject of change in gender transformation and/or mainstreaming and a focus on fitting women into the status quo rather than transforming the status quo. The limitation of situating the understanding of the dimensions of gender as related to other structural inequalities that are faced in Africa and these structural inequalities are situated in the broad context of Race, Power and Class. The problematique of the frameworks adopted to address the gender inequalities as instruments whose aim is to deliberately not change the status quo but rather



concentrate on fitting women into the existing status quo as opposed to addressing the structural problem that are as a result of the three broad contexts.

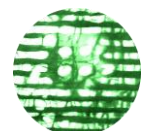
Anne McClintock (1995) brings to the argument a very important point with which a context of the contemporary phenomenon of gender transformation discourse is explored. She locates the problematique of gender in in the broader context of nationalism when she notes that;

All nations depend on powerful constructions of gender. despite many nationalists' ideological investment in the idea of popular unity, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalisation of gender difference. No nation in the world gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state. Rather than expressing the flowering into time of the organic essence of a timeless people, nations are contested systems of cultural representation that limit and legitimise peoples' access to the resources of the nation-state.... Nationalism have typically sprung from masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation and masculinised hope..... Nationalism is thus constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power Anne McClintock (1995: 353-355).

This is a very important argument submitted by Anne McClintock. Its importance lies in the broadening of understanding the implications of African futures in as far as its women are concerned. This argument helps us understand broadly the implications gender transformation has and the imbrication of African nationalism as the driver of African futures to the historical construct of the global power structures.

Both at national and international level, gender inequality and women's rights have been identified, tackled and addressed by formal governance institutions. National governments have the potential to institute laws guaranteeing equality along with support services. Several United Nations agencies focus on women's rights – the newly-formed UN Women; the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and also by UNESCO and UNICEF among others. International human rights instruments also contain agreed priorities for the achievement of gender equality, most prominently the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), the International Conference on Population and Development's (ICPD) Programme of Action, and UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960 Vaughan (2012:2).

The African Union as a body representing the continent adopted a number of international frameworks of gender for improving "gender equality" in the continent. The AU has further made a call to African heads of states to adopt in their governments these frameworks. This is done as a response to the international call to all regions, countries and organisations to respond to a need for gender mainstreaming and/or transformation which will bring the



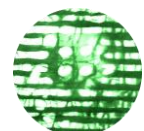
transformation in the gender equality discourse anticipated for African futures. Gender transformation discourse in Africa has and continues to be a problem in how it is defined and therefore addressed.

Acknowledging all the instruments and their observed progress, on one hand, literature suggests that proportional representation has proved to be the most important factor in bringing to reality gender equality and transformation. An example would be the election of Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as Chairperson of the AU Commission makes her the first woman to take up the post, the highest at the AU Commission, and shows the advancement of women at the political level (African Development Bank Group 2013). On the other hand, The African Union Gender Policy (2009) notes that despite this high level commitment and interest raised by the policy, mainstreaming the gender dimension has not yet reached the parity required at all levels in society. Institutionalisation efforts to integrate the principle of equality between men and women in the AU, RECS and member states are very slow. The African Union gender policy goes further and acknowledges that while it is evident that women substantially contribute to economic, social and political development as well as in environmental management, they have not benefitted from economic growth and development, continue to be outside the decision making sphere and barely enjoy human rights. Women still face discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation and do not share equally the benefits from production.

Furthermore, African Union gender policy at macro and micro levels, across spheres of economics, social or cultural and programmes, including structural adjustment, have not always been designed to take account of their impact on women and girl children, especially those living in poverty. Even if women are made visible and they increase their economic production capacities, their labour and efforts would only be exploited if there is no change in the unequal, patriarchal structures and systems within which the union and its organs are functioning. A need for a gender-partnership and power-sharing to move beyond the present gender impasse is required in order to find an alternative, inclusive and compassionate future.

Parpart (1995:3) notes that the literature on women's status in Africa is dominated by the Women in Development approach to the study of women. Steeped in the liberal tradition, this perspective generally accepts Western gender stereotypes as given. While calling for greater equity between men and women, particularly regarding education, employment and other material benefits, Women in Development approach advocates for the most part accept the notion that women are fundamentally responsible for reproductive labour.

Lewis Gordon (1996:7) asserts that patriarchy as it currently exists in Africa must be understood within the context of Africa's peripheral and dependant position within the global power structure (capitalist economy). He borrows from Fanon's idea that the African bourgeois desires to mimic its counterparts in the metropole, thus functioning as subordinate mirror image of the colonial bourgeoisie Fanon (1963:149). This also draws from the





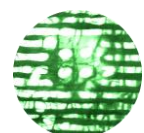
Nkrumahian idea of neocoloniality, the idea of continued colonial power designs that seek to subordinate independent states and their political class to the interests of the former colonial empires Nkrumah (1965). In this sense the African elite are haunted by the scandal of subservience, wretchedness and subordination.

Therefore the discourses in pursuit of African futures must be mindful of the patriarchal system that has inherited an endemic feature of pursing and articulating processes that ought to bring the renewal in the continent. Most African men and women are struggling to survive, and in some cases prosper, within constraints global capitalism impose on their societies. But women typically face more disadvantages and exploitation that men do because the global capitalist system is patriarchal. The patriarchal attitudes and practices, which privilege men, continue to permeate African societies from the level of the family up to the state. Added to this are forms of patriarchy from Western nations that dominate, globally. Western ideas about the sexual division of labour and gender relations are being introduced in Africa.

African advancement of gender transformation must understand that gender is not absolute. It is a manifestation of different systems and structures, be it social, economic, cultural or spiritual within society. The re-writing of African history that continues to disregard women is something that Africa's pursuit of its future should guard against. Mc Fadden (2000) states that the notion of gender is no longer an idea that can be dismissed as 'western' and/or 'other' by an older, formerly hegemonic nationalist discourse, particularly with regards to race and identity. Gender has instead begun to occupy an increasingly central status as a political thinking tool, particularly in terms of comprehensively re-defining African realities within the numerous locations. It is throwing up new discourses that sometimes speak more covertly to unfinished historical tasks relating to our search for freedom as Black women and Black men (McFadden 2000:1).

A decolonial gender transformation beyond the patriarchal system in pursuit of African futures

Oyeronke Oyewumi (2011) and others argue that in order to understand the structures of gender, and gender relations in Africa, we must start with Africa. Also, in order to develop valid theories of gender, all types of experiences from around the world must be documented. That if structures of gender emerged out of particular histories and social contexts, we must pay attention to the continuous ways in which gender is made and remade in everyday interactions and by institutions. In this sense, then, gender is actually more about gendering- a process- than about something inherent in social relations. Given this analysis therefore, it is very clear that effort towards appropriating social relations without unpacking the gendering process which is embedded in the system and structure of patriarchy is to mis-define gender and its transformation.





Augmenting Oyewumi's point mentioned above, Maria Lugones notes that;

The elements that constitute the global, Eurocentred, capitalist model of power do not stand in separation from each other and none of them is prior to the process that constitutes the patterns. Indeed, the mythical presentation of these elements as metaphysically prior is an important aspect of the cognitive model of Eurocentred, global capitalism (Maria Lugones 2008:3).

In this quote, the understanding of Maria Lugones is that in constituting a social classification, coloniality permeates all aspects of social existence and gives rise to new social and geocultural identities. Quijano (2001:1) makes similar argument to that of Lugones that;

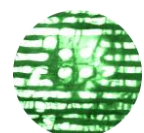
With the expansion of European colonialism, the classification of geocultural identities such as European, Indian, African, etc was imposed on the population of the planet. Since then, it has permeated every area of social existence and it constitutes the most effective form of material and inter-subjective social domination. Thus, "coloniality" does not just refer to "racial" classification. It is an encompassing phenomenon, since it is one of the axes of the system of power and as such it permeates all control of sexual access, collective authority, labor, subjectivity/inter-subjectivity and the production of knowledge from within these inter-subjective relations Anibal Quijano (2001:1).

Therefore a continuous separation of these encompassing phenomena perpetuates their insignificant efforts in as far as gender transformation discourse is concerned.

An analysis of intersection of indicators such as gender, race and class would allow us to redefine the problematique of Africa and Africans and women in particular, it will help us to understand beyond the numbers game the fundamental problem of African challenges. A proper definition of such issues would then allow us to move forward better in addressing such issues. And this way it is possible to address what Thomas Sankara state as a way forward to address the subtle of the system and structure that oppresses women and to significant extent men too.

Decolonising gender argues Maria Lugones (2010) that it is to enact a critique of racialized, colonial, and capital heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social. As such it places the theoriser in the midst of people in a historical, peopled, subjective/intersubjective understanding of the oppressing, resisting relation at the intersection of complex systems of oppression. To a significant extent it has to be in accord with the subjectivities and inter-subjectivities that partly construct and in part are constructed by the situation Maria Lugones (2010:746-747). She further notes that;

To think the scope of the gender system of Eurocentred global capitalism it is necessary to understand the extent to which the very process of narrowing of the concept of gender to



control of sex, its resources, and products constitutes gender domination. To understand this narrowing and to understand the intermeshing of racialization and gendering, it is important to think whether the social arrangements prior to colonisation regarding the “sexes” gave differential meaning to them across all areas of existence Maria Lugones (2008: 12).

A decolonial gender transformation possible for advancing African futures is that which take into cognisance Thomas Sankara’s fundamental problematique of the meaning of women’s emancipation mentioned earlier in the paper. Maria Lugones (2008) augmenting Thomas Sankara’s articulation of the problem of emancipation of women helps us to understand the subtle of the system and structure of patriarchy. she notes as Sankara did that an articulation of the colonial/modern gender system, both in the large strokes, and in all its detailed and lived concreteness will enable us to see what was imposed on us. Worth noting is the empirical evidence presented by Thomas Sankara’s idea of women’s liberation and the inability of the continent to do that allowing the system and structure to perpetuates its imbalances which Maria Lugones captures in the analysis of the Modern/Colonial gender system. Sankara and Lugones allows us to see the fundamental destructiveness of such a system and structure in both a long and wide sense. Maria Lugones allows us to see even further on the subtle of the system that Sankara notes. That in fact the instrumentality of the colonial/modern gender system is subjecting both African women and men in all domains of existence. Maria Lugones in helping us understand the intersections of gender in our society notes that;

“We need to place ourselves in a position to call each other to reject this gender system as we perform a transformation of communal relations” (Maria Lugones 2008:1).

This note from Lugones emanates from her understanding of the intersection of gender, race and class. She understands that gender is not a women issue but rather a systematic and structural limitation of patriarchy which women are at the receiving end of it. Notably from Lugones’s analysis is precisely a fundamental point that

The state of the global power structure and its limitations to advance gender transformation, the limitation of African futures as manifesting in the misinterpreted problematique discussed above allow us to arrive at what Lugones (2008) terms “colonial/modern gender system”. This way we are able to understand that the instrumentality of the colonial/modern gender system is subjecting, both men and women of colour in all domains of existence and therefore allows us to reveal that the gender transformation discourse is not just a women’s emancipation discourse but rather efforts of both men and women to overcoming the colonial global structure that is subjectifying us in different ways. It is important to see that a framework may well be fundamentally critical of the categorical/essentialist logic of modernity and be critical of the dichotomy between women and men, and even of the





dimorphism between male and female, without seeing coloniality or the colonial difference. Such a framework would not have and may exclude the very possibility of resistance to the modern, colonial, gender system and the coloniality of gender because it cannot see the world.

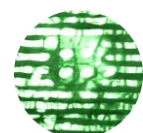
Augmenting the critical argument of gender and the global power structure as demonstrated by the above argument, in the context of Marxism, the Paris Latin American Women's group in Iman et al (1997) had this to say;

To believe that by switching from one mode of production to another we destroy, not only women's oppression but an entire conceptualisation of the world, of the state, of power, women, children, education is to castrate Marxism by reducing it to a very crude form of economism in order to avoid calling into question, first of all, the power, hierarchy and vertical structure of our political organisations and the power which our dear, male comrades have held throughout history (Iman et al 1997:201).

This means that gender subordination requires to be located not merely in the dynamics of production (or of particular modes) but in a 'net of cultural habits' which are in turn sustained as an activity of both sexes Haug in Iman et al (1997:201-202). Arguing further, Iman et al (1997) emphasises the multi-layered relationships within which women's oppression is produced and reproduced. That women's oppression can only be understood as an activity of both sexes in gender relations as relations of production. Gender relations permeate the whole of society; they are structures as well as daily practices. They are always in motion and contested. They are full of contradictions and anachronisms. They are themselves always produced anew. Their foundation is the division of labour in the production of life and the means of leaving. Thus, the status of women will improve only with the elimination of the system that exploits them...."Thomas Sankara (1997).

Guided by Decolonial conceptions of the global matrix of power encapsulated in three levels; the coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of being, it is important and fundamental to define the African futures in the context of gender within the context of these three notions of the global matrix of power. This way, an analysis and conception of gender shall not be narrowed down to just an oppression of one by the other but rather the conception of the intersection of gender, race and class and the conception of gender as a systematic and structural phenomenon as inherited from the colonial forms of power.

Outlined earlier that the limitations emanating from the coloniality of gender are at play today and manifest in very shallow ways of belittling the discourse of gender and emancipation of women to incorporation within the patriarchal system, emancipation of women through the numbers game that suggest that to have more women is to resolve the fundamental power problem that is embedded in the system and structure that is gendered, racial and unequal. These efforts while important do not however provide a clear view of what the futures of Africa hold in as far as gender transformation is concerned. It is not clear whether these





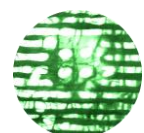
efforts provide the shifting poles between men and women. Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator provides a warning of such a phenomenon when he states in his book titled ‘the pedagogy of the oppressed’ that;

‘The initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tends themselves to become oppressors, or sub-oppressors. The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men (humans); but for them, to be men (human) is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity. This phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience, adopt an attitude of “adhesion” to the oppressor. Under these circumstances they cannot “consider” him sufficiently clearly to objectivise him – to discover him “outside” themselves. This does not necessarily mean that the oppressed are unaware that they are downtrodden. But their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression. At this level, their perception of themselves as opposites of the oppressor does not yet signify engagement in a struggle to overcome the contradiction; the one pole aspires not to liberation, but to identification with its opposite pole’ Paulo Freire (19).

This Brazilian scholar articulates well what seems to be the glaring horizon of the discourse of gender transformation. Where a black men’s aspiration is to become a white men and like a white men treat women as objects rather than subjects of humanity and a black women whose aspiration is to be like a men so that they too secure an extent of advantage to the system. Out of such an analysis this paper emphasises the alternative that should provide a different horizon as the one defined by Paulo Freire.

This alternative must define the discourse of gender within the Decolonial humanist perspectives where an analysis of gender is not confined to its victims but rather the structure and the system that has deviated both men and women from humanity and victimised them in one way or the other. Decolonial humanism in as far as gender is concerned must move beyond the use of males as subject of humanity with which women should be measured against.

Decolonial humanism in as far as gender is concerned must use the tools of analysis of coloniality (coloniality of power, knowledge and being) and unpack such tools and what each mean in as far as gender and its transformation is concerned. It is in using such tools of analysis that we begin to seek the humanity through Decolonial humanism. This is done so that the image of men that defines humanity in the modern colonial world is not taken as a given but deconstructed beyond naturalisation of gender hierarchy. In such efforts I believe a beginning to a meaningful gender transformation and therefore equal African futures is explorable.





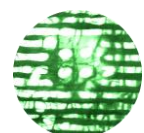
Conclusion

In my conclusion I reiterate that African futures remain a possibility subject to reconfiguration of the system and structure of power that has remained patriarchal 51 years since the Independence of Africa and the formation of the organisation of African Union, a body that supposedly a vanguard of African futures of its citizens, men and women. The modern world system and its global orders have remained fundamentally patriarchal and this means that any initiative aimed at creating African futures has to address the fundamental question of the liberation of women. The first step as argued by Thomas Sankara is to try to understand how the patriarchal system functions, to grasp its real nature in all its subtlety, in order then to work out a line of action that can lead to women's genuine emancipation. Decolonising gender therefore becomes a necessary task so that answers to what should be done are formulated from the perspective of asking correct questions.

Colonial/modern gender system a concept helping us to understand that the instrumentality of the colonial/modern gender system is subjecting, both men and women of colour in all domains of existence and therefore allows us to reveal that the gender transformation discourse is not just a women's emancipation discourse but rather efforts of both men and women to overcoming the colonial global structure that is subjectifying us in different ways. It is important to see that a framework may well be fundamentally critical of the categorical/essentialist logic of modernity and be critical of the dichotomy between women and men, and even of the dimorphism between male and female, without seeing coloniality or the colonial difference. Such a framework would not have and may exclude the very possibility of resistance to the modern, colonial, gender system and the coloniality of gender because it cannot see the world

Guided by Decolonial conceptions of the global matrix of power encapsulated in three levels; the coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of being, it is important and fundamental to define the African futures in the context of gender within the context of these three notions of the global matrix of power. This way, an analysis and conception of gender shall not be narrowed down to just an oppression of one by the other but rather the conception of the intersection of gender, race and class and the conception of gender as a systematic and structural phenomenon as inherited from the colonial forms of power.

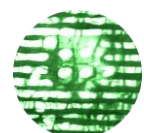
This alternative must define the discourse of gender within the Decolonial humanist perspectives where an analysis of gender is not confined to its victims but rather the structure and the system that has deviated both men and women from humanity and victimised them in one way or the other. Decolonial humanism in as far as gender is concerned must move beyond the use of males as subject of humanity with which women should be measured against.





References

- African Union Gender Policy. 2009. REV 2/Feb 10, 2009
- Gordon, A. A. 1996. Transforming Capitalism and Patriarchy: Gender and Development in Africa. Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc.
- Falola, T. 2001. Nationalism and African Intellectuals, Rochester: The University of Rochester Press.
- Fanon, F. 1968. The wretched of the Earth. New York: Grove Press.
- Freire, P. 1970. Pedagogy of the oppressed. Bloomsbury Publishing USA
- Grosfoguel, R. 2007, The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms, in Cultural Studies, 21, (2/3) (March/May): 203-246.
- Iman, A, Mama, A, Sow, F. 1997, Engendering African Social Sciences, CODESRIA, Dakar
- Lugones, M. 2010. Towards a Decolonial Feminism. Hypatia vol. 25, no. 4 pp 742-74.
- Lugones, M. 2008. The Coloniality of Gender. In Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise, Spring, pp. 4-17.
- Martin, O. 2013. The African Union's Mechanisms to Foster Gender Mainstreaming and Ensure Women's Political Participation and Representation. International IDEA, Strömsborg, Stockholm, Sweden
- McClintock, A. 1995. Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and sexuality in the colonial contest. *RGender Epistemologies in Africa*
- Mc Fadden, P. 2000. Issues of Gender and Development from an African Feminist Perspective. Lecture presented in honour of Dame Nita Barrow, at the centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, Bridgetown, Barbados November, 2000
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2013. Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa: Myth of Decolonisation. Dakar, CODESRIA.
- Nkenkana, A. 2014. Building Critical Consciousness for Advancing African Renaissance: Case Study from Pan-African and Afrocentric Institutions, unpublished text.
- Oyewumi, O. 2011. Gender epistemologies in Africa: Gendering Traditions, Spaces, Social Institutions, and Identities. Palgrave Macmillan
- Oyewumi, O. 1997. The Invention of Women: Making an African sense of Western Gender Discourses, University of Minnesota Press, United States of America.





Parpart, J.L. 1995. Gender, Patriarchy and Development in Africa: The Zimbabwean case. Working paper #254, Women and International Development, Michigan State University.

Quijano, A., 2000, 'The Coloniality of Power and Social Classification', in Journal of World-Systems Research, 6 (2), (Summer/Fall 2000a): 342-386.

Sankara, T. 2007. Women's liberation and the African freedom struggle, New York: Panaf

Vaughan, R. P. 2012. Gender Equality and Transnational civil society: Shifting global power relations and the post-MDG Agenda. Global thematic consultation, Institute of Education, University of London October.

