Women's Agency: A reflection on the Big Three Transformative Fit Model

Francis Onditi[1]

1 Riara University School of International Relations and Diplomacy

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Abstract

Efforts have been made by African women and other gender-based movements to keep alive the spirit of African Unity and to make the women's agenda truly Pan-African. This thinking motivated the early Pan-Africanists in diaspora, such as George Padmore, Aime Cesaire, CLR James and the post-colonial Africa leaders at the fifth Pan-African Conference held in Manchester, United Kingdom, 15–21 October 1945. The ingenuity of this thinking was to promote the formation of a cadre of transformative leaders, particularly women, who would then contribute to Africa's socio-economic and political development. However, Marcus Garvey's vision of a platform for black empowerment lost impetus as post-colonial manipulation and personal gain compromised the dream of independence, the very basis for dignity and empowerment of the African people. In the post-independence Africa, although the core of the Beijing Declaration was to empower women and create space for their participation, the need to pitch this aspiration on solid principles of 'thought leadership', 'thought liberation' and 'critical consciousness', as espoused by Vusi Gumede, is unavoidable.

Keywords: thought leadership, thought liberation, critical consciousness.

Introduction

My first encounter of the relationship between *political struggle* and *women's empowerment* outside Africa came while attending a course on *leadership and women's empowerment* at the famous Golda Meir MASHAV Carmel International Training Centre (MCTC) in Haifa, Israel in June 2017. In this cohort, there were two ladies (probably in their mid-twenties); one, by the name of Aichurek Kurmanbekova from Kyrgyzstan, had just completed her studies in political science while Aria Youssef, from Kurdistan, was undergoing her studies in architecture at a university in Germany. These two career ladies wondered whether their respective country's political regimes could ever become progressive to allow women access leadership opportunities. In one of the sessions, Kurmanbekova from Kyrgyzstan posed a very intelligent question; is it possible whether women who benefit from a 'quota system' to enter parliament can advocate for their fellow women in

turn to be elected?

Similar curiosity emerged from Youssef from Kurdistan, who emphatically implored colleagues to enjoin her in a global campaign to ensure that her country, Kurdistan, gained political independence. Though the relationship is far from perfect, Youssef and Kurmanbekova's conception of 'political struggle' in their respective countries is a mirror of how gender equality relates to a country's degree of democratic consolidation (*The Economist,* 2011). In other words, the nature of governance, and political dispensation determines a country's economic and socio-cultural stability (Aryeetey and Moyo, 2012).

Kurmanbekova and Youssef's world views are largely influenced by their political and cultural systems back home; Kurmanbekova comes from a society that still relies on Russia for several aspects of life including language and the education system (Lewis, 2015), and Youssef is from the conflict-ridden Kurdish lineage. The Kurdish liberation struggle and peace negotiation spans across Middle East; Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran (Yegen, 2016). In my view the two young women demonstrated budding leadership qualities that go beyond individuals. When I reflected on the significance of the young women's dilemmas and aspirations, the inseparable linkages were illustrated between *political struggle, women's empowerment* and the three 'instruments' of leadership as espoused by Gumede: 1) thought leadership; 2) thought liberation; and 3) critical consciousness (2015a).

Indeed, the three leadership conception have been analysed in various theoretical frameworks-*essentialism*, *rationalism*, *critical theory* to *constructionism* (Ludorf et al. 2017; Dartey-Baah, 2014). However, there is still limited focus on the intersection of *thought leadership* and gender, especially regarding the issue of women in politics and development processes. At policy level, normative frameworks exist in different African states on the inclusion of women in decision-making processes (Bawa and Sanyare, 2013; Goetz, 1998). However, the participation of women is still far from a taken-for-granted reality. Scholarship on gender and women issues can take either global or Pan-African perspectives (Alahira, 2014).

A Pan-African dream envisages an African land that espouses inclusivity, integrated political life and economies, good governance, and peace among others. These concepts form part of the building blocks that moulds the development map towards a united Africa, where all people, regardless of gender, can access opportunities equally. Although the agenda represents an epitome of Africanisation development, the framework falls short of an important ingredient-*thought leadership*. This is particularly true considering the fact that Western ideologies, models and frameworks continue to dominate the conceptualisation and implementation of development initiatives on the continent (Albirini, 2008; Matunhu, 2011). Scholars have argued that consideration is required in order to dismantle Western domination (Mazrui, 1967; Martin, 1985) and to develop an independent and truly African social science tradition. This would allow them to reflect on African problems and address the challenges confronting the African socio-economic and political fabric. On a similar note, Mlambo observed that:

> *Western science and capitalism, have led to the domination and marginalization of the African continent through imposing an alien world view, institutions and practices on African societies, being dismissive of African*

> *knowledge, cultures and institutions and promoting Western ones and also through imposing an economic regime that underdeveloped the continent and bequeathed weak and skewed economies to the incoming independent governments (Mlambo, 2006: 176).*

It is against this vicious cycle of intellectual dependency that Gumede argues that 'the entrapment of African leadership and citizenry by the aforementioned foreign opinions makes thought liberation an important imperative' (Gumede, 2015a). This, coupled with low levels of critical thinking otherwise known as *thought leadership* in this article, traps and sustains African people in the chains of poverty and paucity of 'real' development (Gumede, 2015b). Yet thought leadership, which essentially is what the African 'soil' is lacking in the 21st century, has the potential of incubating progressive ideologies, beliefs and movements being championed by women and other gender advocates that would, in turn, create the 'Africa we want'. The dilemma is how do we create the 'Africa we want'? Some scholars have espoused that the continent requires thought leadership defined by the African intellectualism (Gumede, 2015a; Mazrui, 2005). In this debate, however, there seems to be one line of thought that remains swept under the carpet - the role of women emancipation towards regaining the 'Africa we want'. In this article women's emancipation is defined as conditions necessary for advancing women socially, economically and politically through the institutionalisation of ideologies such as thought leadership and Pan-Africanism.

Thus, the fundamental question remains; leadership, liberation and critical thinking may just remain buzz words if structures are not put in place to institutionalise them. This article argues that the institutionalisation of these concepts through an appropriate structure is inevitable. In this article, the notion of '*African intellectual architecture'* (AIA) is coined to support in consolidating the Pan-African ideological traits, and hence reinforce the women's movement for socio-economic and political development.

In order to address the policy lacunae, this article employs Gumede's three 'instruments' that he believes are critical to the advancement of African development (Gumede, 2015a). Section one of this article lays the foundation by identifying concepts and exploring their linkages to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). Section two examines Gumede's three instruments of thought leadership: 1) thought leadership; 2) thought liberation; and 3) critical consciousness. This article contributes to Gumede's philosophy of thought leadership by interrogating the linkages between 'women's movement,' and thought leadership as a means of ensuring gender equality for development.

Conceptual Framework: Thought Leadership

Gumede's philosophy and methods of analysing 'leadership' is a philosophical treatment of the use of a Pan-African lens in addressing some of the development dilemmas Africa faces in the 21st century. In one of his latest publications on *thought leadership*, Gumede reiterates that the starting point is the understanding that the continent requires 'thought leadership' as it links to the process of decolonising the minds of Africans (2016b). The implication of Gumede's philosophy is that if scholars and practitioners took his arguments seriously, a more considered and reflective form of enquiry in gender and women studies could emerge. Other scholars, such as Nkenkana, views thought leadership from a

gender perspective (Nkenkana 2015). In other words, thought leadership also implies extricating women from the complex systems of oppression. And, as such, creating conditions necessary for advancing women's inclusion in various socio-economic and political systems of a society. Such insights demonstrate the payoffs to a more systematic integration of policy and scholarship on leadership, institutional evolution and women's quest for representation in key national and global processes - peacebuilding, politics and development.

From a Pan-African perspective, the notion of thought leadership is characterised by four attributes: 1) ability to inspire other leadership; 2) imagination ignition; 3) exploding old myths; and 4) illuminating paths to the future that others can follow (Nkenkana 2015).). This implies that under the influence of such leaders, institutions should depict a radical departure from the norms or 'business as usual', and instead, champion new ideas rather than be concerned with managing people (Ryde 2008). On a similar note, Gumede (2015b) argues that responding to the institutional challenges facing Africa will require integrating thought leadership into the African development agenda. The growing interest in the need to institutionalise thought leadership is primarily driven by the fact that while Africa's development and economic integration continues apace, studies indicate that unleashing the development potential rests in the ability of institutions to not only reform their political architectures (Cheeseman, 2016), but also to capacitate women to significantly contribute to leadership in all aspects of life.

Thought leadership also encompasses democratic principles; egalitarian, ephemeral, non-hierarchical, and is not easily monopolised. This means that, unlike the traditional concept of 'leadership' that needs to exist for the life of the organisation, thought leadership starts with the spark of a new idea and ends with the implementation readiness for the idea. Likewise, women's ability to elevate innovation is a grand strategy as an integral part of thought leadership within the framework of partnership between United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (shortened as, UN Women) and women's movements across the world, and particularly in Africa. The strategy not only provides a platform for evolving societal values, but also acts as a tool for the strategic engagement of women in politics by advocating violence free electoral processes as part of the protection of women (Wekwete, 2016; Tripp, 2003).

Indeed, Adams (2016) observes that in order for women to contribute to legislation, and avert potential political violence, deliberate efforts must be undertaken to illuminate their capabilities through the institutionalisation of initiatives such as thought leadership. The paucity of thought leadership in the political arena has always been blamed on electoral related tensions or violence that rocks African countries during elections. In situations of violence, studies have shown that women are disproportionately exposed to risks of gender-based violence and sometimes disempowered to voice their opinion (Ndlovu and Mutale, 2015). It is critical therefore, to ensure the institutionalisation of thought leadership in African states, in order for women to make significant contributions to decision making, not only during election, but across the full cycle of socio-economic development.

It is against this vicious cycle of gender inequality in leadership that Pan-African scholars, such as Gumede, argue that 'the entrapment of African leadership and citizenry by the said foreign thoughts make thought liberation an important imperative' (Gumede, 2015a). This, coupled with low levels of critical thinking otherwise known as transformative thought leadership in this paper, traps and tethers African people in the chains of poverty and circles of gender inequality

(Gumede, 2015b). Yet thought leadership, which essentially is what the African 'soil' is lacking in the 21st century has the potential of building a set of progressive ideologies, belief systems and movements that will liberate women and other marginalised groups from oppression (Poncian and Mgaya, 2015).

It is not difficult to link the lack of qualities of thought leadership with the exclusive style of politics in many of the African states. The key contention of thought leadership is that top-down leadership styles lead to the exercise of personal power by a few dominant individuals, which is often in direct contradiction to the will of collective. This conception of power has been viewed as retrogressive and that it only serves to promote capitalism, leading to domination and marginalisation of other groups of people with limited influence (Gumede, 2015a: 100). Based on a similar notion of domination by the few, advocates of thought leadership also contend with the perennial exclusion of women in politics and peace building. Such a notion of leadership takes into account the actual reality of gender exclusion. In Kenya, for example, the new Constitution that was promulgated in 2010 states that no single gender should make up more than two thirds of the membership of an elected or appointed public body. The progress around this provision has been sluggish and contentious, hence, women's substantive participation in politics, national cohesion and integration is not meaningfully implemented.

Gumede's philosophy enables vast inroads towards understanding the novelty of embedding values in leaders. However, the major problem with which leadership architecture in Africa has grappled over the years is the lack of mechanism for citizens to hold leaders accountable. This is linked to the lack of ideology in the political space, monetisation of the political process, expanding the basis of political participation and canvassing alternative policy agendas (Obi, 2015). The personalised nature of rule in so many African countries means not only that public policy making lacks the logic that typically characterises such an activity but also that governance structures are largely based on the 'big man' syndrome, informal network (Beresford, 2016). Such conditions dissuade the majority of people from engaging leaders in decision making. Over time, the political power in Africa became concentrated in one political party and finally in the hands of one leader. This enabled the rise of supremacy of the office of President to all organs of government. This varies from one regime to the other.

In context where the autocratic hold is slightly weaker, civic and political actors may take advantage of cracks within the regime to engage at the community or local level or work with nascent opposition parties. In authoritarian countries, the space for independent activism by women's groups is severely constrained. Gender equality can be seen by state authorities, and even within the broader society, as a threat to national culture or religious practices. When non-state actors challenge stereotypes on the role of women, activists are at risk of repression by governments and often local communities. To the extent that autocrats support ratification of international conventions on women's rights it may be 'to obscure the authoritarian nature of the government… (though they) have little intention of implementing such instruments' (Htun and Weldon, 2010). Based on this understanding, the following section examines Gumede's three instruments of thought leadership (thought leadership, thought liberation and critical consciousness) in the perspective of GEWE in Africa.

Thought Leadership and Women's Empowerment

There have been efforts to link leadership to women's empowerment. Women face several obstacles when participating in political life; cultural norms, structural barriers, discriminatory laws and gendered institutions still limit women's options to run for, and be elected to political office. Despite this causal-effect relationship, there seems to be no consensus as to whether 'gender equality' can be considered as a means for achieving sustainable development (Onditi and Odera, 2016: 2). In other words, the problem is not just economics or politics; it is systemic - ideological, institutional and epistemological. Elsewhere, we have argued that, the term 'empower,' unlike 'power' relates to the transformative capability of individuals to influence others towards a desirable status (Cheeseman, Onditi and D' Alessandro, 2017). Although the concept of 'power' positively correlates to the term 'empower', the former is more *status* and *dominan*ce. Status and dominance in relation to gender equality are simply 'statures' of *capitalism*, bigotry and disrespect for human dignity. The irony is that the flip side of these depravities are values and norms that anchor the very notion of gender equality and women empowerment.

Indeed, it has been a constant feature in African development discourses to link Pan-Africanism to the women's movement and by extension gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE). Pan-African ideology stresses solidarity and alliances, including women's movements, self-leadership and self-reliance for Africa in order to prosper, empower and fulfil the destiny of all African people globally irrespective of their gender (Alexander, 2003). Women's movements, on the other hand, tend to have differences in terms of ideologies, motives and structures (Baritono, 2008. They take up any issue that members consider to be important. They engage with social change in areas of gender equality, women's rights, political and economic empowerment, and unity above ethnic cleavages (Ferree and Muller, 2004). Women's movements are influenced by both internal and external forces in terms of the context of institutions and alliances (De Waal, 2005). Like the Pan-African movement (Andrian, 1962), the women's movement is a political and ideological ideal that closely intersects Pan-Africanist ideology and agenda. The women's movement is also similar to thought leadership in that both embody social activism and intellectualism that see women coming together to develop and share ideas, and to think about common problems, possibilities and capabilities (Ryde, 2008).

Africa hosts the ten fastest growing economies in the world (World Bank, 2015). In addition the continent is home to a country with the highest percentage of women representation in parliament - Rwanda (63.8%) (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015). Critiques have been unsure that this outlook considered all factors confronting the continent post-2015 sustainable development (Fosu, 2016). Despite this impressive progress, the leadership 'ceiling' is not yet broken, particularly in leadership spaces in both private and public sectors (African Development Bank, 2015). However, the traditional masculine intellectual architecture that dominates the market not only under-utilises the female talent pool but also under-employs and consequently undervalues women. This is a situation that is not peculiar to Africa alone, but is actually the norm in most countries.

The situation is, however, exacerbated in the African context where cultural roles for women are still defined by outdated perceptions that bar their being seen, let alone considered, for decision-making positions. Women hold 12.7% of board directorships (364 out of 2,865) in 307 listed companies based in 12 African countries. This is 4.6% lower than the 17.3% women's representation on the boards of the 200 largest companies globally (African Development Bank, 2015). The

persistent inequality, despite economic prospects on the continent, is a motivation to reflect on emerging ideas and models, such as Gumede's three instruments of leadership; thought leadership, thought liberation and critical consciousness (Gumede 2015b).

Gumede's model of critical thinking is an epistemological reflection of Freire who defines consciousness as 'learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive instruments of reality' (Freire, 1970). This fits well with the conception of this article that in order to achieve the 'Africa we want,' women's struggle in the face of socio-cultural paradoxes in Africa should be seen bearing fruits of not only gender equality, but also that such values and norms should help to build a progressive society - where both men and women are free from hunger, oppression, servitude and other forms of restriction. This liberation must also be in a position to address gender gaps in politics, decision making and business with inadequate commitment to change.

This policy inadequacy has led to some gender analysts cautioning that economic and political progress in Less Developed Countries (LDCs) can only be realised when decision makers commit to developing policies that will bring about equality between men and women (Duflo, 2012: 1051). In this regard, the Pan-African ideal has the potential of affording the women's movement identity and impetus to influence change. For example, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the rights of women and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the African Union (AU) Gender Policy and other sub regional frameworks such as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Gender Protocol are key to revitalising the agenda for the women's movement (Tripp, 2003; Wanyeki, 2010). However, such opportunities are blighted by the lack of systematic institutionalisation of women engagement. This article addresses the institutional dimension for invigorating a truly Pan-African women's movement (PAWOM).

In order to anchor the debate, this article examines possible linkages between Gumede's three instruments of leadership and GEWE.

Thought leadership: The depth of thought leadership is characterised by four qualities: 1) ability to inspire other leadership; 2) to ignite imaginations; 3) explode old myths; and 4) illuminate paths to the future that others can follow (Butler, 2012). This implies that under the influence of such leaders institutions should depict a radical departure from the norms or 'business as usual', instead, champion new ideas rather than anything to do with managing people (McCrimmon, 2005). In this arena the notion of 'I am the boss' or 'I am the owner of the office' is monstrous. And as Gumede suggests, institutional challenges facing Africa could be treated by integrating thought leadership into the African development agenda (Gumede, 2015a). On a similar note, development scholars have reiterated that thought leadership is about being persistent with change from imperial regimes (Tandon, 2015). The intellectual domination of the West in the development space is also part of what this article refers to as the 'total intellectual liberation struggle.' Moreover, thought leadership is egalitarian, ephemeral, non-hierarchical, and is not easily monopolised (Alhadi, 2014a). This means that, unlike traditional leadership that needs to exist for the life of the organisation, thought leadership starts with the spark of a new idea and ends with the implementation readiness for the idea. A thought leader continues to champion other new ideas until the implementation phase.

Relationships exist between thought leadership and the ability to innovate new ideas (Alhaddi, 2014b. Organisations

globally are starting to recognise that in order to succeed in a global competitive environment, innovation is required. Likewise, women's ability to elevate innovation (Innovation & Leadership, 2008) as an integral part of political leadership is a grand strategy, not only critical as a platform for evolving societal values, but also as a tool for the strategic engagement of women with policy space. The Kenyan example presents mixed engagement of women in policy platforms. The country is currently ranked at position 75, under the World Classification of Women in National Parliaments (Inter-parliamentary Union, IPU 2015). According to the 2015 Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU, 2015), the proportion of female parliamentarians stands at 19.7% within the National Assembly and at 26.7% within the Senate compared to Rwanda's 63.8% (IPU, 2015). The positions of deputy speaker and deputy majority leader are held by women, but only 7 out of the 27 parliamentary committees within the National Assembly are chaired by women. It is ironical that although women comprise 52% of the Kenyan population and 60% of the country's registered voters, political representation is heavily skewed in favour of men (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2017). In regard to executive leadership, 6 of the 18 Cabinet Secretary posts in government are held by women. During the 11th Parliament (2013-2017), almost 30% of the Principal Secretary seats are also occupied by women (Kenya Women Parliamentary Association, KEWOPA 2016).

The foundation of the Pan-Africanist ideology is based on the belief that only full political unity and justice will bring the desired liberation (Kasanda, 2016). The struggles range from racial discrimination, slavery, respect for human dignity and gender equality and women empowerment. Three perspectives can be used to explain the need for African unity and therefore integration (Morakinyo, 2016; Cervenka, 1977). The first perspective as cited is that by integrating and uniting, Africa would be better placed to respond to the challenges brought on by globalisation (*Association of Political Science Newsletter*, 2001:17). This perspective presupposes that an integrated Africa would have a stronger voice in global affairs and as such the benefits accrued would be more tangible for the continent. The second perspective is based on the notion that the majority of states in the world are following the path of integration and as such, African states must reposition. The third perspective is primarily based on the notion that even in the post-colonial international system, Africa continues to be oppressed and disadvantaged politically, economically, socially and racially (Mazrui, 2001). It is therefore, only through thought leadership that solid African integration can counter the negative forces of neo-colonialism and consequently change its disadvantaged position in the international order (Obi, 2015).

In his articulation of how Africa should deconflict the intractable development paradox, Gumede recommends that African political leadership has to deal with its shortcomings, including the lack of willingness to accept correction or criticism from people that occupy 'lower echelons' and citizens in general (Gumede, 2015a).The former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, expressed a similar view when he declared that despite Africa's victory over colonialism and racism, full reintegration is required to reinforce Africa's unity and cooperation (Obasanjo, 2001). Although regional integration in Africa has been pursued with varying levels of success, there remains a huge gap with respect to social integration and inclusivity. In other words, women's participation in cross-border trade and other progressive initiatives within the realm of integration remains oppressed. Yet, the link between gender equality, women's empowerment and societal development cannot be underestimated. These inequalities and violence against women at various levels of society can only be addressed by the removal of policies that reinforce gender inequalities, and also by formulating and enforcing laws that seek to improve women's economic empowerment.

It is for this reason that Wekwete recommends alternative measures to improve women's economic empowerment including the revision of regulations to increase women's participation in the labour market: 1) skills training; 2) policy reforms on regulations that hinder women's empowerment; 3) setting up of micro-credit schemes; 4) use of technology to access markets such as mobile phones to release women's time in caring and domestic work; 5) fostering of partnerships by providing funding to women - cash transfers and welfare funds; 6) subsidised or publicly provided child care and skill training; and 7) improving infrastructure services such as water and electricity (Wekwete, 2016). At a regional level, capacity development initiatives that could enhance the *Ubuntuism* and consequently increase visibility of women in the Pan-African movement are embodied in developing standards, encouraging women-led executive coaching initiatives and increasing capacities of women with expertise to voluntarily undertake mentorship to young upcoming leaders (Morakinyo, 2016).

Thought leadership, despite its many interpretations embodies two things: vision and change. Transformative leadership seeks to confront the status quo for a new order able to achieve the extraordinary and radically impact the how, why, who and when. In this regard, regional integration is to be understood in terms of the interest and strategies of groups' power (Pederson, 2002). It is plausible to liken Pederson's idea of groups' interest to leadership within the women's movement, in that the power of women's alliance in Africa is viewed as a catalyst towards achieving the women's agenda. The theory of change in the women's movement is that, as a result of this alliance building, women will contribute to national interests and foster cooperation and socio-economic interaction that will lead to integration with other states. As a glaring oversight, Pan-Africanism does not make allowance for consideration of women coalitions in its calls for unity. What the Pan-African scholarship does is to explore the sentiment of similarities of the origin of African people and their experience towards integration.

In today's world, sentiment and similarities of origin are not sufficient mobilising forces and economic resources for integration through regional organisations (Geda and Kebret, 2016). The very core of Pan-Africanism is embedded in the epitome of the 'motherland' on which its tenets of solidarity and equality are anchored. Introducing gender equality and women's empowerment in this paradigm is to draw on the inherent values of dignity and non-discrimination. In the 21st century, GEWE has been securely lodged in development efforts. Indeed, Ogato has cautioned that without gender equality and women's empowerment regarding policy measures, it is hardly possible for even Middle Income Countries (MICs) of Africa to realise poverty reduction goals and sustainable development goals (SDG), targets and sustainable development objectives (Ogato, 2013). As illustrated in this article, there are examples that epitomise African women's contributions to both political and economic causes in Africa, however, sustainability and replication of such gains will require intertwinement of both values of thought leadership and well-calibrated action plans on how each strategy will be implemented and distributed across gender.

Thought Liberation: There is a slim dividing line between the economic and political liberation movement in Africa. This is because the contemporary perspective of the cause-effect relationship of the liberation movement identifies issues such as the need to increase attractiveness of African markets to foreign investors; positive and sustained rates of gross domestic product (GDP) growth, as well as productivity growth; developing new infrastructure projects; and the growth of

a middle class with considerable consumptive capacity and potential political weight (Beresford, 2016). Of specific interest to political liberation is the struggle of a homogenous group of people (in this case women) to safeguard the human security needs of its people (Cantwell, 2015). It is perhaps for this reason that Gumede believes that Africa's current status is historically defined by outdated colonial actions, and therefore, African descent should be taken into account (Gumede, 2015a). This should be the practice for example, when responding to development challenges; in fact, the search for development solutions should be framed in a way that recognises the ingenuity of Pan-African ideologies. The logic of the 'market' does not necessarily offer sustainable solutions to the majority of the population. Instead, such systems advance capitalistic tendencies that cause conflict and not harmony. The implications of exiting neoclassical models of development have pushed women further to the periphery, hence, perpetuating inequalities.

Pan-Africanism stems from the desire for full political unity of African people for political and economic liberation, especially from the shackles of racism and colonialism (M'bayo, 2005:19). Adi and Sherwood argue that there has never been a universally accepted definition of what constitutes Pan-Africanism (Adi and Sherwood, 2003). Acknowledging that Pan-Africanism has taken different forms at different historical moments and geographical locations, Badejo (2008) defines Pan-Africanism as a socio-political worldview, philosophy, and movement which seeks to unify native Africans and those of African heritage into a 'Global African Community (GAC).' Badejo reiterates the role of intellectualism, citing scholars such as Cheikh Anta Diop and Theophile Obenga, who have used the term to mean advocacy for political unification (Badejo, 2008). These perspectives agree with both Gumedes' conceptualisation of thought liberation as well as the women's movement, both as a philosophy and as political ideology. Lessons from South Africa indicate that women stood their ground to fight apartheid, yet when they resisted some of the male figures in authority, they were vilified (Koni, 2015).

Global development frameworks such as the Copenhagen Declaration of the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD) compliment well with regional frameworks. Both WSSD and the African Union Agenda 2063 called for the recognition that empowering people, particularly women, to strengthen their capacities is a main objective of development. It is, however, important to emphasise the fact that empowerment goes beyond norms to instil the culture of mainstreaming the inspirations of women, men, girls and boys into the heart of planning, formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions that determine the functioning and well-being of the society. This is what Doss (2002), refer to as 'action on agenda for women's empowerment.' The AU recognises gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) as one of the key pillars of human development (Kabeer, 2003). Indeed, the AU agenda 2063 is premised on several pillars, some of which are respect for human rights, good governance and democratic institutions. This resonates with the ideals of a united women's movement. Nevertheless, African girls and women still experience several forms of deprivation, including lack of adequate representation in leadership and decision-making positions. Pan-African institutions such as the Thabo Mbeki Leadership Institute (TMALI), established to promote African ideologies, require political will from Pan-African champions in developing visionary and long-term strategies around the question of developing a 'real' women's movement platform through transformative training, coaching and mentorship. Indeed, the process of thought liberation involves three interconnected cognitive processes: 1) unlearning; 2) relearning; and 3) unthinking and rethinking dominant thought patterns (Ratcliff, 2009; Campbell, 1996). Women empowerment and gender

equality will require similar treatments in order to build alternative development frameworks that are gender responsive.

In spite of all these normative and practical efforts towards increasing women's visibility, their contribution remains less illuminated on the continent. James observes however that the history of Pan-Africanism and the liberation struggle is adorned by the names and contributions of men but one has to delve deep to find women recognised as having played a part in the movement (James, 1984). Moreover, women who were allies and full time assistants to leading Pan-Africanists are seldom mentioned in the chronicles of the movement. Little is known, for example, of women such as Mrs. Williams, wife of Henry Sylvester Williams a leading Caribbean Pan-Africanist and Dorothy who worked for George Padmore. Despite that, there are examples of women like Selma James; Peggy Antubs; Andayie; and Ford Smith. Peggy Antubs's work created awareness and brought to the fore the plight of Caribbean women, observing that they bore the bigger impact of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) structural adjustment programs. Her argument that women be integrated into development and that gender is a critical component in the planning process, cannot be over-emphasised, particularly when viewed in line with the work on thought liberation as articulated by Gumede (2015a).

It took a liberation struggle by the women's movement to revise The Beijing Platform for Action 1995 at the 23rd Special Session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly held in June 2000. This approach to issues by women encouraged governments to 'set and promote the use of explicit short and long-term time-bound targets or measurable goals. This included, where appropriate, quotas to promote progress toward gender balance, including women's equal access to and full participation on the basis of equality with men in all areas and at all levels of public life, especially in decision-making positions, in political parties and political activities.' Such platforms present best practices and lessons for future participatory GEWE policy formation, implementation and evaluation. However, there is a need for a learning environment that will set the ball rolling for thought leadership shaping the mind, changing attitudes through what Gumede refers to as the *alternative social projects*. This conception fits well in this article as the outcome of thought leadership conjoined with liberation should be able to promote women's participation in leadership and governance as a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and genuine democracy. Ultimately, this will facilitate women's direct engagement in public decision-making and is a means of ensuring better accountability, not only to women but the entire continent and beyond.

Critical Consciousness: The link between *critical consciousness* and governance lies in the ability of thoughtful leaders to set the agenda and ensure that conducive conditions are set for its implementation and that citizens are free to provide checks and balances through existing accountability mechanisms. In his argument, Gumede (2015a), asserts that there can be no thoughtful leadership if leaders are not trusted by citizens. This conception concurs with the argument in this article that critical consciousness lays the foundation for an Africa that is self-driven and has a reputable and equal standing in global affairs. The constitutive act of the African Union makes clear that the Union is set to accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent, promote peace, security and stability as well as to promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels. African unity encompasses a clear partnership between government and all segments of civil society, including women's movements. The integration and involvement of women and young people to facilitate cohesion amongst African people is also a key aspect of African unity (Adi and Sherwood, 2003).

The limits to successful African critical consciousness in political leadership can be categorised into two broad areas; structural and sociological problems. The structural problems can be further analysed in three dimensions. The first of these dimensions is that of structural poverty within the African continent. Such structures can be both ideological, and institutional. Khadiagala points out that the African continent is plagued with a myriad of failures in terms of governance, policies and administrative institutions, a scenario profoundly manifest in the management of public affairs (Khadiagala, 2011). The second structural problem is the level of organisational maturity within the African Union (Cervenka, 1977). The sociological factors militating against African critical consciousness are primarily the lack of political will by African states to submit their national interests to a supra national body such as the AU or a United State of Africa.

Institutional failures leading to bad governance and lack of critical thinking, the indifference of governments to the rule of law and endless conflicts based on ethnic, sectarian and other civil reasons are also key sociological factors that contribute to institutional failure (Cheeseman, 2016). The implementation for transformative, responsive and disciplined leadership is urgent. In building this calibre of leaders, there must be equal representation of women in politics, government, business and society. Such leaders must be fully equipped with the knowledge, skills, competencies and support systems to bring practical solutions to their communities, countries and continent. In regard to women's movement, Gumede believes that this struggle is legitimised and that such movements have the capacity to offer an alternative leadership platform:

> *It is in this context that other forms of ideological struggles, such as African feminism, could be an answer to the post-colonial development project in contemporary Africa – the neo- colonial state is failing, if it has not already, and liberation movements seem to have failed to transform themselves into vibrant political parties that are capable of pursuing autonomous development paths (Gumede, 2015a: 103).*

In the spirit of integrated development, women's agency is key to promoting principles of good governance as a product of critical consciousness. Governance provides the institutional, legal and political framework not only for the design of poverty reduction policies but also for enhanced capacities of the poor to deal positively with and improve their material conditions. Governance ensures the participation of the poor in decisions that affect them and empowers them to get their views on the policy agenda (Leke and Oluwaleye, 2015). Scholars observes that ideally, working towards good governance means accepting a more nuanced understanding of the evolution of institutions and government capabilities (Poncian and Mgaya, 2015). This also encompasses being explicit about trade-offs and priorities in a world in which all good things cannot be pursued at once; learning about what is working rather than focusing solely on governance gaps; taking the role of government in poverty alleviation seriously; and grounding action in the contextual realities of each country.

African unity, as viewed from critical consciousness, is primarily concerned with an integrated African continent that is equally prosperous and peaceful. It seeks an Africa that is self-driven and has a reputable and equal standing in the global platform. It is only through a united Africa that the continent will be able to pursue its development and integration agenda. It is also recognised that the union can intervene in a member state following the decision of the assembly in respect to

circumstances such as war and crimes against humanity. Another key aspect of African unity is the integration and involvement of women, young people and the private sector to facilitate cohesion amongst African people (Adi and Sherwood, 2003).

In order to effectively deliver its mandate, TMALI, in partnership with other global stakeholders, will be required to draw upon expertise available in the continent by building and enhancing the existing network of leadership. This will bring into play a high calibre of leaders who are linked to tangible and inclusive growth and development outcomes across the continent. The dearth of critical leaders on the continent has been attributed to the intractable cases of corruption and lack of vision for the future generation. There has been an institutional gap in African institutions to develop proper mechanisms and structures that would ensure African countries accrue equitable costs and benefits of development. If this gap was bridged, it would most likely encourage member states to back efforts at supporting women's movement. Member states must also be obliged and feel compelled to honour their financial obligations to the union. Within the African regional arrangement system, if benefits from economic growth are shared in a manner corresponding to responsibility and principles of equity, the likelihood of achieving economic and political integration is enhanced.

Another shortcoming is that Pan-Africanism has been primarily based on the sentiments of the common origin of Africans as opposed to realistic power relations that define the international order (Cox, 1981). This is a challenge for cohesive integration since sentiments alone do not provide a sufficient 'rallying call' for unification. Africa is a continent with diverse cultures, religions and ethnic groups and as such has been challenged in finding common ground. These differences have tended to mark divisions in national and international affairs. There is a lack of consensus on how a supra national body borne out of integration should be administered and structured. A radical faction calls for immediate federation whilst a gradualist opposition composed of countries such as South Africa and Nigeria call for improved regional integration and the need to strengthen and consolidate internal governance and growth structures at the onset. However, states alone may not guarantee enough democratic space for women's significant participation in decision-making processes (Jaysawal, 2013). There is a need to increase participation of non-state actors, and particularly women's movements on strategic issues concerning the AU integration. Currently, the AU refuses to recognise the role of civil society organisations on critical issues affecting the continent such as peace and security. This further dilutes the notion of Pan-Africanism and leads to a lack of inclusivity.

The approach by African states to seek unity and integration based on individual political leadership and hostility against the international community presents a parochial, regional and foreign policy that is not likely to be successful in the continent. This is primarily since the context under which different regions come together to unite are based on narrow individual political interests that may not particularly reflect the needs on the ground, including those peculiar to women.

The African Union must endeavour to achieve contemporary definitions and relevance in order to successfully serve as the normative basis for African integration. Pan-Africanism, in its current context, is fixated in the past and this fixation with racial similarities does not allow it to fully exploit the benefits of a globalising world. Africa should redefine its identities in terms of modern needs and realities. Pan-Africanism and the proposed transition to a United States of Africa need to address the leadership question. Although women's movement or genderism approaches to development may not

necessarily be the panacea for value-driven leadership, they represent a section of the society, which means the continent may not fully exploit its potential if this section is left behind.

Women's Movements: Dilemmas and Prospects

The type of political leadership that articulates the three instruments of development by Gumede is one that is concerned that structures are put in place to guide citizens in harnessing the rich resources of the continent (Gumede, 2015a). However, to influence the political regimes characterised by the 'big man' syndrome on the continent to adopt gender-responsive policies obviously requires a paradigm shift not only in policies and practice, but also mind set transformation. It is on the basis of this state of affairs that the former UN Women Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, Ms. Christine Musisi, reiterates that development in Africa is riddled with paradoxes:

> *"What is the deficit we have in Africa?' We hold 30% of the world's minerals but we are not benefiting. We don't lack wealth but people are starving. We are receiving food instead of giving yet we have 60% of arable land not utilized. We have everything but we don't have anything. The deficit is leadership! If we have people like you who are determined to bring transformation in the way our country and our communities are governed then we need to change the way we think, act and make decision so that these decisions are not just about us as leaders but about the man, woman, girl and boy who depend on us to make the rights decisions." (Personal Interview with the former Regional Director of the UN Women, Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, ESARO Gigiri, Nairobi, October, 2015).*

The Women's movement globally and the type of leadership described by Gumede converge on several indicators; emancipation, human dignity, inclusion, participation and transformative leadership. While many individual women have long raised issues of women's rights, the coalescence into a global movement only became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s (Campbell, 1996). The coming together of women in demanding their political space enabled the African women's movement to make valuable contributions to the international women's movement in terms of agenda setting, models of action, and policy advocacy (Tripp, 2013). It is the force of these movements that gave rise to the 1st World Conference for Women. Over time however an increasingly deep schism has developed over the pathology and agenda of the movement.

Three issues are easily identifiable: the leadership of the movement has aged without a neat handing over of the baton. Younger women thus feel disconnected from the Women's movement which creates a real crisis of continuity. A second issue is the *schism* between the elite and the grass roots community members of the movement. Sachikonye (2010) distinguishes between popular feminism and intellectual feminism within Africa, arguing that the latter often advances a discourse that does not adequately capture the lived experiences of most African women (Toure, cited in Sachikonye, 2010). This implies that the younger generation lacks the serious reflection on African women's conditions and the appropriate solutions to the related problems. A reconciliation of these constituent parts of the movement is sorely needed

for the survival of the women's movement. In the Asian world, the women's movement is sustained through entrepreneurial incubation (Lynch, 2016).

A third element is the agenda and the interests of the different regions. At the Commission on the Status for Women, for example, the issue of sexual orientation and rights has proven deeply divisive especially with many African countries largely opposed to even the inclusion of such items on the agenda. The global women's movement is thus in need of a new consensus. Nonetheless, the women's movement has created and adopted innovative and effective modes of action, organisation and mobilisation with concrete actions that continue to show results in political representation, leadership and agenda setting. But, it is ironic that in most of the leading economies in Africa such as Nigeria only 5.6% of its national parliament members are women, compared to Rwanda's 63.8% (World Economic Forum, 2015). This implies that the old politics of the 'big man' syndrome, political machinations and the hegemonic tendencies commonly practiced by male politicians are not necessarily 'cards' that favour women's survival in politics.

It is also important to note that although the large number of women's representation in political space is a significant step on the women's movement platform, it does not necessarily translate into women occupying senior government leadership positions. Instead, Adams's research in Ghana reveals three important pull factors: 1) a conducive institutional environment; 2) an international context stressing gender-balanced decision making; and 3) an autonomous domestic women's movement, all of which promote women's integration into cabinets, even when pathways to legislative incorporation remain blocked (Adams, 2016). The parity laws that have propelled women's political representation in African countries like Senegal owe their impetus to the agenda of the Women's movement. In 2015 Senegal stood at 42.7% representation compared to Ghana's 10.9% (World Economic Forum, 2015). Feminist scholars argue that the African women's movement can be understood as a sub set of the wider Pan-African aim of promoting equal rights from the point of patriarchal and structural inequalities that continue to belie women (Ferree and Mueller, 2004). It is, therefore, likely that the new breed of African leaders which Gumede mentions in his article refers to women and young people (Gumede, 2015a).

The advent of democracy may have been thought by its very nature to favour GEWE. But great democracies like the United States are yet to elect a woman to the summit of leadership although there was no strong women's movement advocating this during the 2016 US campaign, a clear subjection of the women's agenda to that of the political party. In Africa, a country like Botswana is regarded as the epitome of democracy yet the country's democratic space manifests huge gender gaps. Botswana has a strong attachment to its traditional cultural practices and as a result retains a high affinity to its customary laws. Its plural legal system affects women since the application of law depends on social status and geographical location. The failure to repeal their constitution article 15(4)(c) that opens the door for women's discrimination in areas such as divorce, adoption and marriage is telling of how customs, culture and laws combine to impede progress on GEWE. More tellingly, the Government has failed to ratify the South African Development Community's (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development and the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. The country has one of the lowest percentages of female members in the legislature at only 9.5% compared to South Africa's 42% and Namibia's 41.3% (World Economic Forum, 2015).

The Botswana case represents a host of countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) where women and girls lack space for exercising their potential (Sachikonye, 2010). The country's judiciary has recently set an important precedent by ruling that the *Ngwaketse Customary Law* was discriminatory against women. This may be 'a drop in the ocean', but it does represent some hope for an overhaul of the country's current laws. Botswana and Swaziland remain democracies where patriarchy is staunchly entrenched. But the dilemma remains in that the women's movement is yet to position itself to confront this frontier.

In South Africa, the disappointment with the post-apartheid turn of events, despite programs for Black and Women's empowerment, has given birth to the concept of 'UnFreedom' as a protest against the injustices that continue to characterise the South African society (Hamilton, 2011). It is a protest against the landlessness of the common people and a protest against the lack of recognition to the invaluable contribution that women and young people made to the anti-apartheid movements across South Africa. UnFreedom Day is commemorated on 27 April which is ironically the same day that South Africa celebrates Freedom Day. The collective memory of the public has often excluded women especially in socio-political struggles. Women such as Emma Mashinini who formed the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA), the first union for black shop workers, are hardly referenced in public discourse despite having formed what became the second largest workers' union in the country. Those who have excelled in the mining industry and developed one of the most influential movements, the Association of Women Miners (AWIMA) such as Ms. Kweba Melody are hardly referenced in South African mining policies, yet the country's mining industry is regarded as the most forbidding against miners' rights. In order for Africa to adopt and implement macroeconomic policies and programs that support social reforms, policy actors must recognise the potential of women leaders as agents of change. Without such transformation, efforts such as the Agenda 2063 may prove futile as the markets will remain skewed against women and hence fail to deliver on targeted economic growth rate (Wade, 2009).

Moreover, the challenge in South Africa is that the prevalent narratives of freedom tend to emphasise nationalist based forms of resistance that sought to confront the 'white state' directly, therefore ignoring the contribution of women and the 'gendered nature of the colonised woman'. Women in South Africa continue to struggle against gender-based violence, discrimination and marginalisation. They remain side-lined in the face of a masculine political system and have their space constrained by an equally masculine media. Historical accounts of the struggle against white domination privilege the role of the African National Congress (ANC) yet many of those who took part in the struggle through different forms of civil action remain at the periphery. Workers, of whom a large number were women, were a key part of the mass actions that would eventually lead the oppressive regime to rethink its policies. They actively participated in consumer boycotts (that targeted certain goods) and industrial strikes that had an impact on the state's economy. They organised and participated in marches and demonstrations that highlighted South Africans suffering under apartheid. Yet despite their contribution, women remain outside the 'collective memory of the public'.

In Kenya, the leadership landscape is dynamic. During the 11th Parliament, women occupied approximately 31% of the seats in the entire Kenyan Cabinet. Significantly, women are in charge of some security matters with Ambassador Rachelle Omamo becoming the Cabinet Secretary for Defence. In 2015, the Ministry of Defence recommended Brigadier

General Fatuma Ahmed for promotion to the rank of brigadier, making Ahmed the first female brigadier in Kenyan military history (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Also, Ambassador Monica Juma has been the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of Government since 2014 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is also led by a woman, Ambassador Amina Mohamed. In contrast, women's representation at the county level is low. During the same period (2013-2017), out of the current 47 county governors, none are female. Only 19.2% of the deputy governors are female (KEWOPA, 2016). Also, only 6.1% of Members of the County Assembly and Councillors are female. Indeed, out of a total of 1,450 persons who were directly elected as respective County Assembly Members, only 82 women were elected as members representing only 5% of those directly elected (KEWOPA, 2016). Based on these figures, there is clearly a need to encourage and support women to take up elective positions particularly within political parties, parliament and at the devolved levels of government within the counties.

Lessons from the status of women in Africa reveal that in order for Pan-African institutions to achieve the level of efficiency, social reforms and political participation, it is critical to examine thought leadership and link such values to practice: i) enhance regional and global partnerships; ii) sustaining people network; iii) confronting patriarchy; iv) sustainability; and v) women advocates of gender equality will have to make deliberate efforts to bridge the gap between 'the haves and the have nots' within the echelons of women. This seems to be the only viable way to guarantee the morality of gender equality or women's movements.

Conclusion

The discussion in this article has revealed that the African women's movement, like the Pan-African movement, is anchored on solidarity, self-determination and self-awareness, to fight against imperialism, emancipation, racism, violation of human rights and inequality of economic opportunities for all, including women. It is established, however, that the impetus to achieve this unity is blighted by both institutional and structural problems. Thought leadership, by definition, requires well-developed value systems within African institutions. The leadership landscape is however void of these values leading to less focus on women's issues. As a result, women's movements are oppressed by these clouds of institutional and structural problems. Yet, the article argues that thought leadership, thought liberation and critical thinking is a means to realising gender equality and women's empowerment. In other words, without focus on GEWE policy measures it is unlikely that both LDCs and MICs in Africa will realise poverty reduction goals and SDGs. Efforts being made by women's movements and other Pan-African institutions in addressing capacity issues and mind-set change are commendable. However, more needs to be done for effectual GEWE to be achieved. Adoption and adaptation of good practices of the institutionalisation of *Thought Leadership* as an Africa-born philosophy seem to call for a well-thought out African Intellectual Architecture (AIA) 'housed' and coordinated by an African centre with global reach. Such a move would potentially position African women, and consequently the continent, as a strong and influential global player in reshaping the thinking on the linkages between regional and global norms such as SDGs, the AU Agenda 2063, women's issues and qualitative development.

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