

Challenges in Africa in the context of Contemporary Politics and Culture

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Abstract

African women who constitute nearly half of their continent's population are not treated on par with men in all spheres of human activity. African women writers often grapple with neo-colonialism, racism, poverty, gender bias, ethnic animosity, religious fundamentalism, famine and misrepresentation and in confronting these social challenges, they have created their own stories. The concept of liberty is missing in Africa for far too long.

Keywords : Patriarchy, equality, discrimination, trauma

The concept of patriarchy also is looked at from different perspectives in Africa and is bio-culturally based. The primitive societies are divided up by men and women is given the rule of childbearing and child rearing and man is seen as the provider. African female poets have often reacted to the issue of patriarchy by insisting on the equality of men and women. Ikechukwu Nwakaeze - Ogugua comments on African marriage, "In Africa, a woman is not considered as being a complete person without being identified in her role as wife and relation as mother. She is complete when she has shown herself fertile and productive, that is when she serves as a door to occasion immortality of her husband and husband's people. Men show no concern for the health and happiness of women and women are important primarily

as sex objects. The impression of men's insensitive attitude to women makes a sweeping generalization about the character of man. African society sees nothing wrong in a husband beating up his wife. Physical assault in women, verbal abuse, emotional outburst and disrespect shows the inequality experienced by women. The marital violence and the violence in the patriarchal order creates the atmosphere of women's oppression in vivid ways.”(557)

The pain over the pregnant period of a woman is reflected in this lines "And now I was beginning to feel sharp pains in me and mama saying they are labour pains.. would it be a boy, I thought with intensified wonder, how proud his father would be or would it be a girl, someone I could teach to be just like me." (208) Patriarchy is deeply entrenched in the African blood and the patriarchal burden of dominance is a lament for Africa. The principles of equality, liberty and justice are missing in their economic, social and private lives. Marginalization, mental torture and the biological superiority of one race over the other is seen in Africa. The bleak, pessimistic outlook in Africa and the anguish, and pain of African people are evident. The blatant corruption of the members of the ruling class, rivalry between the ruling class in Africa initiate class conflict in Africa. Both the political class and the intellectual elite are themselves seen as nationalists and the rift between the intellectual elite and the politicians have deepened over time. The tension between the ruling class, unremitting presence of poverty, high crime rates and unemployment is identified as the unfortunate plight of Africa. There are novelists who prominently wrote about the dehumanization and oppression faced by women in the country. Frantz fanon in his book *Wretched of the earth* explains “In the colonial context in Africa, nothing was truer than this fact, especially since colonialism maintained and imposed its power through violence”(211).

According to World health organisation, violence affects millions of women in Africa. In 2005 study on women's health and domestic violence, WHO found that 50% of women in Tanzania and 71% of women in Ethiopia reported violence by husbands or intimate partners. Amnesty International reports that about one woman is killed by her husband or boyfriend every six hours in Africa. Men tend to view violence as a way to solve family conflicts. The plight of African women is so severe and as women are poor and uneducated, the blend of dependence and subjugation makes it very difficult for them. The committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was officially established in 1992 and the committee asked government to identify the customs and practices that causes violence against women. In Africa, men and women legislators together helped to pass the domestic violence act 1998. Law enforcement and mechanisms, including police officers, judges, lawyers, immigration officials, and social workers are trained to respond to the gender discrimination and harassment against women. Ms Kaba, argues that we have to get more women to know their legal rights. We have to teach our people why it is important to protect women and how it benefits the entire community when women are afforded better protection. Domestic violence is a problem affecting the whole community and it is the responsibility of the society as well as the government to take action to eliminate it. Peace building and rehabilitation programs for promoting Human Rights is needed to strengthen Africa.

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