



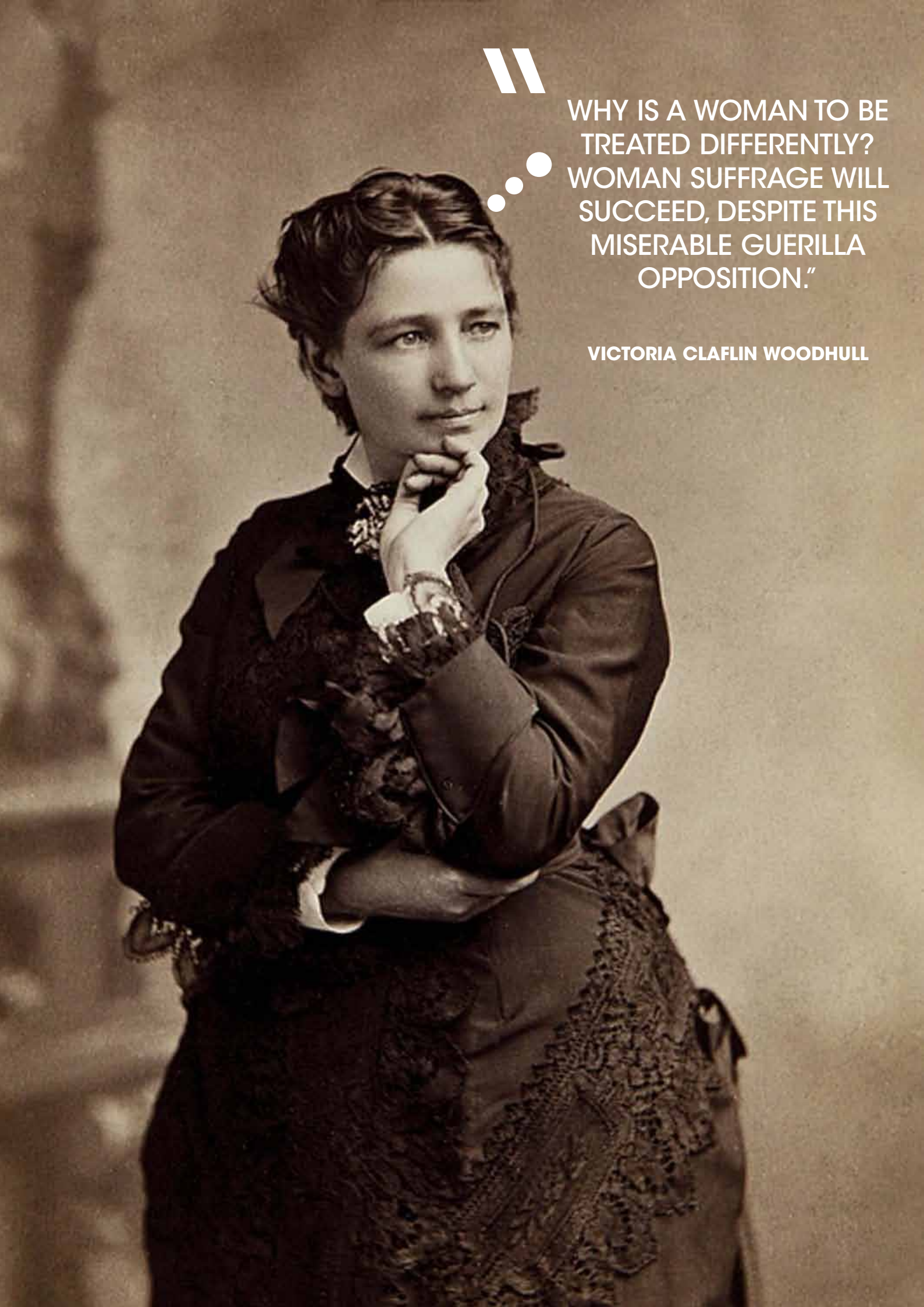
Issue 63 . December, 2017

# Arise

A Women's Development Magazine Published by ACFODE

## INCLUSION & EXCLUSION: WOMEN'S MOVEMENT BUILDING





WHY IS A WOMAN TO BE  
TREATED DIFFERENTLY?  
WOMAN SUFFRAGE WILL  
SUCCEED, DESPITE THIS  
MISERABLE GUERILLA  
OPPOSITION."

VICTORIA CLAFLIN WOODHULL

## Vision

A just society where gender equality is a reality

## Mission

To empower women and influence legislation and policy for gender equality in Uganda

## Core Purpose

Advocacy for gender equality and equity

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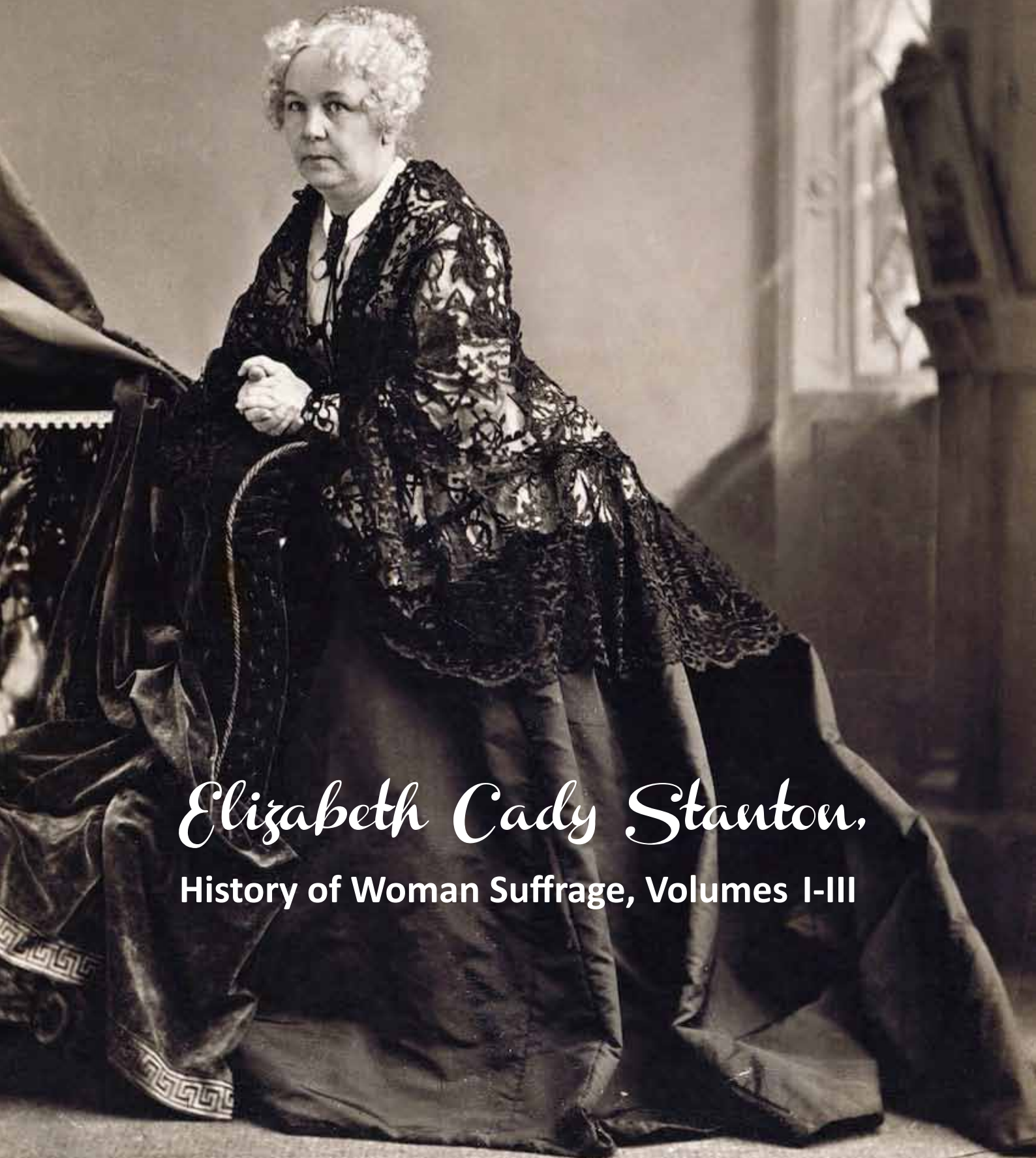
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*"The Happiest People I have known have been those who gave themselves No Concern about their own Souls, but did their uttermost to Mitigate the Miseries of others."*

*Elizabeth Cady Stanton,*

**History of Woman Suffrage, Volumes I-III**





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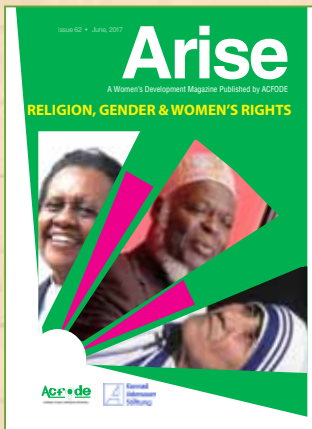


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ORGANISING POWER

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



**Dear Editor,**

Issue 62 of the Arise magazine was very engaging. Thank you for the careful selection of the theme Religion, Gender and Women's rights. I felt like you had touched issues

that are more often ignored and left with little or no redress at all. You provided us with variety and a new angle and reference on issues of gender and religious misconceptions.

**Tendo Christine – Kampala.**

**Dear Editor**

I cannot bring myself to thanking you enough for the distinctive presentation on women's rights in Islam. For so long, society has criticized and tagged violence against women to Islam, something that is not true. Your article on Islam and women's rights addressed my fears and erased my pain. As a Muslim woman, I feel that society now has a good picture of how women in Islam are treated. You have broken the ground and I know there is a lot of good on women and Islam that society needs to understand before pointing attacks to us, the Muslims. Thank you for clearing the air.

**Maryam Kinene- Writer/ English Language teacher, Mandela SSS.**

**Dear Editor,**

Thank you for issue 62 of the ARISE magazine. I was particularly struck by the article on Dr. Sidonia Angom. Her story is very inspiring and gives me hope that one day I too can make it in life and shall be as great and powerful as I wish to be.

**Akello Shanita-Lira District**

**Hello Editor,**

I read your article on divorce and religion in issue 62 with much interest. I concur with the writer that sometimes religion stretches it far and that there should be a balance between what is right and wrong vs. religiousness. I have personally come to agree that puritans are also some of the greatest abusers of human dignity. It is not fair then that one should lose a life just like that because of hoping in forgiveness and reconciliation. Everyone should be held accountable for their actions.

**Jo Oryang- Ntinda.**

**Dear editor,**

Thank you for that exclusive interview with Pastor Sarah Ssegane. Apart from the fact that it was exciting to read about women in ministry, the digest on gender roles in the Pentecostal churches is a fresh one. I have seen several pastors in Uganda but very few of them are women despite the fact that the latter are the biggest number of loyalists to these places. Sarah's story is a remarkable one and she is a force to reckon with. I am eagerly waiting for more of these in your next publication.

**Musoke Ronald – Bwebajja.**

*Thank You!*



**Sandra Nassali**  
Editor In Chief  
arise@acfode.org

# FROM THE EDITOR

On 1 December 1955, a Black American seamstress called Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a public bus for a White American. Miss Parks had no idea what this one act of defiance would come to symbolise. It would not only strengthen the resolve of other Black Americans to be treated with respect and dignity and as fully-fledged citizens of the United States. The civil rights movement that resulted from this one memorable act would later have several spin-offs, including the women's rights movement.

So what is the state of the women's rights movement like today? Though it didn't get off to a flying start at the time when women were starting to come into their own as professionals, entrepreneurs and breadwinners, among others, it did gain a great deal of momentum in the 1980s and 1990s. It is no wonder that it was during this period that the flagship women's organisation in Uganda, Action for Development (ACFODE), was established. Its seminal nature served as an inspiration for the formation of the many organisations that would be set up after it. Of course, the women's movement and the organisations that epitomised it have encountered a number of challenges. Some of these have to do with the socially constructed roles of women, patriarchy, and yet others relate to the ways in which the movement came to be viewed – by commission or omission – by the general public.

Some men, based on the aspirations and demands of the movement, started to look askance at it. They felt that it was something radical that was meant to take away their privileges, to crowd them out of the spaces they had hitherto comfortably occupied, to push them against the wall. In addition, some women – especially rural ones – felt that it was a ploy by some elite women to stack the odds in their favour, with many failing to see its relevance to their day-to-day lives.

However, the activities of the women's movement spoke otherwise and because of this, together with the activities of individual women's rights activists, many of the men and women who were at first skeptical came around. They realised that the movement meant well.

Unfortunately of late the movement seems to have lost momentum much as many young women and men have come on board either to work with it or to give it support. What could have happened?

These are the issues that, besides mulling over the history and contours of the women's movement, Arise 63 delves into. It also comes up with suggestions regarding how to imbue the movement with fresh impetus.

As in earlier issues, Arise 63 also carries reviews of two very engaging works of fiction. The first, entitled *Dance of the Jakaranda*, was written by a Kenyan author, Peter Kimani. It is a historical novel with a multi-layered plot where human foibles and vulnerabilities are explored. It is animated by a huge cast of characters, among whom the most prominent are a White colonial administrator, an Indian technician and a White preacher. The racial, social and geographical spaces of the characters intersect, leading to a number of outcomes. The second, written by a Nigerian writer named Ayobami Adebayo, was nominated for a prestigious literary prize award. Entitled *'Stay with Me'*, it explores the conundrum of male infertility and some of the responses to it, including guilt-tripping and blame-gaming, and how some women are complicit in the troubles of their female kin.

Arise 63 is not only enlightening; it is also thought-provoking



# THE SASSINESS OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

STACEY PEARL KEIRUNGI

Lately, I have been obsessed about reading the biographies of famous women activists, what they had to do or say to get their message out there, the challenges they faced and the victories they celebrated.

Having grown up in a generation where the revitalization of the women's movement was the 'in-thing', I used to think it was a yesteryear phenomenon, just until now. I was surprised to learn from the National Women's History that it goes way back to the 1840s, marking

Dr. Hilda Mary Tadria – one of the historical women rights activists in Uganda.





ROSA LOUISE MCCAULEY PARKS. SHE WAS AN ACTIVIST IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, WHOM THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS CALLED “THE FIRST LADY OF CIVIL RIGHTS” AND “THE MOTHER OF THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT”

13 July 1848 as watershed.

On that sweltering summer day in upstate New York, a young housewife and mother, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, was invited to tea with four women friends. When the course of their conversation turned to the situation of women, Stanton poured out her discontent with the limitations placed on her own situation under America's new democracy. Stanton's friends agreed with her, passionately.

I think that this was definitely not the first small group of women who gathered to have such a conversation, but it was the first to plan and carry out a specific, large-scale programme.

And there were also the likes of Rosa Parks, a modest seamstress, who was on her way back home from work when she refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. That single act of defiance on 1 December 1955 is remembered as the start of the civil rights movement and she is respectfully remembered as the mother of the civil rights movement.

Today, even in Africa, we have lots of Stantons and Parks, who are patriotic

, sharing the ideal of creating a world where women can enjoy equal rights with men. They see their mission as helping fellow women who can't speak for themselves and who can't keep promises of better and more egalitarian lives. They are living the legacy of women's rights that eight generations of women before them gave their best to achieve. Alice Paul, that intrepid organiser who first wrote out the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923, said, "I always feel the movement is sort of a mosaic. Each of us puts in one little stone, and then you get a great mosaic at the end."

African women, acting together, adding their small stones to the grand mosaic, have increased their rights against all odds, non-violently, from an initial position of powerlessness. They have a lot to be proud of in this heroic legacy, and a great deal to celebrate. They have clearly been successful in irrevocably changing the circumstances and hopes of fellow women.

In the world of work, large numbers of women have entered the professions, the trades, and businesses of every kind. Ranks of the clergy, the

politicians, the specialists, the military, the newsroom and elsewhere have been opened up for women from their 'traditional' role of engaging in house chores.

However, though much has been accomplished, a lot still remains to be done since substantial barriers to the full equality of Africa's women still stand before their freedom. The remaining injustices can be – and are being – tackled daily in the courts and conference rooms, in homes and organisations, in local communities, at workplaces and on the playing fields of different states in the continent.

And with this going on, we should never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world because, indeed, it's the only thing that ever has! That was Margaret Mead's conclusion after a lifetime of observing very diverse cultures around the world. Her insight has been borne out time and again throughout the development of this whole movement.



# FEATURE ARTICLE: THE UGANDA WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: CONTEXT, CONTESTS AND PROSPECTS

BRIAN MUTEBI, SASHA MUMBI & JACOB KATUMUSIIME

Organized Women's Activism is rooted in the aftermath of the Second World War. The post war period brought about the passing of significant declarations and decrees that sought to reconstruct a then broken society. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Conventions on Civil, Political and Socio-economic rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) among others declared human rights as women's rights. Subsequently, women movements emerged worldwide in the pursuit for the respect of women's rights.

Issues around the recognition of women's role in development, which had for long gone unrecognized and women's inclusion and participation in decision-making processes, including leadership dominated the narrative. The 1985 United Nations Third World Conference on Women held in Nairobi was among the major events in the birth of women's activism and the women's movement in Africa and in Uganda. It is in this context that women's rights organizations such as Action for Development (ACFODE) were



formed in 1985. ACFODE took centre stage in championing legal and policy reforms for women's rights and gender justice in Uganda. Over the years, many more women's rights organizations were formed. The women's movements fronted initiatives geared towards gender justice and gender equality. A lot was achieved for the woman and girl child.

Despite having begun as strong forces in the fight for women's rights, the movements are currently trailing. More to the deficiency is the disunity among the different women movements. There appears contests among the different women movements which has gravely



affected possible strategic alliances. Intricate challenges such as the rift between the older generation of women and the young also threaten their existence. The young decry the older generation's ring-fencing of the movement, denying the young chance to fully engage in participatory activism for the women's movement. How will this divide be solved?

More so, the movement is perceived to be a preserve for only women's rights organizations, seemingly locking out the active involvement and contribution of many other individuals and groups - a factor that affects its vitality and strength. This (mis)perception stretches further to suggest that at the forefront of the women's movement is a composition of women with failed marriages and families and these women aim at taking over male privilege as opposed to equal opportunities for both genders. The latter presupposition has made the women's activism very unpopular among a cross-section of the population.

Amidst the aforementioned challenges, can the Women's Movement in Uganda still uphold her initial cause? Can it resurrect from the rabble of uncertainty that shrouds it? What are the prospects?

Arise Magazine's Brian Mutebi, Sasha Mumbi and Jacob Katusiime went on a fact-finding mission to establish why the movement seems to operate in reverse gear. The different individuals interviewed separately are put into conversation on a myriad of thoughts ranging from the roots of the women's movement to her current hopes.

May be we should begin with the question, was it necessary to form a Women's Movement in Uganda? Sr. Prof. Dominic Dipio, a distinguished scholar from the Department of Literature at Makerere University strongly believes

that there was need to form a movement to fight for women's rights.

"Definitely it was necessary. Actually the movement began way back before 1985 only that it was going on at an informal level: it was not publicized by the state, or by an organized group of people. But I want to think that wherever oppression exists, that group which feels oppressed develops various ways of contesting that oppression. Looking back in the past, society has been unfair to women in making statements by renowned western philosophers and thinkers whether religious or secular. They make statements that downgrade women. Recently, I am involved in research that tries to distance itself from those definitions with patriarchal perspectives that almost always put women down. And so because the structure that we live in is patriarchal at every level, you find yourself always trying to fit in the male identity to make a sense of who you are as a woman. This must have been very challenging for the female, trying to define themselves using the male lens. For example, when they mention 'He,' you know you are represented therein. I think that what was going on silently took form when a formal structure came up. The movement was extremely necessary"

And indeed the vibrancy of the movement was visible then as compared to now. As to why it performed excellently then and seems quiescent now, Mrs. Judy Kamanyi, a women's activist takes us back into the dynamics of the time.

"To understand why the women's



movement is where it is right now, we need to go back to the political history of the country. We started off under the movement dispensation. Political parties were outlawed. And so when women came together to discuss critical women rights, they were not informed by their political party leanings and beliefs. Even when women stood up for leadership, they were considered regarding their abilities not their political parties. We were bound together”

Anna Nkutu, a feminist and consultant at Nordic Consulting Group (U) Limited, also emphasizes that the change of government and the international drive for gender equality in the mid-1980s and 1990s gave the local women’s movement momentum.

“The change in government seemed like a fresh beginning for everybody... there were so many activities going on at the international level concerning gender equality, especially around the time of the Beijing Conference, so the women in Uganda felt they needed to do something, to be part of the drive, and that explains the momentum.”

### **And what (has) happened?**

“... unfortunately politics in Uganda has not matured to a level where people can say that on this particular issue, I will be bipartisan. We need to come together on bipartisan issues. Another issue is that we have

failed to develop very strong links; a women’s movement is one of the associations where you bring women of different persuasions, different classes, whether educated or not because, for example, the issue of Gender Based Violence; whether you are poor or not, you can experience it.” Kamanyi explains.

But where are the roots of this Gender Based Violence, a vice that has called for international empowerment of the woman especially in Africa? Prof. Dipio takes us on a historical trip into the philosophy of this gender based violence.

“Actually the African Woman has always been empowered. I don’t think that we the African people had oppressive definitions of what it means to be woman as the western people do. Unfortunately we have totally erased who we are from the past that we accept these definitions of what a woman is as it has been given to us from the western perspective. African culture didn’t downgrade women. Yes, the women did their things and the men did theirs but they were all appreciated. Society was really egalitarian and everyone had what to do and they were respected and valued. Even in our folktales, this image of the egalitarian is found a lot. The folktale is the closest in terms of memory of our past. And that’s what gender activists are doing. Trying to bring things back to the egalitarian model.

In my view, people who feel insecure will always want to take over. Patriarchy sought to reorganize society in a way that gives man the authority. It is important for the woman to struggle to reclaim, not a state of authority and domination, but a state of equality and respect, of an egalitarian relationship between men and women. In the order of things, if the woman is the one in control, the man should not be threatened because of the woman’s power, lived in its value as the feminine, as the nurturing, as the mother power, it should not be terrifying to the man.”

How then can we strengthen the movement to uproot this vice? According to Kamanyi, the movement needs to embrace all backgrounds of women.

“It is for us who are a bit privileged in terms of exposure and education to go down to where the majority of the women are at the community level, find out what issues they face, have discussions and engage them and get their perspectives on what exactly they think; we also need to create a mass of critical women that is inclusive, with women of different persuasions and beliefs. The challenge we have now is that people keep saying that the movement is for

elite women but GBV has no class.”

Prof. Dipio believes that the movement needs to redefine itself, a thing that was overlooked at the start of the movement due to the urgency of the struggle.

“... when the Feminist movement started way back in the 1960s, it was something exciting. But in the moment of excitement, sometimes, you may not think through carefully on the right approach to use that could lead to a sustained movement or victory. Because for example when it began, it brought antagonism in families, between husbands and wives. But including the man in the movement to make them realise that the movement is not against the men has helped save the image of the movement. The men have the perception that they are supposed to be the providers and the women fall prey and willingly yield to this power. They want to depend on men for provision. And dynamics are changing now, the men are abdicating their responsibilities. There is a negative response from men with women who are empowered and financially sufficient. This too makes men insecure. The women activists need to redefine the movement, because the struggle has changed face.”

**Kamanyi’s belief that making the movement more inclusive is in line with Prof. Dipio’s view of redefining the movement. But there is an allegation contending that the older generation of women activists have created a glass ceiling preventing the young women activists from making their contributions. How do we harmonize this situation?**

First and foremost, ‘It is a false accusation,’ Kamanyi rebuts ‘when I joined the movement, I wasn’t invited, it was the passion that pushed me to

join the struggle. The problem with younger feminists is that they believe they need to be invited into activist spaces. I think they have not been so passionate, they seem complacent and seem not be bothered by the challenges of womanhood.’

And yet like Hon. Sheila Kawamara asserts, the vibrancy of the women’s movement relied on, apart from the open political space to operate in, the members’ passion. “What the women did at that time was more spontaneous and due to passion for the issues we were working on. Women were advancing the rights of women not because of financial reward, but because it was a genuine passion to see women take their rightful place in society.”

Prof. Dipio believes that if at all the allegation is true, there must be a reason. “When you look at the expression of this younger generation (especially in the music industry), at one level you get the feeling that the girls now have guts, they are bold, they are courageous, they can say and do anything but the question is to what end? What is the purpose of this? What is the political weight of the action in advancing the cause? Flinging the naked female body before the camera (in music videos) is to go right into the trap that people have protested, of looking at the woman’s body as a sex object. Because the buyer is a little patriarch. I think we are not living our real identity and the dignity of our womanhood. I think that if the young generation are not being let in, it is because they don’t fit. How well do the young generation fit in the agenda of the movement? If they qualified, they would be allowed in. I believe people will always be happy and willing to let you in as long as you fit within their agenda.”

Should we then think of the young generation of women activists as less concerned in questioning their patriarchal surroundings? “No,” Nkutu detests, “gender equality is still a priority for the younger generation of women. It is just that their way of work is slightly different. When you do not see women on the streets (demonstrating), you ought to recognize that this new generation has different ways of organizing. They organize from online platforms. They will not take to the streets but they are very active on social media. Our challenge is to try to tap into these new forms of organizing and see how we can use them to continue the struggle.”

**What then is our biggest problem in the struggle and how do we solve this?**

“The problem is that we are aping the values of the west in terms of the way we think about ourselves. We have allowed patriarchy to rule over us without questioning. Africa is originally a matriarchal society whose identity has been eroded over time. But the roots still show. We should reflect back on our traditional values. We need to take interest in our cultures and see what solutions they provide. Our cultures will take us back to egalitarian relations. But as long as we continue looking at the west as the source for our emancipation, then we shall continue using a western (patriarchal) lens to solve the problem and we shall not progress anyhow. We should ask the question, where did things begin to go wrong for us?” Prof. Dominic Dipio concludes.

*Men, Their Rights, and  
Nothing More;  
Women, Their Rights, and  
Nothing Less.*

SUSAN B. ANTHONY



# MOVEMENT BUILDING CHALLENGES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

SHERINAH NAMATA & ROGER KIWANUKA

*Many people wonder why there are few millennials warming up to the women's movement. Some have gone ahead to assert that the movement is for old and tired senior women. However, amidst all the disparagers, there are a bunch of very optimistic youth who have chosen to walk the path of addressing gender and gender issues in Uganda despite the claws and taunts from their antagonisers. These have shared some of their challenges on the journey and some suggestions to attract more youth.*



## Anita Natukunda Lawyer

My biggest challenge is that most people are obstinate in their attitudes towards women's rights. I think it is because of how deeply our society is ingrained in patriarchy.

Quite often, I find that when I stand up to any form of misogyny, I am misunderstood as disrespectful or "overly sentimental". This is very frustrating and causes unnecessary strife. However, we cannot quit the fight because it's too hard or because it makes some people uncomfortable.



## Margaret Talemwa Kemigisa Lawyer Godfrey S. Lule Advocates

You find that in a society where there is a general assumption that men are the “accomplishers” of things and “closers” of deals, as a young woman, you have to do double what they do to get recognised.

When you put your concerns forward, you are perceived to be overly emotional and this is not only exhausting but also very dehumanising.

So you sometimes let things slide, yet in doing that you are in a way propelling the old chauvinist system, and this changes nothing .

Sad thing is, sometimes the patriarchy in our society is not propelled by men but by women.

## Ali Kaviri Founder Youth Equality Centre

As a male and women rights activists, some of my peers ridicule or misunderstand me. Some, in fact, think I am not in the right state of mind to advocate for the rights of women. However, some sections of society see me as an example, which encourages me.

I normally challenge “societal perception” that advocating for the rights of women amounts to subduing men. What is wrong with saying that a young girl of 13 years shouldn’t be married off?

What women are asking for is equality and fairness. Gender is a human rights issue.





## Belinda Kyomuhendo Programme Coordinator ACFODE/KAS Project

The women's movement to me is simply a group of individuals and institutions that believe women are, in fact, people. People should not be discriminated against simply because of their gender.

As a youth and activist, the biggest challenge I find in trying to contribute to the women's movement is that we are part of the 'microwave generation'. We believe that everything – like our food, drink, the internet – should happen in an instant. Do an activity, set a timer and in five minutes it's all done. We do not appreciate that attitude and behavioral change takes time.

I think it's resources that is one of the biggest challenges. Whether it is money, influence or skills, young people still do not have these resources. The older generation has had the time and opportunities to cultivate this: for example, if Miria Matembe landed in jail, she has a battalion ready with the resources and influence to rush to her aid. What about me?

Inclusion and mentorship would help to bring more youth on board. Like the African saying goes: "If you don't initiate the young, they will burn down the village to feel the heat".



### Clara Atuhaire Social Worker

The women's movement is composed of aggressive women who are mainly the older generation. I feel the women's movement should not be that aggressive but rather, more tactical. I like the empowerment but wouldn't want to associate with the aggression.

### Bakitunda Jessie Lwanga Minister of Women and Children's Affairs Kasimba Clan, Buganda Kingdom

I take myself as a liberal feminist as opposed to the extreme feminists. However, even as a liberal, one of the challenges I have faced is that our society is still largely chauvinistic. Feminism is looked at as a very modern ideology and normally, in my language,

independent girls are misquoted.

Your character is misinterpreted and people will say you have 'kajanja', to mean you are a wiseacre.

I will give you an example of one of the incidents. The king – the Kabaka Ronald Muwenda Mutebi – was to visit clans to check on clan work. As the Minister for Women and Children, I had mobilised resources to have the day organised; tents were put up and everything set under my supervision. However, when the king finally arrived, I was stopped from welcoming him simply because I am a female. This got me wondering why my gender had not been alluded to during the organising process!

So our society is still very traditional and conforms to old ideologies of

excluding women on the basis of their gender.

**"Your character is misinterpreted and people will say you have *kagyanya*, to mean you are a wiseacre". Bakituda Jessie**

I will give you an example of one of the incidents. The king – the Kabaka Ronald Muwenda Mutebi – was to visit clans to check on clan work. As the minister for women and children, I had mobilised resources to have the day organised; tents were put up and everything set under my supervision. However, when the king finally arrived, I was stopped from welcoming him simply because I am a girl. This got me wondering why my gender had not been alluded to during the organising process!

## Shirley May Hip Hop Rapper

For me, one of the hugest challenges I have faced is from some men who keep saying that women want to be on top of men. They say, women who are pushing for feminism or women's issues want to have more authority than men, something that is not true.

The other big challenge is that women actually contribute to the highest percentage of bringing down the movement. Women themselves have not yet appreciated women's empowerment.

There are some role models for young feminists like me and these stand up strongly and encourage us as young girls. However, some feminists have not even come up to give their stand, to encourage young people or even lift them up.

The youth are also ignorant. I could say it's because they lack knowledge about the movement. There are several youth who don't know about the movement and what it does or stands for and against.

Society has also contributed much to what the youth get to think. Society has in a way judged the movement and has passed down these stereotypes to the youth. The youth are also scared to open up to the older people. Moreover the feminist movement is full of grown-up and aging women.

### **How are young men in particular responding to women's right?**

Some youth support it while others simply ignore it. This is because a large number of the youth are currently unemployed and distressed by the economic and political situation in the country. They keep saying, "Twakowa, we have age limit issues to decipher and you are talking about equality?"

Some men are partially in support of the work the movement does but at some point, they start thinking, that the woman should not occupy a position as big as being the Executive Director. They would rather see her maybe as a deputy and this, too, is wrong because women are very good and reliable managers and have proved that over the years.

However, the age group of 30–40 years old is very supportive. This is because they are at the marriage stage. They want women who are working, educated and informed. I personally know of a few couples with husbands who have taken their wives back to school. That is empowerment and support.



## Daphine Nakabugo Gomba District Local Government

My big sister has always tried to lure me into joining the women's movement but my biggest problem has been the senior women's rights activists – they are not very receptive to our ideas as young people. They have this "I-know-it-all" attitude and this basically makes us feel alienated, yet we have substantial contributions to make towards building the movement. Nonetheless, I believe and support women and girls' rights in my own space.



### Richard Makumbi Programmes Officer Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP)

In my work with young people, I have observed that they love the women's movement. However, there are no clear and direct strategies for the engagement of young people in the movement. There is no support, especially at organisational and movement levels, to see to it that they are supported, nurtured and guided.

Also, socialisation limits the movement because it creates boundaries and determines ideologies and perceptions.

Currently, there is also a very wrong perception about women's rights by young people. The youth do not know that there are imbalances in society and that the feminist

movement is for diagnosing these.

Most young people are also more interested in how much they can earn in any activity they engage in. They don't have so much commitment and sacrifice.

Also, the senior women in the movement have not mentored young people. They look at them as threats rather than their successors. In so doing, they (the older generation) have not prepared for a transition. NGOs, for instance, would take up mentorship and give space to youth to participate in discussions. This way, they get to mould them into stronger, well-informed and well-equipped movement builders.

In light of the above revelations, engaging young people and keeping them active is a big battle that is being faced by the women's movement. And in the digital age of endless choice and

constant distraction, it's clear the glory days of bumper memberships are gone for good.

However, this is where practical approaches like mentorship come in handy since it is crucial for the achievement of gender equality and social justice. The senior women's rights activists need to organise fora during which they can share experiences and nurture young people to become advocates of women and girls' rights. Young people need to be equipped with knowledge about gender, culture as well as sexuality, to enable them to be better focused in their undertakings and positively influence those they interact with, thereby continuing the aspirations of the women's movement – to attain gender equality and equity.



I'M OBSESSED  
WITH SEEING  
**WOMEN**  
ENCOURAGE,  
SUPPORT, AND  
**EMPOWER**  
OTHER WOMEN.  
IT'S MY  
**FAVORITE.**  
WE NEED MORE  
OF IT

*MAYA ANGELOU*



social equality of the sexes. Others have argued that it is the existence of the 'same' faces in the women's movement that seems to portray a communication problem with the movement. Margaret Ssentamu, the coordinator of Uganda Media Women's Association, explains: "women's rights activists say there is media fatigue but I always ask them whether we have recruited other women to speak to the media about the movement. Why does it always have to be the same people talking about things that affect women?"

The case of professionalism in communication has also been pointed out. Some women's organisations do not have professional communication officers, and those that do have not oriented such office bearers to the vision of the movement. "They speak but they do not communicate," Ssentamu argues, adding, "as a movement, we must understand the philosophy of the movement and how we should work with the media."

Working with the media also means working on the messages. The messages should not only target women, but be inclusive. "We have always focused on the girl child but where are the boys who are going to marry our daughters?" poses Ssentamu. "The boy child also needs to be appreciated and prepared, not to be condemned to the camp of oppressors." It is this inclusivity in the messages that will work to erode the suspicion and mistrust about the movement. The messages, for example,

that call upon women and girls to stand up for their rights should never ignore the role of men in achieving gender equality.

Anna Nkutu observes that in recent years there has been growing recognition that you cannot achieve gender equality without men. "Today, many programmes that work on gender equality, including those that tackle violence against women, have male engagement as one of the strategies," she notes.

"We have to coexist," says Ssentamu. "The way we package our messages has to change and be all-inclusive because it should be about social justice for all, not only women."

The message from the movement should embed and reflect the fact that the advancement of women's rights does not take away the men's rights. Rather, says Nkutu, "it is about both sexes being at a level where they can access equal opportunities."

It also calls for creativity. "When I am working at the grass roots I talk about equal opportunities, not women's rights," says Aritua. "You do not want a mere word to stop people from understanding the advantages of women having the same opportunities as men. As the women's rights movement, if the word 'women's rights' has been misunderstood, then we can look for a synonym - one word should not prevent us from achieving our main goal."



**PERRY ARITUA,  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR  
OF WOMEN'S  
DEMOCRACY  
NETWORK UGANDA,  
SAYS THERE ARE  
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BUT THERE ARE  
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AND MESSAGE  
WILL EASILY BE  
UNDERSTOOD."**





# EXPERT OPINION ON HOW YOUNG PEOPLE CAN BE ENGAGED IN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

CONTRIBUTION FROM  
REGINA BAFAKI  
THE EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR  
ACFODE

The women's movement, how best can one define it? Most youth and even activists inclusive confuse the movement. To me, the women's movement is a social crusade for purposes of promoting women's rights and that's it. It's an alternative space for confronting and challenging issues of patriarchy, power and injustice against women particularly due to the traditional cultural norms that present women as less of human beings.

You can't touch it. It has many players and these use many strategies to champion it. ACFODE is one of the organisations that belong to the women's movement and for me, having the youth on board is key.

As an activist, I am on a daily basis constantly interacting with the youth and the older generation. From my observation, there are youth who love the movement and there are youth who don't know about the movement at

all but would be interested. First, I will start with the ones who love the movement and are trying to be a part of it.

Presently, young people are driven by money and are desperate. Their expectations and demands are high. Every time they hear of an opportunity, it is sought after simply as a money making venture. For instance, every time the youth approach me,

it's for a job or going to the field. An expectation that I cannot fulfil because how many jobs do I have? Even if I had the jobs, are they employable and competent? Better still, the movement is not a money making venture, it is a social cause that anyone can contribute to without necessarily making financial gains.

Secondly, young people are not focused and curious and it's sad that the girls are being the most languid. They lack a sense of direction and are unhurried. For instance, when we sent out opportunity slots for our mentoring program this year, I was shocked to see more boys and up to now, I cannot tell the reason why girls did not come. One of such reasons that came to my mind is the lack of pro-activeness and failure on the side of the youth to seize opportunities even when they come on a silver platter.

On the other hand, the youth need us. I am one of those few people who believe that we as the current movement builders have not given these youth the space to act. Our expectations from them are high and our understanding is very minimal. Moreover, they are living in a very competitive world and face a lot of contest at all levels.

At some point, I think some fractions of the movement see themselves as more movement builders than the others. Something that is not right. I will give an example of the time I was appointed as the Executive Director of ACFODE, young people were not accepted into the movement spaces. There was a lot of harassment and belittling from the older generation, whereby the youth were not availed with opportunities. No one would give them a chance to grow and contribute as a youth. Anticipations and stresses

were awfully tall.

Another challenge I see for young people's inclusion is having the movement NGOised. I think the movement should go beyond the NGO world where we have cossetted it for ages, to churches, for outreaches, to youth camps, schools, universities, tertiary institutions, communities, hospitals and beyond. Take an example of here in Kampala, how many young girls and boys would come on board if they were well mobilised and guided? Very many I guess.

Additionally, there are youth that have managed to engage in NGO work however, they have given up along the way simply because they have been manipulated to push agendas of individual persons and ideologies. This sort of behaviour gets many falling off along the way because it's not what they signed up for. In fact, I throw this back to the leadership of the movement. Some of them have not led, they have given a bad example to the young to an extent that the youth don't want to associate themselves with the movement.

In the same line, there is no deliberate effort to identify young people that can be role models to their fellow youth. It is easier for youth to share their own experiences with their peers and we need to help them in doing that. The women's movement needs to help the young people think out of the box and engage their energies and listen to their ideas. In most cases, the youth have such great ideas. You will not believe for instance that the ACFODE debates, one of our most famous activities that is used to interest young people in the ideologies of the movement was started by a young lady by the names of Agaba Daphine, who was an Intern at that time.

I still remember her courage, when on that day, in 2010, as we (ACFODE) prepared for our silver jubilee celebrations, a slim tiny figure walked into my office to suggest a very novel and by then crazy idea for the celebrations. As usual, we had arrayed very traditional activities to mark the day. Among them was a conference and some dinner and that was it. Daphne, an intern with the Human Rights Department by then, had thought otherwise. She wanted us to have a debate!!

When she first introduced the idea I was shocked, it was news to me. ACFODE had never engaged in anything like this, more so with young people. I half haphazardly gave her a go ahead to make a write up for her idea, helped with editing just a few minor things so that it would suit the required standards. Finally, our proposals for the day's activities were submitted to KAS, our development partner and funders of the celebrations. You shall never tell how astonished I was when feedback came that the debate was the top marked proposal. Up to now, these debates have earned us credit from far and close and to crown it all, the small Daphne then is now a professor in Human Rights. To present day, she accrues her success story to this one opportunity that ACFODE gave her.

This therefore shows that young people have a lot of creativity and this is what the women's movement should tap into. It's about believing in them, supporting them, involving them and offering guidance where necessary.





"I have met brave women who are exploring the outer edge of human possibility, with no history to guide them, and with a courage to make themselves vulnerable that I find moving beyond words."

- Gloria Steinem

# PLUGGING MEN INTO WOMEN

TUMUSIIME K. DEO  
& STACEY PEARL  
KEIRUNGI

As we interacted with an old colleague, James (not real name), the young man proudly, and in a somewhat boastful tone, informed us of how he had “gone through all the stages of a relationship before the age of 40”. Dated, wedded, divorced and married again. His experience attracted lots of comments from fellow men, many marvelling at just how James had managed all this. However, he represents a lot more men out there that pass through women’s life as a kind of joke, or for sheer fun, leaving them badly bruised. James made no single mention of the whereabouts of his former wife. It was all about him, him and him.

Now, social media has redefined the flow of information, making so much of it accessible by a mere click on the phone screen. In one of the posts I



Men wearing high-heel shoes walk in the street during the “Walk A Mile In Her Shoes” event in Kampala Uganda. Conducted world wide, the event is an opportunity for men to raise awareness in their community about the serious causes, effects, and remediations to men’s sexualized violence against women.

accessed recently, there was this joke: when two men have slept with one woman, they pat and joke over it. Yet when two women get to know they are sharing a man, they grab each other by the neck. I am trying to visualise just how important it is to understand the world of women and men in order to clearly appreciate the challenges facing the women’s movement today in the effort to address women’s problems.

In yet another post on social media, a professor attempts to explain the ways

of men and women. According to him, when a man cheats on his wife, it does not necessarily mean that he doesn’t love her. Men are easily turned on and the sex drive comes so quickly in their minds. But dangerous is the woman who cheats on her husband – for by the time she does so, she has fully emotionally disassociated herself from her husband. The reasoning is that women only offer their bodies to a man they love, yet a man does not need to love a woman in order



to have sex with her. Little wonder, then, men find it easy to joke about their sex escapades while women take sex rather passionately and treat it as sacred.

The above examples demonstrate the sharp contrast between the ways of men and women, and how these diverging perceptions ultimately affect any attempts to achieve absolute 'sanity' in our society in favour of women.

I have attended a few conferences hosted by women's organisations, and one thing I observed is the temptation to



*Ethan Musolini, a renowned motivational speaker, believes that mistrust and resistance to the movement is fuelled by the way the movement packages its message. He says, "I have heard some women's rights activists who think men are evil beings standing in the way of women's dreams. This hinders men's involvement in the movement."*



isolate men from women's engagements. In the end, you have women spending time lamenting about their problems, while pointing their "guns" towards men as the oppressors. Temporarily, many achieve the desired empathy within their circles, but this does not translate into tangible solutions at family level.

I do understand that the women's movement in Uganda has over the years attempted to address, among other issues, women's land ownership, female genital mutilation, early marriages, divorce, bride wealth and discrimination at the workplace, as well as sexual harassment, which is today taking centre stage at international level. These are very pertinent issues, but in order to effectively address them, women just cannot work in isolation. Men must be actively coopted into the discussions, including employing them in women's organisations by way of setting a precedent for inclusivity.

Recalling the example above regarding how men and women perceive their sexual involvement should help us not to view men as aggressors (even when they mostly are), but rather to understand the differences between the two sexes. Is men's behaviour towards women something they learn or it is within their natural psyche? Take an example of men's insatiable sexual appetite that gets them to marry more than one woman. Women, on the other hand, culturally do not commit to more than one man and generally do not approve of their men relating with other women – which is a source of family feuds.

If men's character is not something they are socialised into, how, then, can we talk them out of it? The same applies to issues of men controlling family land and property at the expense of

women, and taking women as property at the time of marriage. While some of these things are explained by cultural practices, could some be generally as a result of inborn human character? Either way, even as the women are trying to understand the behaviour of men, they must coopt the men as partners rather than set them up as targets of the women's movement. Otherwise we risk reaping resentment.

I have twice experienced the anxiety of knowing a baby's sex at the time of childbirth. Before we look at men in their grown state, we've got to first appreciate them from the time of birth. Ideally, all children are precious gifts from God and, as little babies, they bring the same amount of joy to their parents. Not many parents regret or show remorse at having produced either a girl or a boy. What this means, therefore, is that how we culture children from an early stage defines to a large extent what they become later in life. It is at this point that the women's movement (as mothers) ought to focus its energy on ensuring that boy children grow up respecting girl children, as opposed to subscribing to stuff like "prove that you are a man".

I know of an online group created by an American friend of mine entitled "My Growing Edge". His focus is a deliberate attempt to help men achieve responsible 'manhood' by respecting women. There have been a lot of



**IF MEN'S CHARACTER IS NOT SOMETHING THEY ARE SOCIALISED INTO, HOW, THEN, CAN WE TALK THEM OUT OF IT?**

discussions already, and many men clearly appreciate the need not only to respect but also to protect women seen as mothers, sisters, wives and daughters. However, ironically, while the online group, comprising more than 90 members, includes women, the women scarcely participate in the discussions. This to me suggests a serious inherent problem – that some women are just not comfortable sharing their concerns on the same platform with men. This is something that requires further study to appreciate the intrinsic differences between the sexes, and how these impact on the women's movement efforts towards addressing the issues affecting women.

**REAL MEN  
DON'T BEAT  
THEIR  
SPOUSES**

 diakonia  
International Development

 Acc+de  
Accountability & Development





Beverley Nambozo Nsengiyunva, Founder and Director, Babisha Niwe Poetry Foubdation



Bother Augustine Ssekibuule



Emily Drani, Executive Director, The Cross Culture Foundation of Uganda

# ISSUES THE MAR THE GROWTH OF A DIVERSE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN UGANDA

## ARISE REPORTERS

**NAMBOZO BELIEVES THAT THE MOVEMENT NEEDS TO RECOGNIZE THE CONTRIBUTION OF EACH AND EVERY INDIVIDUAL FROM DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE SOCIETY. SHE THUS EMPHASIZES THE NEED TO APPRECIATE THE ROLE OF ART IN CREATIVELY COMMUNICATING THE AGENDA OF THE MOVEMENT AND OPENING NEW SPACES FOR CONVERSATION ON THE PLIGHT OF WOMEN.**

With almost as many women as there are men in the UPDF, Uganda Police, Education sector, Judiciary, Legislature, Entrepreneurship, Manufacturing industry, Sports and the Entertainment industry, wouldn't it be right to say that the Ugandan Woman is fully emancipated? With success stories such as Hon. Rebecca Kadaga's – the Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament, Mrs. Jennifer Musisi's – the Executive Director of Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), and Ms. Allen Kagina's – the Executive Director of the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA), wouldn't it be right to assert that the Women's Movement has achieved its goal?

Yet you would be alarmed at the prevalence of Gender Based Violence in Uganda. The percentages shoot to the sky and each new day, new forms of GBV manifest. From physical torture to sexually suggestive language. GBV's change of face thwarts efforts by several duty bearers in combatting the vice.

But is GBV the only challenge that the Women's Movement is struggling with? No, there are numerous contests (internal and external) that devastate the progress of the movement. Like Emily Drani, the Executive Director of The Cross-Cultural



Jaffer Sengada, President, Muslim Centre for Justice and Law

Foundation of Uganda believes, the movement is currently dealing with the backlash of empowering women without balancing power. Who ever thought that empowering women would aggravate their plight? Feeling insecure at the women's empowerment, men have amplified their high handedness leading to rise in cases of violence against



Hajjara Mugerwa, Gender Coordinator, Muslim Centre for Justice & Law

women and or in some cases abdicating their fatherly responsibilities. As a result, divorce, child neglect and single motherhood are becoming widespread.

Drani believes that the women's Movement normally clashes with culture because it overlooks the cultural context of Women in Africa. "Women

in Africa have power but not in the sense the women's rights activist deems or exerts it." Drani explains. She cites how women have been at the heart of peace building in Northern Uganda after the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) war. "For twenty years now, women have been at the forefront of initiating and mediating conflict resolution and restoration meetings. And no one disrespects them. In fact, all the men agree that the conflict-solver should be the woman," she adds.

Jaffer Sengada, the President of Muslim Centre for Justice and Law agrees that when it began, the women's movement seemed like an anti-men crusade. It thereby attracted negative bias not only from men but also from women who saw the movement as a foreign imposition. Mores so, at its inception, the movement seemed



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I'm endlessly inspired by the resilience and impact of **women and girl activists** globally; their courage is what makes me wake up every morning ready to work for **gender equality**. It is what i believe in and it gives me **meaning in life.**"

- Musimbi Kanyoro, Kenya

to be a composition of only Christian women leaving the Muslim women and members from other religious denominations on the margin.

Yet still, Ms. Hajara Mugerwa, the Gender Coordinator at the Muslim Centre for Justice and Law believes that several Muslim women may not associate with the movement because it tends to clash with the values of the Islamic faith which does not allow a woman to speak in public circles, and particularly, in the presence of a man except through her husband. Though inflicted, the Muslim women may have to silently bear their pain in allegiance to their faith.

And women's movement doesn't seem to only antagonize the Muslim faith but also the Christian faith. Augustine Ssekibuule, a Catholic Brother highlights how their faith has no authority to change certain concepts that Jesus left. Since Jesus for example chose men (not women) as his disciples, Ssekibuule questions what power the church would have to repeal the precedence. For the afore mentioned reasons, religion often excuses itself from committing to women's rights ideologies.

Amidst the kaleidoscope of accusations, where is the movement headed? Beverley Nambozo Nsengiyuva, a renowned Ugandan poet and Director of the Babishai Niwe Poetry Foundation believes that the movement needs to recognize the contribution of each and every individual from different sectors of the society. She thus emphasizes the need to appreciate the role of Art in creatively communicating the agenda of the movement and opening new spaces for conversation on the plight of women. "I often feel that poets, other professional artists and curators are given peripheral roles to entertain and not to effect policy... yet Art is the heart of a nation," Nambozo claims.

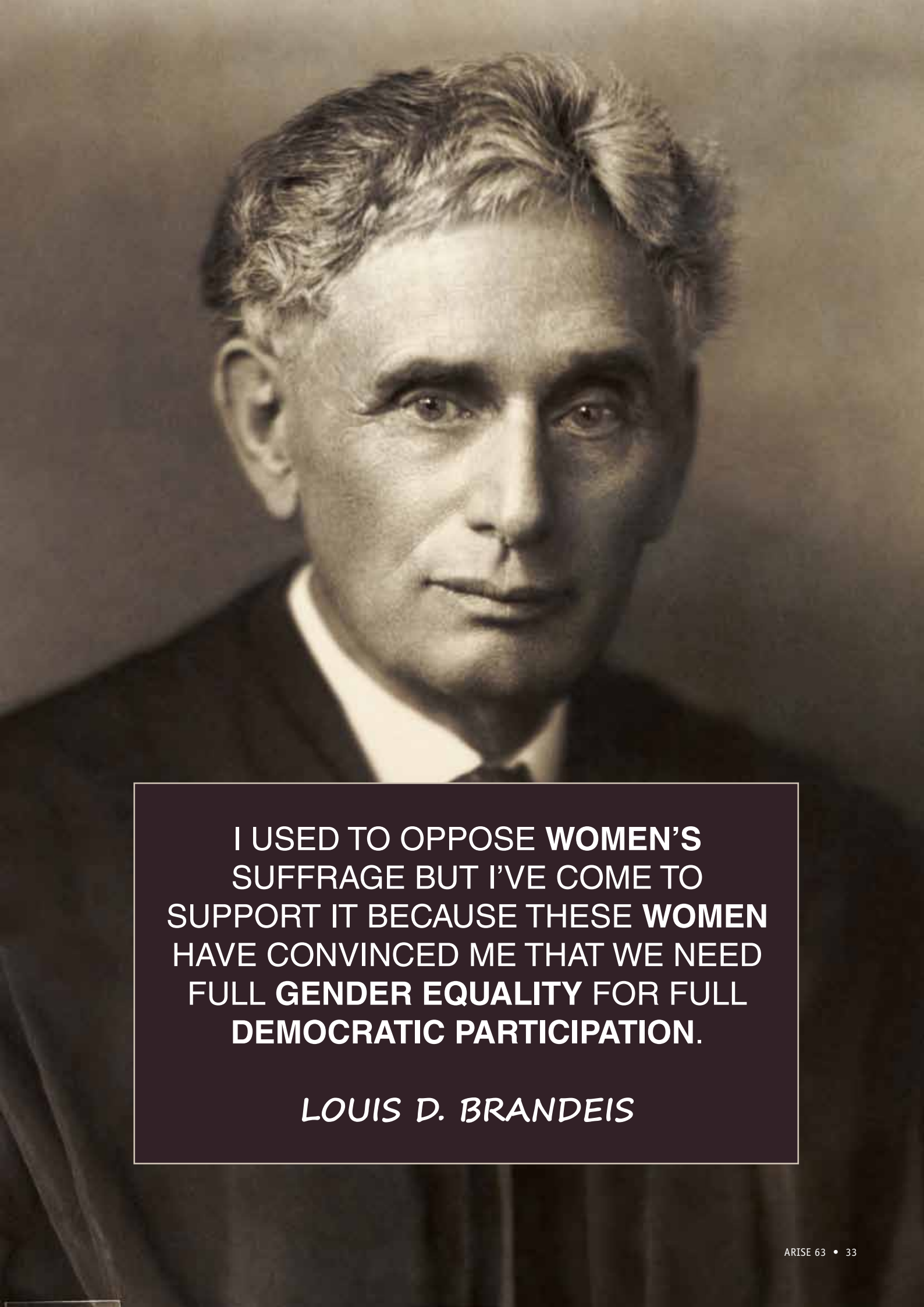
What remains clear so far is that we can't explore the setbacks of the women's Movement. However the movement can work on damage control. But what procedure is to be followed? Is the movement willing to accept Drani's idea that actually the African woman was fully empowered, had and still has rights and freedoms which the women's movement overlooked at the onset? Is the movement going to set out on a fact finding mission of identifying the unique challenges that affect different individuals or groups of women as Senganda suggests? How will the Movement address itself to the question of National Politics which seems to shadow the progress reached at?

The solution lies in the change of tact and method because women's challenges now manifest in more subtle ways. And to ignore the peculiarity of the African context of the woman is near to a treasonous step for the movement. The movement needs to recognize the cultural diversity and formulate solutions that are relevant to each community. The movement further needs to recognize the role that might be played by the young people. It needs to appreciate that times have changed and they might not have young people work or behave in the same way the movement functioned when it began. This requires a sensitive approach so that vision of the movement is not lost. And most applicable would be the inclusion of all stake holders from religious leaders to cultural leaders, from young women to men, from disabled individuals to sports men. The movement needs to embrace individuals of different persuasions so as to keep on track with the changing world.



**YET STILL, MS. HAJARA MUGERWA, THE GENDER COORDINATOR AT THE MUSLIM CENTRE FOR JUSTICE AND LAW BELIEVES THAT SEVERAL MUSLIM WOMEN MAY NOT ASSOCIATE WITH THE MOVEMENT BECAUSE IT TENDS TO CLASH WITH THE VALUES OF THE ISLAMIC FAITH WHICH DOES NOT ALLOW A WOMAN TO SPEAK IN PUBLIC CIRCLES, AND PARTICULARLY, IN THE PRESENCE OF A MAN EXCEPT THROUGH HER HUSBAND.**





**I USED TO OPPOSE WOMEN'S  
SUFFRAGE BUT I'VE COME TO  
SUPPORT IT BECAUSE THESE WOMEN  
HAVE CONVINCED ME THAT WE NEED  
FULL GENDER EQUALITY FOR FULL  
DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION.**

*LOUIS D. BRANDEIS*

# Street Talk

## WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN UGANDA?



### **Annette Najjuma – Candle Maker**

I am a single mother of four daughters and from as far back as I can remember, I have had to work hard to take them through school and provide a home for them. But I could not have done that without the encouraging support of women who fight for the rights of

other women. Throughout the years, I have met such women who have encouraged me not to look down on myself or wait to find a husband who can help me look after my children. Because of their advice, I have done all kinds of jobs. At the end of it all, I managed to build a house. When I decided to become my own employer, I learnt how to make candles at Entebbe Single Mothers Association. So for me, the women's movement is real. I keep on telling my daughters not to let anyone discriminate against them based on their gender.

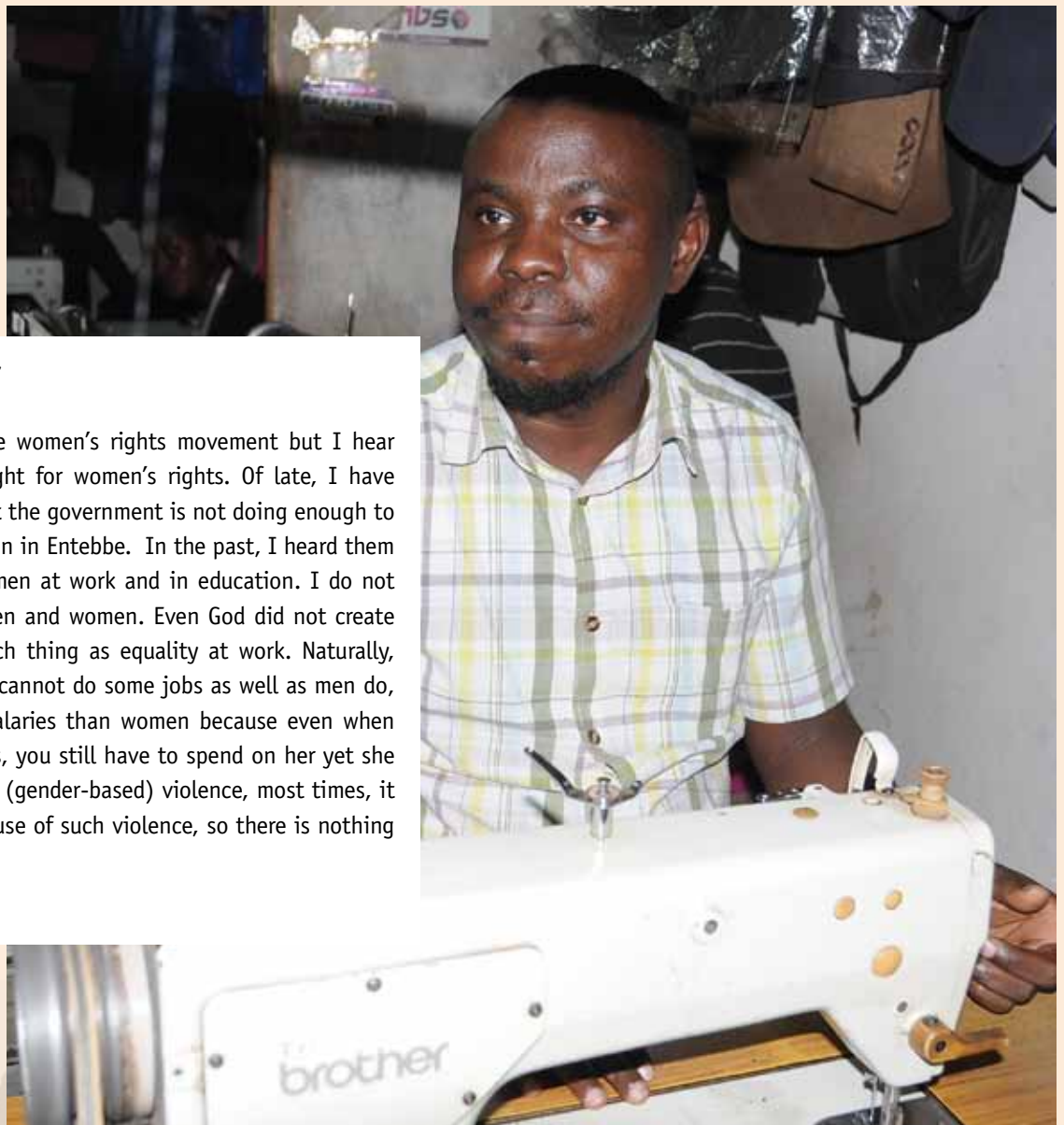


**John Kamanya**  
Maker of clay charcoal stoves

I have heard of the groups that support women and their rights, and I am happy with the work they do. In the clay factory where I work, most of the employees are women and many of them are married. The fact that their husbands allow them to come to work shows that the impression that women are inferior to men is outdated. Their husbands realised that their wives can contribute to the wellbeing of the home. I support independent women because my wife also works and I do not make any plans at home without listening to her thoughts and valuing her input. I hate gender-based violence and in this day and age it is strange that there are men who still beat women. If I notice any of my neighbours beating their wives, I will be compelled to report the matter to the police..

### David Kwepima - Boda boda rider

I do not know much about the women's rights movement, and I do not support it, especially the equality between men and women, because when a woman feels she is equal to you, she listens to you no more. You will tell her to do something but she refuses because she does not think it is important. I believe some jobs should not be done by women, jobs such as boda boda riding, for women cannot perform as efficiently as men because women are physically weak yet these jobs require a lot of energy. I am not doing anything to promote the rights of women but the truth is, women are ill-treated. In the communities where I live, I see violence against women. I do not have the authority to do something significant about it, but when I see violence, I advise the individuals fighting to come to a consensus because they are adults and ought to behave responsibly.



### Habib Senyonga - Tailor

I do not know about the women's rights movement but I hear there are groups that fight for women's rights. Of late, I have heard them complain that the government is not doing enough to stop the murders of women in Entebbe. In the past, I heard them fight for equality for women at work and in education. I do not believe in equality for men and women. Even God did not create us equal. There is no such thing as equality at work. Naturally, women are weak so they cannot do some jobs as well as men do, so men deserve bigger salaries than women because even when a woman works and earns, you still have to spend on her yet she never spends. Concerning (gender-based) violence, most times, it is women who are the cause of such violence, so there is nothing much I can do about it.



### **Shariph Kayihura - Market vendor**

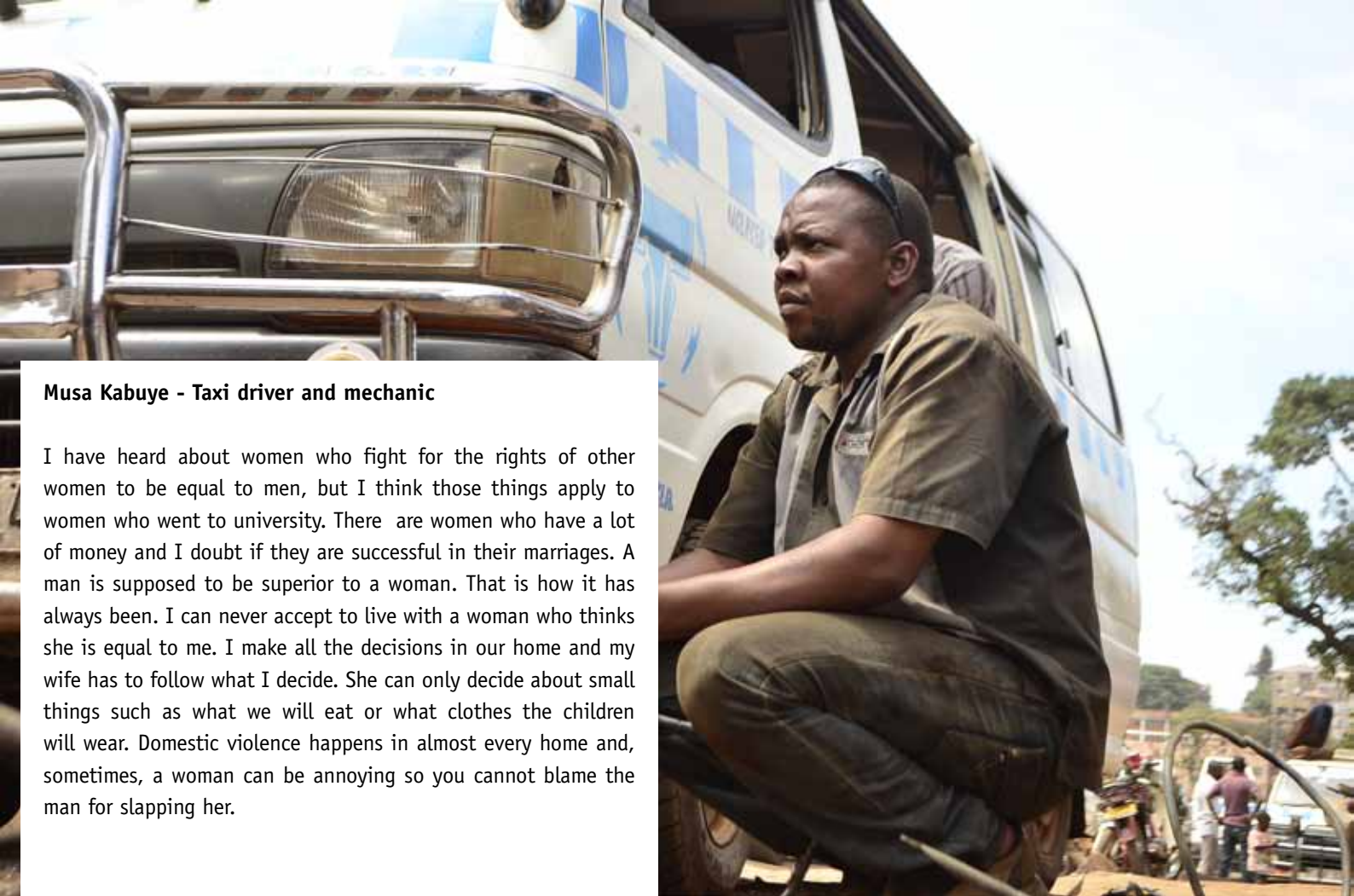
I have heard about the women's movement although I do not know the specific groups involved. They say women have to have rights and should not be treated with disrespect or subjected to violence, but I have seen women who have this idea of equality or women's emancipation simply become a problem. I will give you an example; sometimes when a woman has a better job and earns more than her husband, she wants to be the "man" in the home. Equality should have a limit because a man has to remain the leader in the home. All in all, today women enjoy their rights. For example, I allow my wife to work. There are still problems, though; I see violence in homes, in my neighbourhood. As a neighbour, I can hardly intervene but report to the police or the local council who have the authority to handle such matters.



### **Hadijah Musubika - Housewife**

I understand the work of the women's movement because if it were not for the work that it has done, women would not have come this far in the pursuit of their rights. My husband respects me because it is old-fashioned to treat women like second-hand citizens. It was my choice to stay at home and bring up our children and, good enough, my husband understood the merit in this and agreed with my decision. If I witnessed a woman being battered by her husband, I would definitely report the matter to the police and even talk to the woman about her rights. I think the women's organisations should be more visible in the rural areas because it is in the villages that you will hear more reports of teenage pregnancies and child marriages. Sometimes it is because of poverty but, most times, it is ignorance about the dangers of those practices, and this is where women's rights organisations should come in strongly.





**Musa Kabuye - Taxi driver and mechanic**

I have heard about women who fight for the rights of other women to be equal to men, but I think those things apply to women who went to university. There are women who have a lot of money and I doubt if they are successful in their marriages. A man is supposed to be superior to a woman. That is how it has always been. I can never accept to live with a woman who thinks she is equal to me. I make all the decisions in our home and my wife has to follow what I decide. She can only decide about small things such as what we will eat or what clothes the children will wear. Domestic violence happens in almost every home and, sometimes, a woman can be annoying so you cannot blame the man for slapping her.



**Edward Kisige - Farmer**

I hear about the groups that fight for women rights but I believe equality for women has brought problems. A woman cannot respect you once you give her rights, when she is more educated or has more money than you do. As such, I do not want her to be more financially empowered than me because she will disrespect me. However, I also want to state that I am an understanding man so, to an extent, I do something in my own way to bring about harmony at home. For instance, if a woman has good ideas, why not listen to her? Let her say what she wants to say. If I witnessed abuse, I would listen to both the man and the woman and talk through the issues, the cause of the conflict so as to solve the problem, from the root cause rather than merely addressing the symptoms.

"If you're someone who genuinely believes that women don't deserve or aren't as much as men, you're like the plague. On the big history chart, you're the plague....It's just pointless and deadly."

- Joss Whedon



# BOOK REVIEWS

TITLE: DANCE OF THE JAKARANDA

AUTHOR: PETER KIMANI

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 7 FEB 2017

PUBLISHER: AKASHIC BOOKS



*In that year, the glowworms in the marshes were replaced by lightbulbs, villagers were roused out of their hamlets by a massive rumbling that many mistook for seismic shifts of the earth. These were not uncommon occurrences - - - locals experienced earthquakes across the Rift Valley so often that they even had an explanation for it. They said it was God taking a walk in His universe. They believed this without needing to see it. But on that day the villagers saw the source of the noise as well. It was a monstrous, snakelike creature whose black head, erect like a cobra's, pulled rusty brown boxes and slithered down the savanna, coughing spasmodically as it emitted blue-black smoke. The villagers clasped their hands and wailed: Yu kiini! Come and see the strips of iron that those strange men planted seasons earlier - - - which, left undisturbed, had grown into a monster gliding through the land. The gigantic snake was a train and the year was 1901, an age when white men were still discovering the world for their kings and queens in faraway lands.*

This is the very first paragraph in the novel, and in this, the author, in a gentle

and artful way, sets in the keystones for the book: the railroad, the white men, and a country on the cusp of independence.

Amid the huge cast of characters that Dance of the Jakaranda brings together are three men: Ian Edward McDonald, a colonial administrator; Babu Salim, an Indian technician; and Richard Turnbull, a preacher. McDonald has come to the East Africa Protectorate from South Africa, where he had caught his wife in bed with her African gardener. He stays on after overseeing the construction of the railway, having lost his campaign to be awarded a knighthood by his British masters but given another sort of title instead, the deed to a parcel of land "of his choice, anywhere in the colony." He settles on a patch of the Rift Valley that he had spied from the train, overlooking Lake Nakuru. There he builds a house, the "Monument to Love", in an unsuccessful attempt to win back his wife, which in turn becomes a private club and then, when the settlement grows into the town of Nakuru, the Jakaranda Hotel.

The novel revolves around what happens

after Babu, who, like McDonald, also works on the railway and then settles in Nakuru, is accused of fathering an illegitimate child, a girl who is eventually raised by the Reverend Turnbull. The story is given traction in a modern parallel setting in 1963, when Babu's grandson Rajan, a crooner in a band at the Jakaranda Hotel, is kissed one dark night by a mysterious young woman who tastes of lavender.

Kimani does a commendable job managing the carpentry of this ambitious novel, showing great skill in deploying multiple story lines, and taking huge leaps back and forth in time. Peter Kimani's breathtaking descriptions of "God's country" bring out the beauty of Kenya. The expertly written dialogue and natives' observations can make the story lively. This is a fascinating story that helps us appreciate the multicultural and multiracial politics that plagued Kenya at the time of independence and continues to do so today.

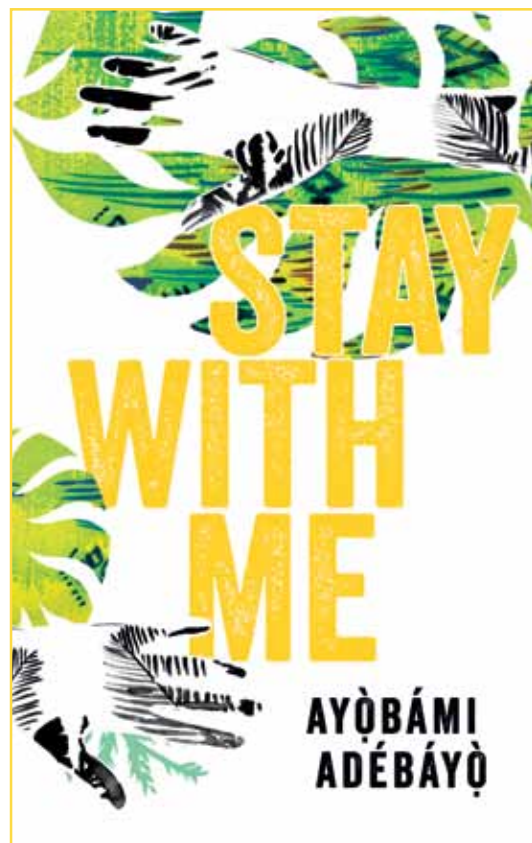
# BOOK REVIEWS

TITLE: STAY WITH ME

AUTHOR: AYOBAMI ADEBAYO

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 22 AUGUST 2017

PUBLISHER: KNOPF PUBLISHING GROUP



Typically, many African communities do not openly discuss infertility. When the issue is addressed, it is only in hushed tones and even then, it's almost always to mock or blame the woman. The women at the centre of these unfortunate situations are often subjected to verbal torment and are even targeted with degrading songs sung about childless women. The man in this scenario is always protected, with his infertility concealed at all costs, even by his wife.

Women's Prize for Fiction Nominee (2017), *Stay with Me* is a beautiful debut novel by 29-year-old Nigerian author Ayobami Adebayo. The book gives audiences an inside look at how other cultures address infertility. The book is narrated by a young, beautiful, intelligent, educated businesswoman named Yejide, and her husband Akin, who is a successful banker. Although it was love at first sight for Akin, who has provided Yejide with her heart's desires, he has yet to give her the one thing she wants the most – motherhood.

When the guilt and trips to doctors and healers don't work, Akin's female relatives convince Akin to take another wife, a younger woman named Funmi. Yejide is horrified; Akin is ashamed. Both thought they were modern Nigerians and didn't believe in polygamy.

"This life is not difficult, Yejide. If you cannot have children, allow my son to have some with Funmi. See, we are not asking you to stand up from your place in his life, we are just saying you should shift so someone else can sit down." Moomi (Mother-in-Law)

Such dialogue and vivid characters bring this novel to life. There is the rival hairdresser, Iya Bolu; Akin's womanising brother, Dotun; and Yejide's cruel stepmothers, who were also extra wives to her father, her own mother having died in childbirth. Yejide's worsening nightmare of mistaken pregnancies and childlessness becoming child loss takes centre stage. In one comic scene, she treks up the "Mountain of Jaw-Dropping Miracles" to visit a healer named Prophet Josiah, who has her dance with a white

goat while she's dragged to the summit as his chanting followers swarm her. She soon believes she's pregnant, despite doctors' insistence that there is no baby. When Yejide eventually does bear fruit, she discovers that at least two of her three children suffer from sickle cell disease. They are thus relegated to a life of pain, of waiting for the next "crisis". Akin's role in all this is unhelpful. It is the women who are strong and the men who mess things up, yet the patriarchal tradition is stringently held to. *Stay with Me* is an emotional roller coaster with many twists and turns. Ayobami Adebayo forces the readers to question traditional attitudes towards women, the importance of motherhood and the deference towards their husbands. This debut novel is absolutely one of the best books of the year.

***These book have been reviewed by Belinda Kyomuhendo. She can be reached at [bkyomuhendo@acfode.org](mailto:bkyomuhendo@acfode.org)***



# NEW ACTORS, NEW MONEY, NEW CONSERVATIONS: BUILDING MOVEMENT BRIDGES WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

GILLIAN NANTUME



The Ugandan labour market has evolved over the years. Government agencies, ministries and parastatals are no longer the largest employers, but the private or business sector. An increasing number of qualified and competent individuals find employment in this sector. The private sector must, therefore, be an important player in the women's rights movement. It must be influential in promoting gender

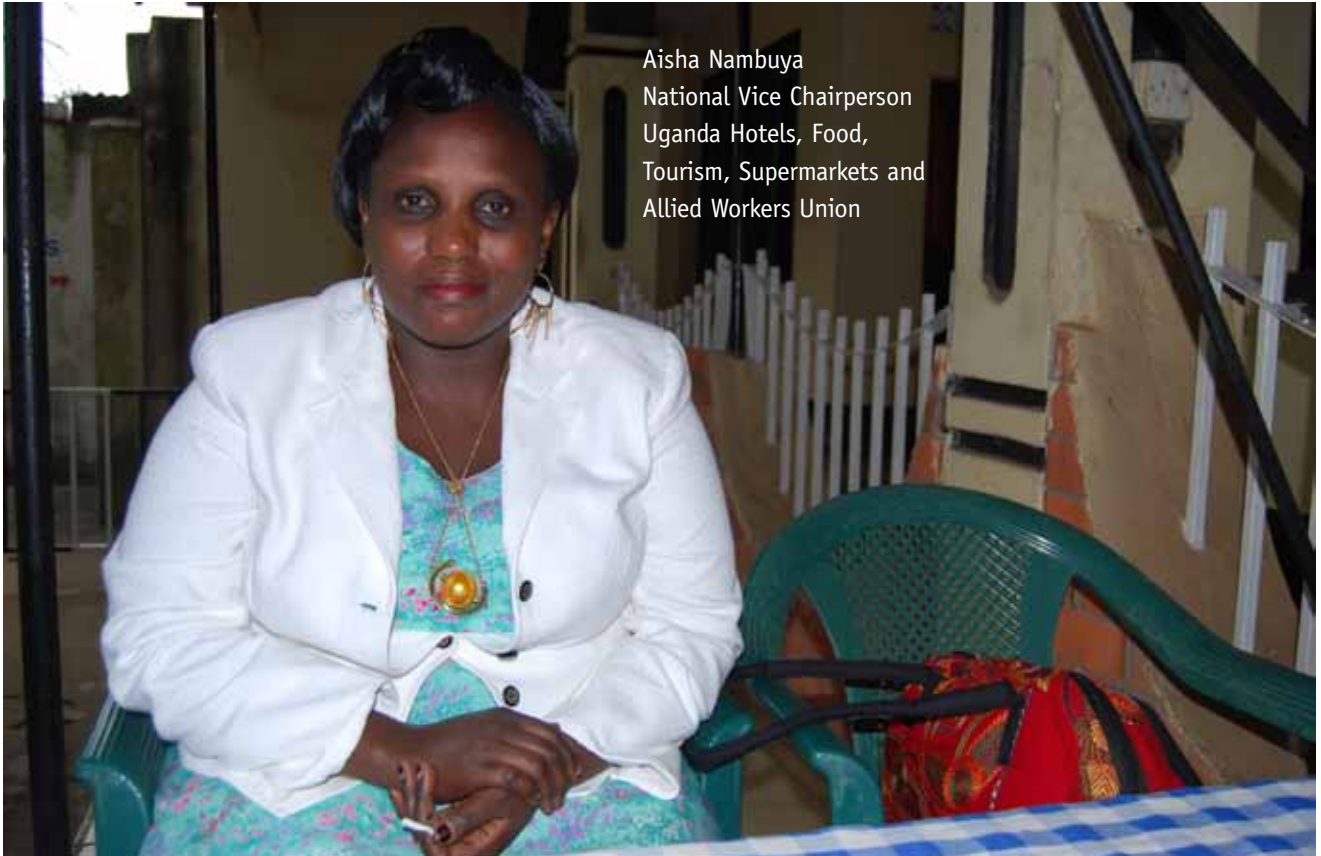
equality and the empowerment of women in the workplace and beyond.

It is, however, important to reflect on whether or not women, while they are breaking the glass ceiling in many spheres of life, for example in politics and governance where an increasing number of women are taking up elective positions, the women's quest for equal opportunity has been taken

seriously in the private sector.

A strong women's voice in the private sector can build a stronger economy and help Uganda, for example, realise its commitment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Women's Rights and Empowerment. It does not only improve the quality of life for women but also for communities. This is an opportunity for the women's rights movement to partner with these emerging sectors to ensure that the agenda of upholding women's rights does not fall by the wayside.

Examining developments in this sector through gender and women rights lenses is crucial. Here, therefore, we sought out four private sector players to share with us the experiences and practices within their enterprises.



Aisha Nambuya  
National Vice Chairperson  
Uganda Hotels, Food,  
Tourism, Supermarkets and  
Allied Workers Union

**Aisha Nambuya**  
**National Vice Chairperson**  
**Uganda Hotels, Food, Tourism,**  
**Supermarkets and Allied Workers**  
**Union**

I believe the women's rights movement is about women having their rights, including at the workplace. It means working under favourable conditions, having days-off to attend antenatal care or the immunisation of children, without their remuneration being affected. As a trade union, we lobby for these two conditions. We also ask employers to give women breastfeeding rooms or at least allow women time to breastfeed. Many employers are not happy about these conditions because they believe that it affects their business. However, most hotels that are part of the union have signed these collective bargaining agreements. We would love to work with the women's rights movement on these common goals.

**Claire Natukunda**  
**Landscape designer and co-owner,**  
**Nuwell Impressions Ltd.**

I have not been so keen on following the women's rights movement. I, however, try to make sure that the work environment is conducive for my female

workers, especially given the fact that ours being a construction company, the work is heavy. Nevertheless, I try to demonstrate to my female workers that they can do whatever a male builder can. However, in the construction industry, clients may refuse to pay



Claire Natukunda -  
Landscape designer  
and co-owner, Nuwell  
Impressions Ltd.

you just because you are or employed a woman. This is where the women's rights movement should, using their knowledge and resources, come in to support our efforts. That said, I personally do my part. I make sure all my employees sign contracts with the company. We are also considerate of the women's special needs. Our female employees, for example, return to their positions at work after giving birth and completing maternity leave.

**Boniface Wanja**

**Director, Bonre Consultancy Parlour**

The women's movement is doing so much to help women realise how valuable they are in Uganda today. I, however, have a problem with the women activists who ignore men in their cause. They instead raise women high at the expense of men. I think that is not right. There should be balance. At Bonre Consultancy Parlour, maternity leave is guaranteed for our female employees. We do not have breastfeeding facilities, however. I hope we will do so in the future.



Ronald Zaake - Managing Director, A-Plus Funeral Management

As a company, we support girl child education through funding different programmes that promote the well-being of the girl child. It is also in our business operations and plans to support women where we see the need and when it is within our means to do so.

**Ronald Zaake**


**Managing Director, A-Plus Funeral Management**

At A-Plus, over half of our staff are women. These are women who stand on their feet and work rather than expect favours. I believe women should have rights in the workplace. The only challenge is that some women look down upon themselves. It is also not possible to provide some facilities, such as that for breastfeeding. Female employees plan that themselves, including scheduling time for breastfeeding. Otherwise it is not good to come to the workplace with a baby. It would be wrong to think that the employer should provide such a facility. Maternity leave is, however, universally acceptable. It is only the pallbearers who are strictly men because it is a menial job.

*(Editor's note: We should have a world where no job is the preserve of a specific gender; we should promote equal opportunity in employment).*



Boniface Wanja  
Director, Bonre Consultancy Parlour

A close-up portrait of a woman with dark hair styled in braids, smiling warmly. She is wearing a black top with a decorative, metallic-looking border around the neckline. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting with foliage.

Diana Kagere Mugerwa - Media and National Advocacy Officer, Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention



*The organising power of the women's rights movement was based on unity and strategy. The women then used resources that were at their disposal, such as voice, power, knowledge and personal networks to penetrate the leadership structures from the local to the national level.*

# HOW TO STRENGTHEN AND SUSTAIN WOMEN'S ORGANISING POWER

ARISE REPORTER

On 1 January 1976, the United Nations Decade for Women began with the goal of promoting equal rights and opportunities for women around the world.

In Uganda, at that time, however, there wasn't much women's rights activism as activities like these were banned by the then president, Idi Amin. The country and the women would wait until 30 July 1980 when Uganda signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It was a strong step forward in advancing the rights of women in the country. The country would ratify the convention on 22 July 1985.

These positive developments were greatly propelled by interest from the then new government, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), which sought to consolidate its support

among women. The women were a strong support base for the new government. The women increased momentum in organising. And in 1994, during the national constitution-making process, women were deeply involved to ensure that women's voices are heard. ACFODE, founded in 1985, was one of the pioneering organisations leading these activities. Women and women's organisations organised seminars across the country and made submissions, among other activities, to the Constitutional Commission.

With women's organisations being free to operate, the fight for women's rights was galvanised. "There was an understanding that once there was a favourable legal framework, it would be easy for women to organise," says Perry



*Women's organisations and leaders should return to the grass roots and empower women to take up leadership, promote accountability in governance, and question processes and procedures. Empowered with information, women can, for instance, report cases of abuse and tackle problems without necessarily asking for help from national leaders but, instead, leaders within their communities*



Aritua, Executive Director, Women Democracy Network Uganda. The movement realised huge results in the constitution-making process, including political representation at all levels of government and affirmative action for girls to gain entrance to higher institutions of learning.

None of these milestones would have been registered without the strong organising power of the women's lobby, which, through networking, alliance- and partnership-building, registered a significant impact in the communities.

Today, however, the momentum and euphoria surrounding the achievements

of the women's rights movement seem to have gone down. "Women's rights activists are working hard in every way. The only problem is that the fight for women's rights is no longer as exciting as it used to be," says Dr Maggie Kigozi, entrepreneur and feminist.



Many women working in the rural areas, such as midwives and teachers, do not seem to comprehend that they are actually advancing women's rights, so there needs to be capacity-building to equip these women to be able speak out for the rights of women in their communities.

"To strengthen our organising power, we should take our work to the grass roots," notes Aritua.

Women's organisations and leaders should return to the grass roots and empower women to take up leadership, promote accountability in governance, and question processes and procedures. Empowered with information, women can, for instance, report cases of abuse and tackle problems without necessarily asking for help from national leaders but, instead, leaders within their communities.

Coordinated and harmonised communication practices underscore the need to strengthen the women's organising power. Recently, for example, when the president appointed all new male judges to the High Court the women's rights movement did not come out strongly to voice concern.

"While an increasing number of girls and women are empowered today, there are still issues, such as early marriages, teenage pregnancy and female genital mutilation, that are of grave concern to the movement. We still need to come out together and strongly to tackle these problems," says Kigozi.

The movement needs to keep adapting to a world with changing priorities to sustain its organising

One of the buttresses of the women's rights movement was getting more women to appreciate that when one stood up for the rights of another woman, one was actually doing it for themselves.

Aritua says, "The organising power was in making people realise that when the rights of another human being are violated, you must get concerned. The problem now is people have classified the movement as an urban or elite's entity."

# EQUALITY



power. One way is to transfer it to the next generation through mentorship. This kind of training conditions young women to fight for women's rights out of passion and attachment to a cause, not merely because of financial rewards, or anything like that.

It is also important for alternative voices to be heard. Otherwise, if only a few women speak for the movement, they may not be representative of the opinions of young women or women of different socio-economic status.

Rita Aciro, Executive Director, Uganda Women's Network, believes the key is to reach out, far and wide. "I know there are resource challenges but that should not be an excuse," she observes. "There must be leadership and the onus lies on us as women rights organisations to be a catalyser of the organising power so that women can benefit from the development processes, economic

empowerment, and access to justice."

Other spheres of life, such as business, should also be incorporated into the movement. "People think an economically empowered woman automatically has rights, so no one approaches businesswomen," says Kigozi. "My challenge is in involving women in the business sector." She concludes.

Sustaining the organising power of women requires resources, planning and strategy. The movement needs to harmonise these positions to continue to be a strong force, or even stronger in the country.

**Commentary: Diana Kagere Mugerwa  
Media and National Advocacy Officer  
Centre for Domestic Violence  
Prevention**

The organising power of the women's rights movement was based on unity

and strategy. They used resources that were at their disposal, such as voices, power, knowledge and their own networks from their areas to penetrate the leadership structures from the local to the national level.

Currently, though, the movement seems scattered, even when women are organised in different groups. The civic organising and political organising sometimes seems to be working in silos on critical issues. For example, at the tabling of the Marriage and Divorce Bill in Parliament, while civil society was mobilising support for the passing of the Bill, some female political leaders were bashing it.

The organising power of the movement is sustainable but there is need for mentorship and harmonisation of the ideology and strategy of engagement.





**WE HAVE A WORLD  
FULL OF WOMEN WHO  
ARE UNABLE TO EXHALE  
FULLY BECAUSE THEY HAVE  
FOR SO LONG BEEN  
CONDITIONED TO FOLD  
THEMSELVES INTO SHAPES  
TO MAKE THEMSELVES  
LIKABLE.**

*Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*

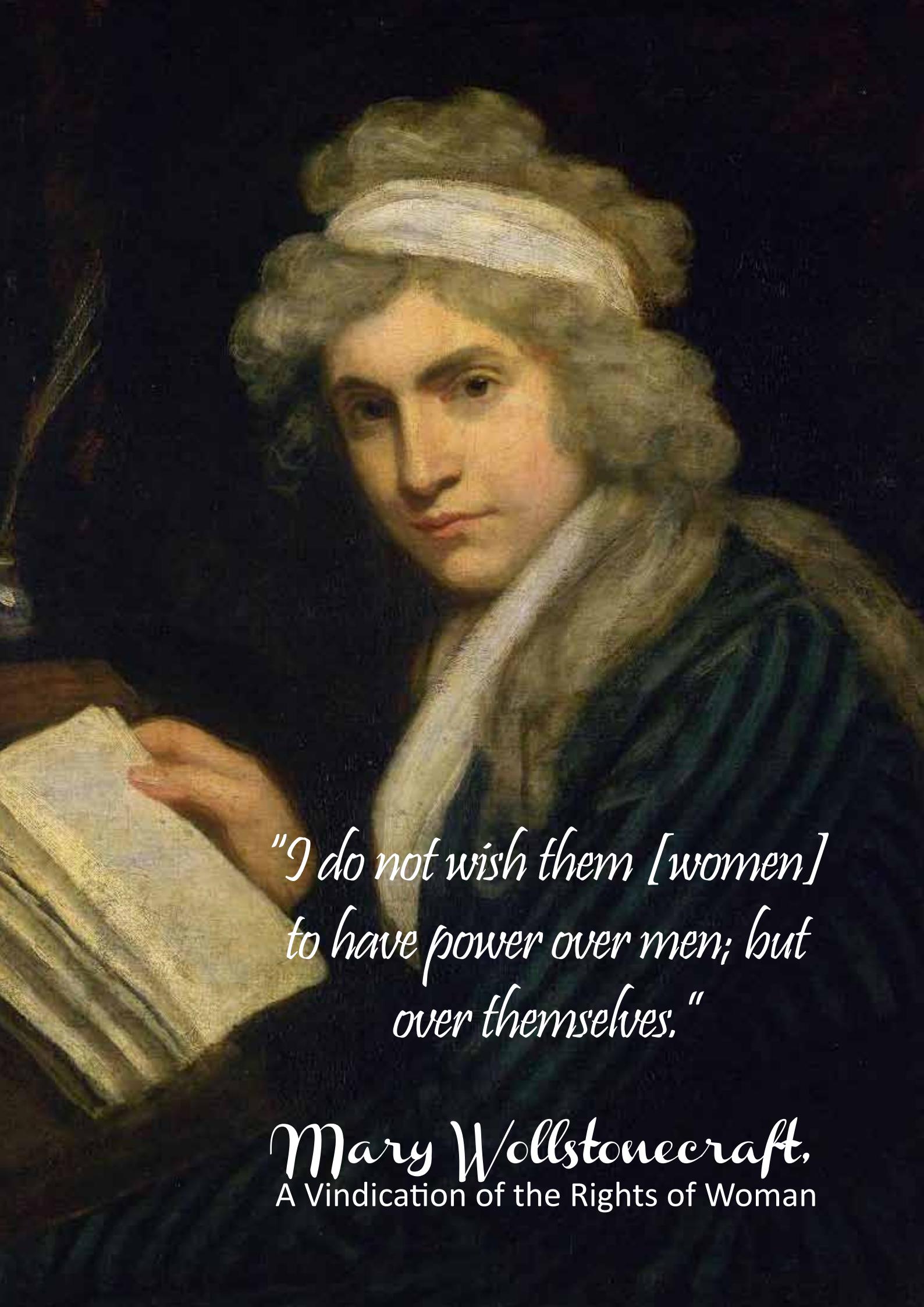


WOMEN DEMAND EQUALITY

I'm A  
SECOND  
CLASS  
CITIZEN

Country Squire

PAGE



*"I do not wish them [women]  
to have power over men; but  
over themselves."*

*Mary Wollstonecraft,*  
A Vindication of the Rights of Woman



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