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Ethnicism and the Democratization of Civil Society: Envisioning Changes in the Proximal and Causal Ideologies of 'Marginality' in Africa and America

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the possibilities of transforming social and political marginality by democratising the ethnic groups in societies replete with multiethnic social construction of 'underclass' conflict such as America and Africa to engage prioritised issues targeted at promoting the interests of collective existence in the sustenance of national goals in both continents. Although the concept of ethnicity embraces several interesting aspects of our empirical experience, they nonetheless have theoretical significance as metaphors of social struggle for democratic principles of equality and justice.

The paper argues that in order to develop a broader based democratic agenda that would eclipse the intense controversies in the pursuit of sexual equality within the ethnic systems, there is a vital need for a democratic reconstruction of governance strategies that erstwhile have created complex difficulties in reassessing the continental social systems of nationalism and ethnicism, and much more that failed to examine the anti-racist and anti-tribal interactive approaches of the community alliance.

It examines the basis for the lack of resistance to the institutionalised ethnic relations of power that continue to prop systems of domination, victimization and exploitation in both Africa and America. It analyses the theoretical and practical hierarchic trend of ethnicism and feminism, which makes them sources of social dysfonction. More significantly, in postulating an effective possibility of reconstructive challenges characterized by mainstream view which equates feminism with ethnic co-operation, the paper also critically deconstructs the onslaught of 'sexual sociality', and 'democratic sexism' in the United States and, more profoundly, in Africa.

Résumé

Cette communication traite des possibilités de transformation de la marginalité sociale et démocratique à travers la démocratisation des groupes ethniques dans

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les sociétés caractérisées par une construction multiethnique du conflit «de classes défavorisées», telles que l'Amérique et l'Afrique, ceci dans le but de poser des débats prioritaires, censés promouvoir les intérêts de l'existence collective, dans le cadre de la recherche d'objectifs nationaux viables dans les deux continents. Bien que le concept d'ethnicité englobe divers aspects intéressants de notre expérience empirique, ceux-ci n'en revêtent pas moins une signification théorique en tant que métaphore de la lutte sociale pour les principes démocratiques d'égalité et de justice.

Cette présentation soutient que pour développer un programme démocratique plus large, qui puisse éclipser les vives controverses survenant dans le cadre de la recherche d'une certaine égalité entre les sexes au niveau des systèmes ethniques, il est absolument nécessaire d'initier une reconstruction démocratique des stratégies de gouvernance qui ont jadis créé d'énormes difficultés concernant la réévaluation des systèmes sociaux du nationalisme et de l'ethnicisme sur le continent, et bien plus, qui ne sont pas arrivées à examiner les approches interactives antiracistes et anti-tribales de l'alliance communautaire.

Elle examine également les raisons de la faible opposition à l'endroit du système de relations ethniques institutionnalisées, qui continue de soutenir les systèmes de domination, de victimisation et d'exploitation, aussi bien en Afrique qu'en Amérique. Cette présentation analyse la tendance hiérarchique théorique et pratique de l'éthnicisme et du féminisme, qui transforme ces relations en source de dysfonctionnement social. En posant la possibilité d'instauration de défis reconstructeurs caractérisés par la vision dominante qui assimile le féminisme à la coopération ethnique, cette communication procède également à une déconstruction critique de l'attaque de la «socialité sexuelle», et du «sexisme démocratique» aux État-Unis, et dans une plus large mesure, en Afrique.

Introduction and problem

An important aspect of the African and American social systems is their multi ethnicity, which has largely formed the basic social construction of conflict between the people. The consensus of opinion among feminists, in relation to this, is that it has a biological and domestic predicate. In order to develop a broader based agenda that would eclipse the intense controversies in the pursuit of equality within the ethnic systems, there is a commonality in view of the fact that all forms of subordinated interactions are vital for coalitions and nation building.

As such, strategies, that fail to examine the interactive approaches to community alliance, create complex difficulties in re-assessing the sub social systems of ethnicism namely: sexism, racism, nationalism etc. However, the pattern of women's involvement in precipitating heterogeneous marriages, pluralistic kinship, and community alliance, can be the resource needed for the mitigation and reconciliation of ethnic

conflict in a way that will project neo-ethnicism as a system of transition form national consciousness to a more communal from of identity and organization (Said and Simmon 1975: 70).

Our analysis recaptures the theoretical and practical hierarchized trend of ethnicism and feminism which makes them sources of social dysfunction. More significantly, it addresses the possibilities of radical change, characterized by mainstream view, which equates feminism with ethnic co-operation. Most often, the hindrances placed on nation building lie in areas where ethnic mobility structures prevailed over ethnic co-existence between the sexes.

This mobility, according to Germani (1964: 371), has its most disruptive effects on the social order when it is non-institutionalized mobility and when there is an imbalance between aspirations and actual chances of mobility. Non-institutionalised mobility by definition introduces status in congruencies with segregational schemes of culture and tradition. It involves opening some dimensions while the dominant norms and values (or at least the norms and values of the dominant groups) remain geared to the requirements of the previous structure of social marginality.

This situation is a powerful source of social tension because the minority groups involved tend to either equilibrate their status or mutiny against invasion or intrusion on their status. Groups in the minority, often express resentment towards the privileged groups and particularly against the strengths of their union. The reason for this more precisely as Model (1993: 170) aptly stated lies in the fact that ethnic concentration can heighten the possibility for non-unionized economic social and political opportunities to become unionised.

As a result, the opposite and disadvantaged camps, often experience group and personal demoralization, and social disruption may result. In this context, women particularly, face a double-edged problem of minority and marginality. To reconcile this king of ethnic resentment and diversity we envision a redefinition of concept, commonality, plurality and sexual alliance of social structures within an ethnic group and amongst ethnic groups.

Ethnicism: Redefining concept, commonality and plurality in Africa and America

Ethnicity as a social phenomenon according to Barth (1970: 10) is a category of ascription and identification that characterizes interaction between the people. It is most often associated with specific social formations and interaction strategy among members of particular traditional

and cultural groups. Most often these characteristics reflect the diverse cultural value systems of such people, which are subjected in most conflict cases to clashes of inter-cultural supremacy. It thus refers to the contextual discrimination by members of one group against others on the basis of the differentiated systems of social and cultural symbols (Otite 1990: 60). But ordinarily ethnic groups are distinguished by the communal character of their characterizing traits such as their geographical boundaries, native language and vagaries of dialects, peculiar cultural practices etc. In Africa, heterogeneous linguistic structure is an inalienable variable in social formations of many ethnic groups. While in America, there is a blend of both heterogeneous and homogenous linguistic structures.

However, ethnic groups are not necessarily homogeneous entities either linguistically or culturally because it is visibly clear that minor linguistic variations and cultural differences often exist within the group, forming the basis for the delineation of sub ethnic systems. More important still is the problem of sex and class differentiation. This is dependent on the level of the disparaging cultural forces and the consequent extent of the division along class structure within the ethnic enclave. In this regard, different ethnic and sex groups may have similar patterns of social differentiation or similarities, all lumped up in their ethnocentric category and conduct.

Ethnocentrism is, therefore, often confused with ethnicity as inextricably synonymous. Although there are quite a number of ways in which they are related, they are quite distinct from each other. Ethnocentrism has a behavioural attitudinal framework that is often considered as both eccentric and extreme in content and context. It normally represents the subjective dimension of ethnic behavioural affiliation. Such that the members of a group are taken to be ethnocentric, whenever they exhibit an attitude of self-assertiveness, and consequently blow the trumpet of their ethnic exclusivity and uniqueness.

Ethnicism on its part incorporates all ethnocentric attributes, but carries them to a logical hypothesis and conclusion of politicisation. In other words, it exists only within a conglomerate political structure consisting of diverse ethnic groups, and characterized by a common consciousness and commonality of a distinct group association, although many of these differentiating or characterizing traits of ethnicism and ethnocentrism have been grossly altered over the years. For instance, not many of the ethnic groups in Africa or racial groups in America shared any common consciousness but only a tenuous link in the myth of their ancestral descent,

which marks the historical allusion, they hold to any form of common identity that unites them.

A philosophical and conceptual analysis of a group's ethnicity and its ethnocentric flavour reveals to us, therefore, that there are social groups which, within a larger cultural and social system, are accorded a special status in terms of their complexities of traits, either drawn from the religious beliefs and linguistic construct, cultural complexities, geographical location, distinction in skin pigmentation etc.

Thus ethnic groups define themselves or are defined by others as having distinguishing characteristics either in a cultural of physical sense or both as exemplified in Africa. In America, usually physical differences have coincided with cultural differences, and as a consequence have resulted in both social and political conflicts of racism, simply by the fact of the hues of skin characterization. Although the concept of ethnicity embraces several interesting aspects of our empirical experience they nonetheless have theoretical significance as metaphors of social struggle for equality and justice.

One striking similarity in Africa and the United States is that they have multi-ethnic grouping systems, some of which are more dominant than the others. Instances of the dominant groups in Nigeria for example are the Hausas, Yorubas and Ibos. For the United States, the dominant ethnic group? WASP? controls all significant governmental and commercial strata of the society. The sociological effect of ethnic grouping is basically the problem of difference (Appelbaum & Chambliss 1995: 244) and pluralism.

This structuring captures the competitions and conflict relations between the groups in a multi-ethnic society. In Depress's (1976: 29) opinion 'cultural sections do not clash by chance or because their structure express incompatible values. They clash because certain individuals and groups have decided that something can be achieved by way of making them clash' (Depress 1976: 29) particularly in changes that will increase and develop the scales of their human cognitive community and sociality.

Recently, there has been an increasing tendency of ethnic peoples to think fundamentally in terms of segregation. A good deal of secessionist movements arises in many of these kinds of separateness with the driving force for expression of economic and political interest. Some of the more fruitful application of plural society is the overabundance of theories and concepts for the characterization and analysis of social biases and classes. Pluralism does not, in most cases, engender the structuring of ethnic identity, and despite the characterized domination and conflict, there are

actually widely accepted theories of democratic pluralism and equilibrium (Kuper 1969: 22-23).

There are basically many aspects of multi-ethnicity, namely: cultural, institutional, economic, political, social and other structural forms which either integrate or disintegrate the diverse sections of social strata of the society on a basis of power equality or inequality. For Smith (1969: 4), the essential condition of a structurally multi-ethnic society is a status of subordinate segments of society as less than full citizens, which implies that inequalities of power and economic and social opportunity are incorporated.

The biological, cultural, linguistic and structural properties of ethnic groups are most easily applied in a dichotomous manner (Barth 1969: 10-13) and this goes a long way to reinforce emotional intensity of the organizational principle of the ethnic group especially in the aspect of defining leadership roles and its relation to other sources of changes in the society. Ethnic dichotomies would seem analytical in two orders, either as a process of dialectical features of the overt symbol or as the basis value orientation and standards relevant to the peoples' identity (Barth 1970: 14), particularly as a personal and group boundary of identification and maintenance of benefit (Otite 1975).

In both Africa and America there is the illusion of ethnic harmony, which entails various forms of re-introversions of new self and parochial interest in the continent's macro or local boundaries. The present phenomenon of ethnic conflicts in both continents is a far cry from the concepts of balanced powers. And this difference cannot be viewed as the ultimate democratic community since their 'cultures and ethnic groups have an inner logic that determines behavior, values and attitudes confounding objective description or absolutism' (Said & Simmon 1975: 66).

Ethnicism reveals a consciousness of selective interactions that accentuates a group's dynamism and as Barth (1970: 14) stresses, it is 'super-ordinate to most other statuses' and defines a way an individual 'operationalizes and externalizes his references to group norms' subject to traditional and futuristic preservation of the group's intimate identity.

On this note, ethnicism and its more contemporary form notably referred to as neo-ethnicism, will be used to refer to the resurgence of ethnic identification and revival through the humaneness of modernization and industrialization, neo-colonialism and urbanization (Smith 1968). As a system it is the 'transition from a national state to more communal forms of identity and organization characterized by cultural patriotism, ethnic nationalism and a revolt against anxiety' (Said & Simmons 1975: 70). It

therefore articulates the traditional conflicts and co-operation, in a way that socially enhances the needs of the community at large.

This has a striking similarity with ethnic nationalism, Marxian ethnicity and communal ethnicity (Riggs 1994: 583), which somehow requires a 'condition where major social functions are met in a community sense and shared in common by ethnic members to some degree'. In which case, it is believed that production, consumption, materials and other resources are to be maintained in common to sustain communal 'ethnicities' without prejudice of distribution. In this case, homogenous or heterogeneous ethnic systems must have relevance to the community system with a strong sense of community identity. However in the current public perspective in America and Africa, ethnicity is often viewed as a resurgence of age-old tensions and anarchical and exploitative survival (Riggs 1994: 585).

On the issue of the colonial genesis of the exploitative inclination of ethnicity in Africa, it is often opined that ethnicity is not a creation of colonialism (Otite 1990: 23), but rather, an amalgam of colonial government (Kasfir 1976: 30), which condenses the fluidity of ethnic integration and perpetuates cultural separation (Post & Vickers 1973: 41).

In the United States, while the indigenous Americans such as the red Indians have larger social and ethnic cultural aggregates of ethnic identity encapsulated by their geographical boundaries, other ethnic groups such as the Greeks. Italians, Irish, Africans, Jews, etc. are empty of elaborate social distinction despite the open function of the American multi-ethnic social system (Parson 1975: 65). And because the ethnic enclaves in Africa exist before the institution of the state machinery, this makes them natural groups as opposed to the conglomeration of ethnic superficiality of caste and race in America, mostly made up of immigrant communities with a few indigenous groups who constitute ethnic and racial nationalities.

Against this backdrop, contemporary conception of ethnicity maintains a freedom of theoretical interpretations and appears fluid because of the many different fragmentary and dangerous agenda attached to it. (Campbell 1997: 5). At times it can be dis-aggregated, and only exceptional identification parameters are employed. For Otite (1990: 65), African ethnicity provides some basis for collective but fluid action and the problem or situation at hand determines whether the whole ragbag of socio-cultural criteria or a critical section of it can be mobilized in the ensuing discriminatory relationship.

In the academia there are three distinguished kinds of this fluidity each of which possesses some social diversity and the necessity of allian-

ces. The common case of these brands of 'ethnicities' is the traditional or primordial types, which seeks to influence the national and local structure and functionalism of the polity along the principles of multiculturalism. The other brands as applicable to the American situation as highlighted by Campbell (1997: 9), are the instrumental and moral ethnicity which reverses priorities by promoting the interests of individuals and their natal group. It also complicates the problem, which threatens collective existence and the attainment of nation goals (Otite 1990: 68).

It is generally the case that ethnicism in Africa impedes social, political and economic development, and its effect has been "socially disastrous and nationally more disintegrative than their American counterpart. In Africa, problems on ethnicity are made complex by diverse upsurge of sociological groups—such as the military, which not only aggravates the crisis of the national security but also forestalls the entrenchment of democratic practices that will foster a sense of community alliance among the ethnic groups.

In this regard, ethnic militias spring up, but lack the basic material needed for infusing social ethics into their ethnic affiliation, and more particularly into their supportive role in the scheme of governance. As Ali Mazrui (1975: 45, 48) argues 'at best a military regime succeeds in putting ethnic cleavages in a society in cold storage'. At worst military rule, partly because of its nature simply degenerates into eruptions of militarised ethnicity with periodic violent confrontations'. This simply implies that the military agrarian and revolutionary statuses often resorted to in the crisis between ethnic militias are opposed to the politics of communitarianism needed in fostering security and stability in a democratic society.

Rhetoric of Intolerance, Underclass, and Segregation: Problems of co-ethnic debate, multi-national reconciliation and inter-continental alliance

The democratisation of the civil society and the bid to entrench security and stability can only be justifiably argued if the underclass problems, rhetoric of intolerance, and segregation as engendered by ethnicism and racism are seriously addressed. Only a few scholars have depicted racism and ethnicism as a societal vice perpetuated by some bigoted group in the society. And not so many too have analysed the rhetoric of intolerance, segregation in the light of possibly engendering inter-continental alliance and multi-national reconciliation.

On many occasions, there have even been varied degrees of socialization perpetuated to enhance belief in the dichtomized version of societal strata in which racism and ethnicism play a prominent role, especially in enthroning a particular set of people above the other in the African and American continents.

Consequently, the average man's understanding of racism, as a political instrumentality of the imperialistic structure of colonialism has been inexorably restrained, while at the same time the lay man's conception of ethnicism as an incapacitating ideology is seldom appreciated. In this context there is the imperative to examine the issues of racism and ethnicism as weapons of 'marginalization'; and at the same time, call for procedural measures in bridging their escalating trend of marginality in the history of either African or American separate cultural orientations, or in a naturalization duo of African-American relations.

While it is true that ethnicism appears incidentally as the highest expression of the African cultural system, racism, on its part, subsists as an appendage of the American colonial system. Both establish a fundamental discrimination between groups, and also lay the foundation for the exclusivity of human relations. It is indisputable that ethnicism and racism condition us to see human difference as simplistically in opposition to each other, and typically suggestive of power divisions in a strict sense of domination and subordination, good and bad, superior and inferior.

This sort of historical misrepresentation spells marginality at its inauguration, and still, drags many groups in multiethnic and plural societies, in the muddling of diverse pioneering and patronizing biases. The normal differences, by virtue of geographical location, ethnicity, colour, breed or clan, industrial and technological advancement, have become a life long problem in both the American and the African continents. Distorted democratic culture, grossly, hinged on contention and dominance, reigns supreme.

For instance many of us have been raised in societies where those distortions were endemic within our living. At many cultural levels and perspectives, ethnicity and racism are integrally woven into the cultural perspectives of a people's cognitive essence. According to Schaar, ethnic and mutually exclusive constructs of social identification 'pervades man's self perception in his relation with his fellows. It contaminates the sphere of man's relationship to politics, the state and the social structure and forces which shape his destiny' (Schaar 1964: 173).

The inherent superiority aura in which many ethnic groups parade themselves over all others, generally leads them to wallow in the euphoria

of treacherous, marginal, contentious and deviant human relations, which culminate, in many instances, in the destruction of life, property and political processes. Furthermore, the systems of differences between the people and the polity have ways of generating alienating effects in the ostracized peoples. For instance, they sever relationships, hinder development and social growth, and disrupt effective political stability. In many cases of intra-ethnic, inter-ethnic and international ethnic conflicts, the less developed group suffers the loss that normally emanates from these stagnation, alienation and enslavement.

Contrary to the phenomenal naturalization strategy of American states, racism and ethnicity still persist forcefully. Irrespective of the Emancipation Proclamation by Abraham Lincoln as issued on the 1st of January 1863 in which he declared all slaves in confederacy 'forever free' not much can be said for the reality of this Proclamation in the lives of African-Americans and their likes. Charles Houston, remarked that 'nobody needs to explain to a Negro the difference between the law of the book and the law in action' Winnie Mandela also remarked while the South African emancipation struggle was at its peak that she 'married a struggle' implying of course the struggle of ethnic and racial marginality.

In much more the same way, the Blacks in America have come to realize that the emancipation envisaged at the outset of democratisation was just the beginning of an awesome struggle that lay ahead (Martin et al 1995: 377-379, 733). And by the current U.S naturalization visa grant, many other Africans are being brought over into the continuous struggle against the natural disposition to the ethnic intolerance and racial segregation, inherent in man's culture. Ethnicism and racism are so pervasive in the African and American cultures to the point that their manifestations cannot be dealt with effectively in one workshop or one hour-long heated discussion (Yamato 1995: 7). The emphasis of this explication is that there are erroneous tendencies that make light the diverse manifestations of racial and ethnic inclinations.

The ethnic agitation for independence, recognition and acceptance, have become a re-occurring syndrome in both Africa and America. It is notably clear that in the United States and in African States, people on number of times have had to resist all forms of enslaving tactics particularly the ones that make them lose their uniqueness, identity and territory. And this resistance in most instances had equally been centred on the fact that what we perceive as race is often intertwined with culture, biology, and physical qualities.

The belief in the bigotry of ethnicism and racism goes a long way to reflect biological influences, which seems inextricably tied to the intolerance in attitudinal, life-style and socio economic factor of the people (Thornton 1995: 95). In the context of international ethnic cleavage, the depiction and characterization of an African or an American identity are questionable, especially in view of the fact that as 'a new century approached, the United States (Like in many other centuries past) seemed to be a nation torn by racial, class and regional antagonism (Martin 1995: 520). This is so because the historical and ideological practices of colour segregation which affiliate more with the supremacy of the whites, just like it had in the past, cannot be assuredly said not to continue particularly in worsening the race relations in the Unites States of America.

Many attempts to legalize segregation were rampant and till date, the many efforts at elimination these attempts have proved abortive. The evidences about disassociation of races in the strategic and significant spheres of life and services are still matters of reckoning in American polity. From the historical perspective, the national integration and coalition between America and Africa depict a game gamble wherein as in the time past, the 'African lost more than they gained'. Of course, this is reported mildly as blind attitudes of the whites, which possibly stems from their paternalistic and supremacist attitudes towards racism.

The problem of ethnic or racial intolerance and segregation is more pronounced in the 'the systematic institutionalised mistreatment of one group of people by another, based on racial heritage (Yamato 1995: 37). Unfortunately, however this heritage remains as unpredictable as its predictable cause, and is mostly turbulent and violent. In the American racial culture, especially in the African-American instance, there is a vivid political propaganda about co-ethnicism and equality of races. As reported by Martin (1995: 519) 'most often, the government deserted African Americans, and populists failed to unite Blacks and Whites on the basis of class interest'.

Although it is arguable that the desertion is not climax of all racial crime done against the African American, nevertheless the racial violence to which such desertion gave credence still remains pathetically alive in the minds of the black and colored minority groups. More gruesomely alive is the fact that 'lynching increasingly became a tool for controlling both black votes and actions. And under the pretext or 'maintaining law and order' vigilante mobs hanged, mutilated, and burned African Americans in increasing numbers' (Martin 1995: 519). The salient inhibition of those times was the disenfranchisement plan through which

Blacks' democratic rights were grossly undermined. The impact of incapacitation of the racial governance of the past still lurks in the minds of the battered class and race.

According to Sugrue (1993: 93), economic incapacitating repression makes its appeal in the structure of urban poverty spurred on by spatial divergence by class and by the cleavages of ethnicity. In most ethnic niches, the processes of initiating employment association therefore vary. For instance, as explained by Model (1993: 166) 'Italians were rarely employed in Buffalo's steel mills on the grounds that they performed inadequately at factory labor, while Poles were accepted enthusiastically, Blacks were widely believed well equipped to withstand the hottest most dangerous and dirtiest of manufacturing tasks'.

A pro-slavery argument lends a presumptuous support to this supremacist culture of the White racial culture, arguing that the Southern way of life is superior to any other in the United States, and even perhaps in the global world. And more also, the biological inferiority of African Americans and their inherent unfitness to take care of themselves leave them naturally bereft of the privilege to exercise the rights of citizenship (Brinkley 1997: 37).

A reminiscence of this aspect of American past leaves racism distastefully poignant; it recaptures the racially induced political ostracism, discriminatory social legislation, and other forms of segregation, which had metamorphosed haphazardly, informally and implicitly into legalized systems of repression. The consequences of this on the female sex have enormously been underestimated, and that is why there is a need to challenge the omission of the effects of ethnicism on the feminist liberation ideology.

Ethnicism and Feminism: A challenge on the omission of the effect of ethnicism on feminist ideology

According to Model (1993: 170), because the history of racial and ethnic mobility is primarily a tale about men, only males are included. Accordingly, the opinion about the correlation of ethnicism and feminism is most controversial in the case of women, who historically are concentrated and associated with domestic services with a niche that offers little political recognition and meagre economic rewards. Feminism, to a large extent, addresses the problematic citizenry disparity and contention emanating from the crisis of ethnic niche, by emphasizing the different ways in which sexual and social marginality were construed.

While feminism argues for the exclusivity of the female sex in contradistinction to the male sex, backed with the belief that women should be accorded the same rights as men. Ethnicism on its part seeks to promote in as much as possible, the theory of political, economic and social equality of their cultural group. They both, however, are from different ideological frameworks that insist that society should recognize claims of a cultural or a sexual group for civic rights like political, legal, social and economic rights.

This implies that, ethnicism and feminism, in certain respects, may not differ substantively from other liberating ideologies revolving round the marginality of minority groups. They can therefore be said ideologically designed to enforce liberation and emancipation of their interest group from oppression, ignorance, and poverty. However, some scholars have criticized feminism as being confined to women's struggle against oppressive gender relationships, oblivious of their commitment to many other aspects of resistance around culture that are not simply gender.

A more comprehensive view of ethnicism and feminism captures the view that women's liberation would bring about a radical change in the tradition of the society and its cultural group values. Consequently, some feminists stretched the meaning of the world ethnicism to a wider scope of conceptualisation to include a proposal for social transformation as well as a movement that strives to end the multiple oppression of women on sexual and cultural note. More so, because this oppression has not been isolated from other forms of ethnic and social struggle and this relationship has influenced both the ideology and the organization of many feminist movements.

Ethnicism and feminism as an ideology in this context can be defined as a set of closely related beliefs, or ideas, or even attitudes, characteristic of a sexual group within a multicultural community. As a result, feminist movements are divided into different ideological camps, but are still confronted with questions prompted by their belief that justice requires the equality of the sexes within a group and between groups, such that the female sex does not suffer more by virtue of their biological determinism amidst all other forms of oppression prevalent in the society. In which case they will not only cease to be victims of a sexist system anchored on sexual difference but also will be able to establish for themselves reputable modalities within ethnic enclaves, which will serve as foundations for feminist reforms in an attempt to create gender neutrality in a multi-ethnic society.

Feminists are more concerned with entrenching an inclusive democratic theory designed primarily to provide accounts of women claims to ethnic security so that ethnic reflection to women's situation would not be neglected entirely without changing the system of community alliance. Contemporary feminism is challenging this omission. It suggests that the possibilities of transforming and democratising the ethnic groups should be redesigned. It seeks to explain how not only the minority of individuals are being oppressed, but also how the majority notably the women are short-changed in the productive resources of the society.

In order to explain this further, feminism makes recourse to the theory of class, race and sex in the resource-based competition of multi-ethnic societies. It claims that not only does ethnicism or its more contemporary version hinder the development and national sense of belonging of the women, but it also carries along with it the social stigma of insecurity for the female sex. In analysing either ethnicism or neo-ethnicism, we can see that they focus on human beings who are seen as having neither sex nor gender. Thus women in ethnic situations are invisible and virtually ignored. However the social reality of ethnicism is not gender-blind and vividly spells out women's subordination, under the influence of class and race with greater experiences of oppression.

It is obvious that ethnic sentiment arouses extremely violent acts whose degeneration and confrontational agitation are only to well the original causes of war (Turton 1997: 3). A related issue of ethnic conflict is its direct shortfall of battle adversity on the female sex. Under ethnic wars the postulate of feminine linkage elicits extraordinary stoicism and self-sacrifice even from the normal invisibility and frailty of the female sex.

However all historic ethnic diversity seems clear that the first and deeply affected factor in its disintegration processes are the women. As evident in ethnic conflict situation the latter lacking resource capacity, biological encouragement and military or combatant weaponry, could not definitely survive; except by banding in groups, which is, essentially and technically, inadequate; especially in the traditional distinction between males in the political military roles and females in the domestic family roles (Goldstein 1999: 118).

Furthermore, the bewildering consequences and externalities of feminine adversity cut across class and cultural perspectives. In addition to combating the general images of grief, suffering and destruction brought about by the ethnic enemy (Turton 1997: 1), women are made liable to greater vices such as sexual objectification and harassment. Women with children fared worse, with the added care of those children at the critical

time when one constitutes a burden even to oneself. The failure of ethnicism and racism to provide adequate solutions to gender disparity is more than just an omission; it walks surreptitiously to obscure women's oppression within the conceptual framework of ethnic predicament.

In providing a feminist re-interpretation on ethnicism, an advocacy for a transformation of human consciousness needs intensification, in considering the strategies and problems of power, independence, and leadership in nation building. In order to associate ethnicism with and egalitarian processing of human, social, political and economic distribution, there is an imperative need for a re-definition of cultural and ethnic logic that restricts values, attitudes and resources in a confounding objective absolutism.

According to Said and Simmon (1995: 66) nationhood is a conscious expression of peoples' shared sense of community. Conventionally, the view is that when a sense of ethnic belonging is vitiated, the seat of the biases of must be restructured. Buttressing this, Osaghae (1994: 1) argued that because the major consequence of ethnic conflict was destructive rather than constructive, it must be managed rather than eradicated within the context of democratisation processes in any ethnic torn society. In Sithole's (1992: 1) opinion 'if ethnicity is legitimated then it can be diffused, controlled and managed better than approaching it as if it were an illegitimate social phenomenon'.

Based on the premise of the predictability and contingency of ethnic conflicts, we are therefore urged to accommodate the diversities with a bid towards allaying the fears, repression of ethnic minorities and protecting both the citizen and society, through the democratic principle of equity in power, positioning and resource distribution. The realization of this democratised management has proved elusive in many African societies due to inappropriate and constraining management factors to the extent that, rather than manage ethnic conflicts, they are suppressed and their activists excommunicated and eliminated.

The process of managing ethnicity in America is somewhat different and carries along with it prospects for an effective change. Management factors such as education civil rights movement remedial actions like affirmative actions rule of law are constantly being employed in mitigating ethnic-racial discrimination (USIA 1997: 5). Federal structures, party politics local autonomy, economic deregulation, state power, and resources inequities are all underlying philosophy of ethnic mis-management, and consequently of female gender dis-empowerment in Africa (Osaghae 1994: 30-34).

In addition, gender divisive forces are inseparable from class structures; and so, the concepts of race, ethnicity, class and gender must therefore be reviewed if we are to establish or to be given a universal gender significance that will provide modes of inter-ethnic or co-ethnic accommodation of feminine complementation to the differential conditions of ethnic composition in any given society. Gender categories of race, class, sex, arisen initially from the experience of subordination interpretation, must then be sought in the ideological pragmatic basis of female involvement.

Clearly the process of ethnic alliance between the sexes is more complex. The Civil Rights movements in the Unites States have, over the years, had problems in raising consciousness on ethnic solidarity. American history is still replete with accounts of inappropriate justifications of racism and illusions of stereotypical ethno-nationalism. Ethnic segregation in Africa is inevitable.

Nevertheless, some generalizations apply to ethnic diversity and social class differences in the American and African families. Ordinarily these families confer their own ethnic status on their children (Appelbaum & Chambliss 1995: 368). On the other hand, choice of ethnic allegiance by virtue of kinship and marriage institutions does not place women outside the practice of rural poverty, resource competition and other paradigms of ethnic communication.

As a matter of fact, lack of resistance to the institutionalised ethnic relations of power will continue to perpetuate the maintenance of systems of domination, victimization and exploitation. It becomes necessary for women in both continents to speak increasingly about the necessity for community alliance as feminist input to problems of ethnicity by calling to attention the interlocking systems of domination, sex, race, culture as diversities and degradation effect of edifices of ethnicism on feminism. And more constructively, envision modalities in effecting democratic changes to curb the proximal and causal ideologies of ethnic niche and marginality.

Ethnicism, Feminism and Democracy: Envisioning changes in the proximal and causal ideologies of 'marginality' in Africa and America

The view that democratic representation is ethnic and gender neutral in both America and Africa stands as a proximal and causal stumbling block for many women. The democratisation of the civil society is intended to address the problem of marginality partly because women's admittance

to its participatory popular politics was often made to personify communal neglect. And by this construct, it grossly depicts fundamental democratic blindness to functions of cultural, social, political, economic, and much more importantly, biological factors, in democratic socialization.

It seems, however, from this premise that social customs, policies and organisation, or what women do, are very largely preconditioned by what they are, and not particularly by the process by which they came to be what they are. So germane are these findings about sex differences in democratic organizations to the current political debate about the justice of continuing sexual inequalities in professional life, that they are now regularly singled out by many feminists for distinctive deconstruction.

Our concern here is to look at the central axiom of popular participation in African and American democratic systems. It recaptures the social and political tension in both continents' democratic cultures by examining the effect of sexual sociality, and 'democratic sexism' and marginalization of the 'minority' and underrepresented groups in the African and American polity. Given this context, in a somewhat overlapping manner, ethnicism, feminism and democracy share similar socialization strategies which are to promote cultural, economic, educational, social and political development of all citizens in the society, based on equity, interdependence, common interest and co-operation. Democratic legitimacy and autonomy of governance is predicated on principles and practices of popular vote anchored on the platforms of fundamental human rights, franchise, freedom, justice, liberty, and equality in evolving social policies on governance strategies. (Barrow 1973: 76).

This ethnically signifies the rule of the 'demo', in the context of having an adequate representation of the ethnic groups directly or of having their interest incorporated into governance policies and practices. Accordingly, democratic relations between the ruler and the ruled, to the extent that they evolve processes and conditions of governance with divergent internal dynamics of ethnocentrism and sexism in political portfolios and social opportunities between those who govern and those who are governed, poses a problem to the true art of democratic governance (Schumpeter in Finley 1973: 16). And against the outlook of the institutional structure of democratic governance in Africa, the supreme power of election, smacks short of political rejection, and democratic representational illusion. For instance, the great majority of people are not just uneducated or uninformed, they are also the culturally restricted women and therefore cannot participate effectively or at all in the process of governance (Macpherson 1976: 88).

By both ethnic and cultural indoctrination, feminism faces the challenges of indoctrinate apathy in political matters often explained away as representational delegation, which often does not transpose the grumbles of women and daydreams of the ethnic majority as well as the minority into a will to govern or to act' (Schumpeter 1954: 296). And this dilemma presents the political condition of 'democratic oligarchy' of few minority representatives with the interest will and organizational ability to appropriate the role of leadership.

The gender justification for viable democratic practice has a validation used to pursue ideas such as sanctity of life, justice, freedom of choice and fundamental human rights, all of which are principles used in the legitimisation and reform of the wants and demands of man and society. Democracy in practice particularly in an age of ethnic conflict, will safeguard the very much needed gender sensitivity in a way as not to accentuate social constraint between the sexes and their political desires.

To operate within the ambit of representational powers and the diverse ploys that restrict powers and raise controversy on the proper conceptualisation of democracy, sovereignty, rule of law, and liberty of the individual. (Heater 1964: 117). The proximal and causal ideas on marginality and thraldom, have most often been culturally and ethnically propelled, and apparently such inducement has direct semblance with eternal factors and cultural interdependence of internal and international relations. The problem of ethnic segregation in contemporary democratic governance as Zimmerin (1929: 313) puts it, is that 'we actually live an age of democracy, but democracy has not yet discovered its appropriate institution'.

This signifies that without the necessary machinery for participatory governance against oppression, marginalization and outright exclusion of some sections of the society, democracy has not yet been made safe for mankind" (Wilson as cited by Zimmerin 1929: 313). Africa is fraught with the upsurge of incessant military intervention, 'sectional governance' deprivation, crimes such as, verbal abuse, physical assault, fraud, embezzlement, infringement on fundamental human rights, which discreditably sparks off wounded self respect, helpless hatreds and thwarted affection in our women as epitomes of coercion and abject servitude (Berlin 1985: 417-525).

Most often however, the broader spectrum of gender and ethnic disparity has direct influence on the overall marginal propensity and concepts of differences in nature of ethnic affiliation and sex roles. And in a way enforces limitations against female subjects in a social-institutional

arrangement, strongly aligned with the ethnocentric interpretation of equity (Deutsh 1945).

In view of this, reactionary campaigns have been harboured by feminists against the phallocentric thinking and subsequent devaluation of women in ethnic groupings (Horney 1967). Attempts in this regard were propelled toward deconstructing the biased interpretations of an erstwhile explicitly proven democratic exclusions of women and the marginality of their political abilities, motivations and rights (Lovenduski 1986: 23).

The imperative today, is the quest for power and dis-entanglement from the shackles of diverse incapacitation and marginality of ethnicism that poses greater vehicles of social de-mobilization and consequently of political ostracism. For instance the stark reality of the economic predicament of the African continent raises the dust of gender or class stratification and patriarchal exploitation. Nigeria is a vividly good prototype of this ethnic marginalizing drive. Despite the fact that the country enjoys a tremendous oil boom, nevertheless the economic empowerment and strategy development of the ethnic groups whose territorial domain produces the nation's resources remain stagnant. These groups have had to contend with the ever-recurring controversial cynical cases of property acquisition and inheritance, revenue, employment, and cultural rights (Gordon 1996: 91).

Understanding the gross effect of this marginality and incapacitation on women, women in Africa have in various organizational capacities urged for a democratisation of the social, ethnic and cultural institutions through the modalities of Education, Law, Media, Family, Religion, etc. (WIN 1992: 18, 23). Feminism in this context is often inclined towards eradicating the obstinacy with which people hold to ethnic cleavages and their traditional values even in the face of a rapidly changing democratic culture (Hoselitz 1995: 18-22). And as such it draws attention away from the ambiguity inherent in contemporaneously staging a crusade for democratising the civil society while still preserving these inhibiting national ethnic and cultural traditions.

Ostensibly, ethnic incapacitation is always an obstacle to political participation, but in the case of democratic development it is doubly fatal. More so as democratic development is about people and the most important resources required to bring about development. It therefore follows that the ethnic or racial background to hardship, deprivation, inadequate opportunities in the national economy, un-gainful employment, and other forms of sufferings being meted out to the large number of women on daily basis, are evidences and attestations to their disempowerment. And

consequently this severs them from any form of significant political participation and portrays them as political stooges and sheer status enhancement to their privileged ethnic counterpart, thereby leaving them with little or no opportunity in political mobility (Andersen & al 1995: 65).

The capitalist-economic political structure to which Africa and America subscribe, works to preserve this same ethnic sexism through diverse patriarchal capitalistic monetary influence America for instance is basically bourgoisie; right from its inception, sexism holds sway and the political leadership of the white, man and money had always been the order to the day, while women are constantly being desensitised by androcentric economic and ethnic prejudices. Today arrays if ethnic forces are driving changes into democratic socialization. In ideal democratic culture, 'ethnicism' can be used as a medium of public enterprise that can effectively shape coalition of actions between the groups to serve civic purpose.

But this is not so in Africa. The public value ascribed to the trend institutionalises unhealthy competition, and more often than not generates a situation whereby its perpetrators act as competitive ground for unseasoned democratisation. Another of the demeaning and destructive thrust of ethnic decadence is the weakening influences of traditions, cultures, and their vagaries of masculine idealization.

In many multi-systems, proximal and causal ideologies of marginality and subordination seems inevitable and inalienable and particularly more complex in sex roles stratification (Maccian 1997: 13). In most cases leadership is conceivably subjected to dilemmas of traditional stereotypes of dichotomised biological command roles, which most often are presumptuous of a prejudicial ethnic superiority of a particular group and sex, and their natural propensity to command the inferior class or sex.

Plato and Aristotle extend the natural fitness' to command not just to the ethnic and class enclaves but equally to men, hence man is considered to be 'naturally fitter to command' (Aristotle 1962). In reaction against women's subordination, Jaggar (1983: 5) urges for a social grouping devoid of the vicious trend of ethnic activism and aimed purposely at bringing about veritable equality between the sexes in the hierarchies of social significance.

Feminism, to this end, argues against any form of ethnic bias, injustice, degradation or dehumanisation of women in a male dominated ethnic feud. Feminism often challenges the damaging and destructive aspects of ethnic social relation especially its linkage with untoward un-statutory

and undemocratic subordination (Grimshaw 1986: 20). As against ethnic advocacy that seeks to foster equal opportunities for a part against the whole, feminism interjects a solid pace for participatory rights in democratic politics with a vividly spelt out liberation strategy that erodes the fact of ethnic political conflict of rights and equality between the sexes. Feminism, therefore, represents the aspect of social and political stabilizing force in human ethnic relations. And as such, it proposes democratic reforms anchored on the struggle for ideological policies of liberation (Machinyre 1973: 7).

Thus governance in feminist postulates is symbolic and figurative of legitimacy of authority and expressive of popular and just autonomy of the populace, which frowns at the biases of ethnic oriented relations of authority and power stratification. Feminist agitation against the onslaught of ethnic prejudices is centred on the informal and implicit deficiencies of social order. Thus the limited or outright deprivation of social economic and political incentives necessary in securing a viable democratic legitimacy raises a problematic of under-representation and marginality of women.

Based on this, ethnic marginality and democratic under-representation have ensured the neglect of salient featuring defects of the ethnic and racial culture that are central to feminist basic tenets of emancipation. Articulated ethnic integration and subsequent development plans and policies have trivialized popular autonomy in matters affecting predominantly ethnic configurations of political, social and economic repository of resources in Africa and America. In view of the problems foreseen in ensuring an intercontinental alliance between the two continents without a repeated resort to multiethnic thraldom, our feminist concern seeks to democratise the civil social relations 'in and between' Africa and America to ensure women's participatory and representative role.

Conclusion: Inter-continental and Multi-ethnic Thraldom. The possibility of futuristic alliance between Africa and America

Davidson (1969: 55) aptly expresses the quandary of marginalization encountered in evolving autonomous African nations in view of the seemingly inter-continental and multiethnic thraldom the continent faces regularly. The relationship between Africa and America casts curious doubts on the possibility of futuristic alliance between both continents in entrenching the new wave of sovereign identification much clamoured.

Buttressing this by appeal to national and international identity crises, Davidson maintained that 'a man without lineage is a man without citizenship, without identity and therefore without allies… or as the saying goes in Africa, a man outside his clan is like a grasshopper which has lost its wings'.

In view of the fact that ethnic and racial discrimination has enormous capacity to vitiate and disintegrate multi-cultural history and development of a pluralistic continent makes it a subject in need of urgent re-construction. More so because the struggle between the dominating and the dominated, and the diverse class antagonism at the level of culture and values reflect those fundamental antagonism and power struggles at the economic and political levels (Ngugi 1997: 7).

Both Africa and America have been subjected to ethnic dilemma on a scale that has no parallel in history. The extent to which co-ethnic integration is determined by the fact of aids, industrialization, immigration and Americanization should therefore be minimized.

Our argument is that in view of the prevalent structure of multi-ethnicity in both Africa and America, Afro-centricity should be safeguarded from the hegemonic subversion by any form of Euro-centricity which has for many centuries caused both physical and psychological traumas for many Africans, leading to collective loss of confidence, marginality, brain-drain, historical alienation and other forms of social serfdom. Buttressing this, Marx as cited by Ngugi (1997: 26) opined that indirect as well as direct slavery is as much the pivot of industrialism today. Slavery is therefore an economic international category of the highest importance…modern nations have merely known how to disguise slavery in their own countries while they openly imported it into the New World.

It is often the case that an ethnically or racially conscious continent tilts towards a social appreciation of values and norms of life that boost their self interest as opposed to altruistic welfare agitation as normally couched by the hypocrisy of an erstwhile civilizing paternalism in their dealing with other continents. Based on this, the general concession of opinion in relation to inter-continental integration of multiethnic societies is such that it fosters paradoxical and superficial independence, with the invisible trappings of imperialism. In view of the primary concern in forestalling the resurgence of enthralment, Asante bluntly stated that, "it is necessary to place Africa at the centre of our existential reality, else we will remain detached, isolated and spiritually lonely people in societies which constantly bombard us with anti-Africa rhetoric and symbols (Asante 1991: x). It therefore follows from this, according to Franklin

(1974: 511) that 'if America's role is to lead the world towards peace and international understanding. Americans have a special function to perform in carrying forward the struggle for freedom at home for the sake of America's role and abroad for the sake of the survival of the world'.

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