

SHEROES



FORD FOUNDATION



Let's Move! is a national campaign to help children and adults get the most out of life by eating well, moving more, and living better.

Sheroes of Africa's Political Movements



A person's silhouette is visible on the right side of the page, set against a background of a bright sunset with orange and yellow clouds.

Publisher:

Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE)

Plot 1 Martyrs Garden B Road, Ministers Village, Ntinda

P. O. Box 4934 Kampala, Uganda

Tel: +256414698684 / +256414543954

program@isis.or.ug

www.isis.or.ug

Copyright 2017

All rights reserved

Printed in Kampala, Uganda

ISEN: 978-9970-29-043-7



“For Isis-WICCE, there is never any doubt that we must document and amplify the voices of African women political leaders whose stories are often unwritten or absent from the rhetoric of the sole male political victor or revolutionary leader.”

Contents

Foreword	4
Acknowledgements	6
Introduction	7
SUCKED INTO POLITICS: TRACING THE ROLE OF CAPTAIN GERTRUDE NJUBA IN UGANDA'S 1981-1986 LIBERATION STRUGGLE	10
Gertrude's Formative Years	12
Gertrude's Early Silent Revolutions	14
Gertrude's Experiences in the Workplace	16
Gertrude's Religious, Education and Work Experiences in Context	18
Sucked into Politics: Gertrude's Entry into Active Politics in Uganda	19
Joining the Liberation Struggle	23
Gertrude's Encounters with Matayo Kyaligonza	26
Womanhood Across Enemy Lines: Faking a Threatened Abortion	27
A Guerrilla in Busuuti	28
By a Whisker of Luck	29
Settling in the Bush	29
On the Message to the World from the Bush	29
The National Resistance Army's focus on Women in the Liberation	31
"What the struggle would have missed had I not joined?"	31
Out of the Bush to the External Missions	32
Woman, Wife, Mother and Fighter	33
Reflections from Olive Zizinga and Matayo Kyaligonza	36
Brigadier Kyaligonza on Gertrude Njuba's Clandestine Missions	37
Gertrude after the War: Women in Post-liberation Governance	38
MARGARET DONGO: A COLONIAL AND POST COLONIAL REBEL'S JOURNEY	41
Born into Politics	42

Joining the Struggle: The Power of Conviction	44
Grounded by Experience	46
A Decade of Political Leadership	48
An Independent Candidate	51
Taking a Leap for Women's Rights	53
Mother, Wife, Friend and Fighter	54
Lessons for Women's Movements	55
The Battle is Far from Over	56
JESSIE MAJOME: DESTINED FOR LEADERSHIP	57
Bearing the Right Name	58
Early Years	59
Political Awareness: Confronting Racism	62
Confronting Patriarchy in School	64
Women's Bodies on Centre Stage	65
In the Seat: Public Leadership	67
Breaking Down Barriers	69
Leadership Challenges for Women	73
Sharing the Load	74
ALICE ALASO ASIANUT: THE MAKING OF A WOMAN POLITICAL LEADER	79
A Childhood in 1970s Soroti	80
Securing University Residence	83
Alice at Work	85
Policing of Women's Private Lives	86
Getting Further Into Public Service	87
Contesting for Woman Member of Parliament	80
Women's Political Journeys	95
References	97

Foreword



It is a widely acknowledged fact that women and their invaluable contributions to great victories are typically excluded from history. We are rarely introduced to the female hero or the pivotal roles women play in driving progress and the necessary changes to create the world we live in.

For Isis-WICCE, there is never any doubt that we must document and amplify the voices of African women political leaders whose stories are often unwritten or absent from the rhetoric of the sole male political victor or revolutionary leader.

When in November 2014, during the gathering of the Isis-WICCE Women Leaders Think Tank in Nairobi, we met the heroes of this book, the task was clear. We did not want to simply detail the specifics of their remarkable life events but offer a glimpse into the ways these women negotiated, contested, and subverted experiences they perceived as gender inequalities.

We were confronted with assumptions that women, African and otherwise, are simply victims of war and post war reconstruction processes, not active agents in shaping individual and collective destinies. We had long before rejected the discourse that any woman involved in guerrilla armies or political liberation struggles was coerced or doing the bidding of a spouse, father, or brother. We also acknowledged that women political leaders face specific barriers to substantive participation, particularly in militarized conflict and post-conflict settings.

Therefore we sought to amplify their voices and power, in the feminist Isis-WICCE way – to provide a platform for the women political leaders to speak about themselves, trace their agency and share their stories.

In 'Sheroes of Africa's Political Movements' you meet Captain Gertrude Njuba (Uganda) a former combatant in the National Resistance Army (NRA) sucked into politics by the circumstances; Hon. Margaret Dongo (Zimbabwe) a freedom fighter and trailblazing political leader; Hon. Alice Alaso Asianut (Uganda) and Hon. Jessie Majome, (Zimbabwe) representing a fresh breed of revolutionary women in post-conflict political leadership.

This book traces the role of women in liberation struggles in Uganda and Zimbabwe. The book also documents the experiences of women political leaders negotiating political situations characterized by risk, violence, intimidation, sexual pacification, aggression and fear while bearing aspects of hope, crafting of nations, building citizenship and political independence.

The women's experiences are portrayed across institutional settings such as family, clans, schools, religious beliefs, state laws and so on. Each of them, display striking individual and collective agency in claiming their rights to political participation and propelling political movements- explaining the perception of these women leaders as risk-takers, fearless, confident, determined, shrewd, powerful and at most social cultural transgressors as seen in references to them as "rebellious" or "militant".

Sheroes of Africa's Political Movements is indeed a must-read for all. I invite you to read the stories of Gertrude Njuba, Margaret Dongo, Alice Alaso Asianut and Jesse Majome, our veritable sheroes who contributed and continue to contribute to the Africa we now know.

Helen Kozie-Nwoka

Executive Director,

Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE)



Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Captain Gertrude Njuba, Hon. Margaret Dongo, Hon. Alice Alaso and Hon. Jesse Majome for their time and generosity in sharing their life's stories with good grace.

This book is the result of conversations with the four sheroes and individuals who know them well by an invaluable team of researchers. Special thanks go to the researchers in Uganda Amon Ashaba Mwiine and Beda Balikudembe Kireju as well as Hope Chigudu, Isabella Matambanadzo and Rudo Chigudu in Zimbabwe. For editing the book, we thank Kampire Bahana, Helen Kezie-Nwoha, Suzan Nkinzi, Sandra Tumwesigye and Juliet Were.

Introduction

This book serves two key objectives; tracing the role of women in liberation struggles in Uganda and Zimbabwe, and documenting experiences of women political leaders in male-dominated political spaces in post-conflict states.

With this book we hope to shed light on the voices and actions of women political actors that are often silenced in patriarchal political settings. Four women leaders were selected, to learn from their experiences in historic liberation struggle, and their journeys as a new breed of female politicians in post-conflict governance. Revolutionary struggles often do not have defined front lines. Women, men and children assume critical roles, and also come directly under attack. Many contemporary African women war veterans served in African liberation armies during struggles for independence from European colonial rule¹. African women have also served (voluntarily and by force) in government militia and counter insurgent paramilitary forces (including “civilian defence forces”) during post-independence civil wars. Their war stories however, are rarely written, read or heard.

There is also an assumption that women, African and otherwise, are simply victims of war and post-war reconstruction processes, not active agents in shaping their individual and collective destinies. In several instances, writings on armed liberation struggles assume that women involved in guerrilla armies or political violence were not involved through their own initiative, but rather had followed a spouse, father, or brother². This erases women ex-combatants and allows them to be overlooked in the appointment of post-conflict leadership. Literature on African women in politics indicates that in pre-colonial African societies, women’s political roles varied extensively. During the colonial period however, European administrators imposed a legal and cultural apparatus that undermined women’s traditional bases of power. Women became politically and economically subordinated and marginalized. Among the Baganda in central Uganda, British colonisers set up a

Stories from Captain Gertrude Njuba of Uganda and Hon. Margaret Dongo of Zimbabwe are a window into the lives of women combatants who crossed cultural boundaries to challenge injustices against them, their families and their countries.

1 (White, 2007)

2 (White, 2007)



centralized power structure that did not include the once-powerful role of the Queen Mother, who traditionally had her own court, land and even taxes. (O'Barr and Firmin-Seller, 1995). Postcolonial independence governments did not reverse this marginalization even while women were active participants in nationalist and liberation movements.

Stories from Captain Gertrude Njuba of Uganda and Hon. Margaret Dongo of Zimbabwe are a window into the lives of women combatants who crossed cultural boundaries to challenge injustices against them, their families and their countries. Other lessons are drawn from Hon. Alice Asianut Alaso and Hon. Jessie Majome both of whom navigated extraordinary barriers as women joining elective politics in post-liberation Uganda and Zimbabwe respectively. What comes through is their striking individual and collective agency in claiming their right to participate in politics, despite the circumstances each of the four individuals found themselves; a society that saw women as 'second-class' citizens, always at the margins of decision-making. The four women are described by their close associates as risk-takers, fearless, confident, determined, shrewd, powerful and even rebellious or militant. While talking of Hon. Margaret Dongo, Hon. Mukwekweze recounted, "I think her fearlessness in picking up a fight when matters of principle are under siege, and her hatred against corruption are the gem in the crown".

As a feminist organization that has for generations worked towards promoting women's political leadership in conflict and post-conflict situations, Isis-WICCE set out to document voices of women leaders whose life's journeys are often overlooked in male-dominated politics. The four 'her stories' of these women illustrate the role of women as individuals and groups, in shaping the politics of their countries. Each detail in these rich narratives provides useful demonstrations of different styles and strategies that women politicians use to question,

resist, and subvert male domination and to empower themselves in the face of patriarchy and under development.

The last section of this book includes a reflection on what these experiences mean for individual women, the women's movement and the future generation of young African feminists. Theorizing and profiling experiences of women tackling power and masculinity in political leadership is intended to inspire other women political leaders to break through barriers and transform governance. This book confirms that the story of a liberation struggle cannot be complete without looking at the role that women have played.

The narratives presented here are derived from in-depth conversations with individual women, interviews with people they closely associated with and insights from their personal archives of childhood photographs, report cards and correspondences among others. Tracing the life stories of four women politicians, this process used an African feminist approach to women and war to dig deep into how women politicians led amidst masculine social expectations and ideas on womanhood.





Sucked into Politics:

TRACING THE ROLE OF CAPTAIN GERTRUDE NJUBA IN UGANDA'S 1981- 1986 LIBERATION STRUGGLE

Gertrude's story took turns and twists, revealing a woman who was "sucked into politics". Gertrude Njuba navigated threats from the government she was fighting against and the liberation movement she belonged to. Following the success of the liberation struggle on January 26th 1986, she took on a critical role in reconstructing a country scarred by unending wars. Women, like men, are products of social structures and processes that nurture and hold up social inequalities, but women have also worked to create change and social equity. Uganda media³ has often described Gertrude Njuba as a 'silent influence'.

Gertrude Njuba, a silent yet influential figure of the NRA liberation war in Uganda

Gertrude's calm demeanour was that

expected of a religious and traditional woman of Kiganda culture in late-colonial Uganda⁴. Gertrude says that all she aspired to be in life was “an educated, religious, married, working mother – the Mothers’ Union type of a woman”. However, her unwillingness to ignore discrimination and injustice led her down an unconventional path. In her story, she reflects on the many ways in which she used her feminine identity to resist oppression in the masculine world of politics and leadership.

Today Gertrude is a Senior Political Advisor to the President and a Director in the Directorate of Land Matters in State House. Seeking to correct public misconception on the role of presidential advisors, she describes her job thus:

“As political advisors we don’t call the president and tell him ‘do this’, but we take care of the issues that the president would have taken care of, were it possible for one person to take care of all these things. So when you see a political problem, you take care of it. In those core cases where you have absolutely no answer you refer to the President or to the appropriate government person – Minister, Resident District Commissioner (RDC), Permanent Secretary, wherever you think that issue can be solved. That’s how presidential advisors do their work”.

Born in Hoima on 22nd November 1944 to Bishop Yokana Mukasa and Norah Nakacwa Mukasa, she came from a religious family that had not long exchanged traditional spirituality for Christian values as was encouraged by missionaries and advantageous in the British-controlled protectorate of Uganda.

My great grandfather was a traditional priest. I come from a family of priests right from the days before missionaries came. So my great grandfather was a very renowned “Musamize” [traditional chief priest] his name was Nakikulu Kaaya. He was the father of Mukere, Mukere was the father of Isaka Mukasa and Isaka Mukasa was the father of Yokana Mukasa Balikudembe. The late Yokana Mukasa Balikudembe, a Bishop, was my father.

Retired Bishop Yokana Mukasa was consecrated and enthroned as the first bishop of Mityana diocese on May 29, 1977 at a time when Christians were being persecuted under Idi Amin’s regime and served until his retirement at 72 in 1989.

4 The cultural expectations around women in traditional Buganda entailed calm, submission and gentleness in relation to men as symbolized through practices such as women kneeling to greet men

Gertrude's Formative Years

Gertrude's political journey began in her childhood. She was born in what is now Hoima district at a time when Abaseveni⁵ were coming back from the World War II. The Abaseveni returned home with revolutionary ideas that influenced some of the political uprisings in 1940s Africa.

"I remember there was a political morale boost called Bataka Bbu. People were not allowed to say it. My dad told me that if they found you saying Bataka Bbu, they would arrest you but I wondered why anyone would arrest me for that. So when I saw that people were away, I would say it".

Here we see Gertrude question and resist what she perceived as injustice at an early age.

Gertrude began her formal education at Duhaga Girls' Primary School in Hoima while her father was a head teacher of Duhaga Boys' Primary School. When she was four years old Gertrude's community was attacked by polio, an infection which prior to a global vaccination campaign killed millions of children. She vividly remembers the epidemic;

"When [polio] came, a lot of children died and I was a victim but a lucky one because most children who got infected died. It looked like ordinary malaria but in a few days, somebody would be paralyzed, the whole body would become almost useless. So I got this thing but after sometime I don't know how long, I overcame it but with one of my legs affected, it had no strength at all. When I look at my life, that is one of the times when I think I survived where many people died".

The disease left one of her legs paralyzed, a condition that would impact the tasks she would take on in her adult life. Gertrude credits her survival to the education level and Christian faith of her family. While many families at the time associated polio with witchcraft and did not seek medical attention, Gertrude's parents' belief in medical care saved her life. After surviving polio, Gertrude moved to Kikoma Primary School in present-day Mubende District when her father was transferred to teach at Kikoma Junior Secondary School. When her father moved again in 1953 to study at Bishop Tucker Theological College Mukono to become a priest, Gertrude, aged nine, was left in the care of the head teacher at Kikoma primary school. Later she went to Kako Junior Primary School,

5 Abaseveni referred to people who fought in the seventh battalion in the Second World War.

Buloba Demonstration Secondary School and finally Makerere College School.

"If you were a Catholic you would go to a catholic school therefore you would either go to Kisubi [High School], Namityango [College] and the choices of different religious schools didn't come. You didn't even see the paper on which [Mount St Mary's College] Namagunga was. Since I was an Anglican girl, on my application to go to secondary school, there was no Namagunga, there was no [Trinity College] Nabbingo and then someone else who has been in a catholic school, on their application paper, there would be no Gayaza High School or Makerere College School, so it was strict you would go in that line".

To Gertrude, the segregation of schools on religious basis was not only unfair but also accounts for divisions along religious lines in Uganda today. The European colonial administration emphasized religious over tribal differences.

"The Europeans kept us in compartments. For example, my daughter got married to a Munyankole Catholic and my father who was then a bishop said it's ok for you to get married to a Munyankole but a Catholic?" Gertrude recalls.

Gertrude joined Makerere College School in 1958. In a class of thirty-six, fourteen were girls and for the first time, she attended a school with boys. It was there that she met Sam Njuba who would later become her husband.

Gertrude's background is by no means ordinary. Her experiences place her among a small group of elite young women, privileged by education, religion and class. Gertrude points out that regardless of their background girls still were not sent to school as often as boys. Girls' schools were few and hosted smaller numbers than boys' schools because parents learned slowly that it was useful to educate girls.



Holiday time: Gertrude Mukasa, (the eldest girl in the picture) washes utensils during a school holiday while at Buloba Demonstration Secondary School.

"Even with girls in homes like mine which were privileged, still the teaching was that you are going to school so that you become a good housewife and a good mother. So as soon as you identify somebody you think will be the father of your children you go with them because you are prepared".

Gertrude's childhood experiences point to a character that was not necessarily quiet and conformist but one bent on rocking the boat she was placed in, resisting disadvantage and exploitation. Despite the limited expectation of girls' education (education for domesticity) Gertrude wanted more for herself. She added the vision of becoming a working married woman, and it is that work which took her beyond the family confines to the public realm.

Gertrude's Early Silent Revolutions

Here Gertrude describes an early experience fighting injustice in school:

"When I was at Buloba Demonstration Secondary School, there was too much teasing. I really hated that and the immediate friend I got was also called Mukasa. She was Harriet Mukasa and I was Gertrude Mukasa. We were in the same class at Buloba. We decided that we were going to fight this teasing and that we were not going to put up with it. We first thought about running away from school but it did not look like a good idea. We then decided that we were going to cry. We cried in the morning when we went for our gardening, we cried at the dining place, we cried in class, in the chapel. We cried everywhere until teachers got concerned. We would just sit there and tears would flow.

Teachers got concerned and they called us. Even the headmistress got concerned, she asked "why are you crying, do you want to go home?" We said no, we wouldn't like to go home but we have to go home because these girls are teasing us so much. So the headmistress called the school parade and said "from now on teasing is prohibited in this school and anybody caught teasing will be dismissed from school". The girls laughed it off. So from the parade we went to the hostel and they started teasing us again. This time they were even laughing at us. We resumed crying and they [administration] called us again. We told them "the girls are teasing us even the more". The headmistress requested us to submit names of the girls who were teasing and we did. Students were expelled from school and teasing in Buloba stopped. We fought that war of teasing by crying.

Early in life Gertrude Njuba was confronted with cultural expectations that she thought were unfair to her as a girl. Having grown up in a family at the heart of missionary work in Uganda, Gertrude learned that it mattered more to be a Catholic or Protestant than a Muganda⁶. She saw and fought traditional norms that expected different things from girls than boys.

"At some point in life, I could see that the girls were being treated unfairly. For example, I was told by my parents that I used to refuse to do things that boys are not told to do. Once I see that the boys are not told to do this, I used to resist. One example was kneeling. You know in Kiganda culture there is a lot of kneeling and fortunately in my paternal family they were not extremely traditional in the Kiganda sense. We followed more of the church tradition than the Kiganda tradition. So one day I went to visit my aunt, (my mother's sister) who had come to see us in Hoima. When she was leaving, she suggested that I go to stay a few days at their place. They used to stay in Kibibi. Today, Kibibi is in Butambala District.

My parents told me that I was very excited, since I liked traveling. I went with her, we reached home, and then meals came. We sat down and then my aunt came and said "eeeeh how do you sit? You must sit properly as a girl". Girls used to kneel and then sit back on their heels. I felt very bad because the boys in her home were not being requested to do the same. So I knelt because she had ordered me to but then I refused to eat. They told me to eat I refused, I remained without food until the next meal and I had to kneel again. I refused to eat, then the husband to my aunt told her, "better take this child back, she is not happy. How long are you going to keep her without eating"? I am told she went by bus (and those days you know travelling to Hoima was not easy) and brought me back just in a few days.

These were intentional moves by a young Gertrude Mukasa to resist institutionalized unfairness to girls and women. Though young and quiet Gertrude had agency and sought change; events that prepared her for a calling to liberate Uganda from a despotic military regime. One can say that Gertrude's participation in the National Resistance Army (NRA) liberation struggle was no coincidence.

Gertrude's Experiences in the Workplace

"When I finished O-level, I started working at the post office. There came an advert requesting for young boys and girls to go to London and study hotel management. The government of Uganda wanted to build what is now called Sheraton Hotel. Then it was called International hotel. They wanted young people - boys and girls to study hotel management as receptionists and chefs. So I said 'if it's going to London, I must apply'. I applied, went through, and I did go to London actually but my problem was when I went to say bye to Sam Njuba, that's when we messed up. A few weeks later I discovered I was not well. They took me to the hospital and the diagnosis - pregnant. At the time, even in Europe, for the unmarried to be pregnant was terrible. So they brought me back to Uganda. Remember I was not only unmarried but my boyfriend and I were children of religious leaders."

Getting pregnant before marriage at that time and in a strict religious setting was a big setback for Gertrude who dropped out of the training and got married. At twenty years, she sought state permission to get married since she was below the legal age of marriage (twenty-one years). Granted permission by the State Minister of Justice Hon. Grace Ibingira, Gertrude married Sam Njuba on Monday September 14th 1964 at All Saints Church, Nakasero.

After giving birth, Gertrude looked for a job and started working with the East African Income Tax Department (from 1965 to 1980). While Gertrude dropped out of school and became a married woman and a mother, Sam Njuba proceeded with his studies, and graduated with a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Dar es Salaam. Gertrude still actively engaged in the East African Community as a worker but also a mobiliser (Trade Unionist) focused on work-related injustices against women. Gertrude became a very enthusiastic member at a time when many did not want to join trade unions for fear of being sacked by their employers.



Sam and Gertrude Njuba on their wedding on 14th September, 1964.

"The East African Common Services Organisation would tolerate a girl getting pregnant, having children as they work as long as they are single. They tolerated that but the moment you said you are getting married, they told you to resign.

If you are a married man and employed and your wife is also employed in government, the housing allowance would always be given to the man. The man will get housing allowance and the woman will not. So because of that, many people who were married didn't declare to the government that they were married in order to continue getting housing allowance.

There was also charging income tax at a lower threshold for married women.

Women had no maternity leave. They would take off days from the annual leave depending on the period they had spent at the workplace."

Gertrude remembers how she used the excuse of her pending marriage to resign from her job as a telephone operator at post office.

"I did not want [the] post office to know that I was going for the London training. So I used the excuse of marriage to resign. I told them I was going to get married and would not be allowed by the law to continue working. They pleaded with me to stay as they worked on changing the law but I insisted. Two years later, that provision [of the law] was scrapped.

Gertrude also worked through the trade union to challenge the denial of housing allowance to married women whose husbands were working for the government. Cases occurred where marriage relations went sour and women separated from their husbands. Legally men would continue getting a housing allowance but women would not.

"For the sake of income tax, the moment you register yourself as Mrs. Gertrude Njuba they assume that Mr.Njuba is taking the responsibility to look after you and the family. The assumption is we give this allowance to the man because he is the one looking after the family so we don't start taxing him until his salary passes a certain point. As for you the woman, you are a housewife and the man does everything else, yours is just an increment on the family. Yours is taxed from the lowest possible point.

Women quietly resisted by not registering as married at the workplace for fear of being fired or denied housing allowance.

"The employer doesn't want to employ a married woman and yet I need to work, I went to school, I want to work. So I managed to get my colleagues in the trade union to sit and back it up even men; women but mostly men."

Although not all the laws were changed at the time, there have since been significant amendments to the labour laws to accommodate working married women including maternity and paternity leave, consolidated salaries with housing allowances irrespective of marital status.

Gertrude's Religious, Education and Work Experiences in Context

Like many women growing up in colonial Uganda, Gertrude's experiences are impacted by the colonial state and its agents the church missionary society and the traditional kingdoms on which the colonial administration thrived. In her book *Colonial and Missionary Education: Women and Domesticity in Uganda*, Nakanyike Musisi describes the colonial state's emphasis on education for domesticity. Missionaries who championed colonial education agreed to introduce girls' education only after assuring traditional chiefs that it would not take girls away from their domestic roles. Domesticity-oriented education aimed to make girls into good housewives and keen cultivators. A typical girls' school curriculum reinforced the stereotype that an accomplished woman is a successful manager of a plantation and an expert cook⁷. School was a combination of practical domestic work combined with religious education. Girls' schools were established on large expanses of land, located away from towns, boys' schools and what missionaries considered the 'degenerating influence of the pagan environment'. As a routine, girls started with gardening before class work. The aim of a missionary-educated woman rhymes with the ideal image of a woman Gertrude looked up to – "an educated, religious, married and working woman". Gertrude repeatedly states that it never occurred to her that she would end up in politics because her desire was always to be educated, get married, get a job and look after her family.

"I think in those days my decent kind of woman I wanted to be was a married Christian woman, Mothers' Union sort, and I did achieve it. I was a mother and a Mother's Union member. I liked singing in the church choir, I was a working woman but I wanted to be a working married Christian woman."

7 (Nakanyike, 1991)

Gertrude says that her role model was a lady she had then only heard about – Sarah Ntiro, a woman from Bunyoro.

"All we heard was that Sarah Ntiro got married and she lived a mzungu (white lady) sort of lifestyle. We heard that she was a Christian, educated, working and that's the type of woman I loved to be."

Educated women of Gertrude's time envisioned professional roles beyond the home and became more ambitious than the colonial state had anticipated. Such career goals informed women's response to issues regarding their families, their workplaces and even state politics. Gertrude's level of education, her career ambitions shaped her for a greater role as part of the NRA's liberation struggle.

Sucked into Politics: Gertrude's Entry into Active Politics in Uganda

Gertrude says,

"going into politics was something for people who were non-believers, politics was for people who didn't know God, that's how we were taught, especially married women. If you are to be a good wife you can't be in politics".

"When Idi Amin was overthrown in April 1979, we all jubilated and thought that sighting dead bodies along the roads would stop. Unfortunately, our happiness did not last long. During the short-lived post-Amin regimes, we saw atrocities being committed by the very people who had come in as liberators. My husband, Sam Njuba, in his capacity as chairman of the Uganda Law Society, was quite outspoken against the excesses of the regime. Uganda Law Society wrote a document in protest of the killings that were going on at the time and being the chairman, he signed the document calling on the government to rectify the situation. In May 1980, he was arrested by Paulo Muwanga and detained in Makindye barracks for some weeks. Although I had grown up an apolitical Christian girl, I was so disgusted by the regime to the extent that I was willing to join whoever wanted to fight it. I had never dreamt of getting into politics but when my husband was arrested I got sucked into politics. I had no other choice but to look for possible ways to get my husband out.

I had moved with my husband from home to attend the first Democratic Party Rally, and on our way, my husband was arrested and taken to Makindye military barracks. I was standing by the roadside with a female friend wondering how I was going to get my husband out of prison. Remember that in those days, if someone was arrested, they would probably be dead in a matter of hours, so it was that urgent. As we fidgeted, a young military man saw us and asked

"you women, what do you want?" The manner in which he asked us looked like, he did not want his boss to know that we were talking. I also looked away from him and told him that my husband had been arrested, I needed to get him out. I was told that a man called Yoweri Museveni could be of help. At that time, Museveni was the Vice Chairperson of [the governing] Military Commission which was chaired by Paulo Muwanga. Apparently, it was Muwanga that had arrested my husband.

Calling on contacts made during her time as an employee of the post office, Gertrude secured a telephone number, called and made an appointment with Museveni. She asked a female friend to drive her to the appointment at Nile Mansion but to drop her some distance from the hotel and ensure that neither she nor the vehicle was seen.

"I had told my friend 'you drive me', you know we were well-to-do women, we were driving but I said 'I can't drive because I don't know whether I will come back. This man [Museveni] might arrest me. So you drive me but don't come near, I don't want them to see which car has brought me'. So she drove and I got off at the Ministry of Finance because I was working at the Income Tax Department, which was my office. I left my friend there in the parking and told her that 'if am not back within a given time, go away because I probably would have been taken in and I don't want them to come looking for you'.

I could not understand how Museveni would assist me when it was his military commission that arrested Njuba, but I gave it a try. It took me quite a long time to get Yoweri Museveni's contact, but when I did, I met him immediately. He knew Sam Njuba because they had been at University of Dar-es-Salaam together. Museveni told me that it wasn't going to be possible to simply order for the release of Njuba. He only offered that he would arrange for his file to come before the military commission for hearing. He therefore helped me get better access to Njuba in Makindye barracks and also helped us get the case file for a faster trial. Njuba was released at the time when we were getting ready for the presidential and parliamentary elections [of 1980].

Following Sam Njuba's release, Sam and Gertrude joined the new political party of Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM) with Yoweri Museveni as the party leader.

"Museveni convinced us that now that Njuba had been released, we couldn't get out of politics because the government will know that once one is imprisoned and later released they opt out of politics. It also became clear that if we were to remain safe, we had to actively engage in politics to protect ourselves and our family members. We therefore joined Museveni's Uganda Patriotic Movement and Njuba stood for the Kyadondo parliamentary seat, which he lost.

According to President Museveni in his book *Sowing the Mustard Seed*, those involved in the formation of UPM included Jaberu Bidandi-Ssali, Chango Machyo, Joshua Mugenyi, Father Okoth, Jeremiah Opira, Erisa Kironde, Rhoda Kalema and Sam and Gertrude Njuba⁸. Gertrude worked as a political activist for the party while Sam Njuba stood for the Kyadondo parliamentary seat. UPM was not only new but full of young, educated and communist youth. The UPM stated goal was to build a country united regardless of religion or tribe and free from imperialists.

"I remember Rugunda at Makerere during the 1980 elections under UPM. He said to the students of Makerere, you know these people have nothing to accuse us of because we are a clean group, but because they must find something to accuse us of, they have decided to accuse us of being youths. Yes, we plead guilty, they are accusing us of being socialist, yes, we plead guilty, they have accused us of being a party of the educated, yes, we plead guilty. I remember that one very well. And the students were very happy."

Gertrude says that from the outset, UPM made it clear that women were to participate on the same footing as men.

"The message from UPM was that it did not matter whether you were a woman or man, protestant, catholic or atheist, it did not matter. What matters is that you are a Ugandan and African".

Gertrude adds that

"From that first rally I became a staunch UPM, why, because from the beginning we were told we were going to work on women's emancipation".

Although UPM was a new, unknown party not expected to win the 1980 elections, its leadership used the election period to recruit more members and made it clear that if elections were rigged, they would fight the new government.

Together with Mrs. Bidandi Ssali, Gertrude monitored the voter registration process during the 1980 election period.

8 (Museveni, 1997)

"We were supposed to move around and see that people are ready to vote. The idea was if people are registering, they are ready to vote, we can't fight them, we should allow our members to go and register to vote.

"The second assignment I had was given to Sam Njuba and I by Museveni after the 1980 elections. Museveni started preparing for war but he didn't want to tell people to avoid information leakage. So he started to pose as if he was now beginning to settle down. He told us he even went to the bank to get a loan. He made sure that he did things that would make those in government know that he has given up. But in the meantime he told us to go to Nairobi, a lot of people had run away once they heard that UPC had taken over power. Most of them ran to Nairobi. He told us to go to Nairobi to talk to the various people there and see what they think. We needed to persuade them to work together and not in broken groups so we would not be defeated. I went with Mr.Njuba by car, and we talked to many people. We stayed there about a week. Although people agreed to the idea of working together, they were sceptical about working under Museveni who was perceived to be a communist. So we came back and reported to him that we only managed to convince one woman but her husband refused. Museveni said it is okay we shall do what we can, we will see how things go. Then we waited, we thought that he was going to tell us that "you people now we are going" but we just heard "Museveni has attacked Kabamba barracks".

Thus began Gertrude's involvement in guerrilla activities to liberate Uganda from the Obote administration. As reported by the Daily Monitor, in a series on "Bush war memories" Gertrude Njuba recounts,

"After the rigged December 1980 elections, most former UPM candidates were being harassed. During the campaigns, Museveni said it openly that if anyone rigged the elections he would be opposed using all means. So, when his group attacked Kabamba on February 6, 1981, some of us had already gotten in touch with him. And as soon as news reached Kampala, one of the first people the regime wanted was Sam Njuba. Soldiers came to our house in Kawuku in Ggaba. That day, people found me in town and alerted me not to go home. Our neighbourhood had been attacked. That is the time Njuba sneaked out of the country and went into exile in Nairobi."

Left alone with the children, Gertrude was faced with the challenge of defending herself and her family against the state. She says that her desire to liberate Uganda from a dictatorship was secondary to what took her – a woman, a mother and a wife to 'the bush'. She wanted to protect herself and her family against injustices by the military state.

"I did not go to the bush to liberate Uganda per se. People used to say 'Mwebalekutulwanirira (thank you for fighting for us). I said, for me I never went out to fight for anyone. That is the ideology that we got from Museveni while in the bush. For me, I had gone; one, to protect myself and my family but mainly so that I learn this gun and come back and pay back Paulo Muwanga who hated and had arrested my husband. It was Museveni who told me that Muwanga as an individual was also a victim of the politics of the day.

Gertrude's actions in the liberation struggle were separate to those of her husband who coordinated international support for the rebellion.

Joining the Liberation Struggle

Being a woman, her education, her foreign experience as well as her bad leg all helped decide the nature of assignments Gertrude took on. As a married mother, older than many of the youthful recruits of the resistance movement, Gertrude and fellow combatant Olive Zizinga were 'mother figures' and were given the responsibility of ensuring the safety and welfare of the Chairman of High Command Yoweri Museveni. In a Daily Monitor article "*Women of the Liberation Struggle*" Gertrude describes one of those important and memorable assignments.

"I was responsible for typing the letter declaring war against the Obote government in 1981, and distributing it to different embassies in Uganda and other strategic locations. Because of the sensitivity of the letter, I used a cyclostyle [stencil copier] to publish it".



NRA's Foreign Mission: Gertrude Njuba as she visited her husband in Papua New Guinea. Sam Njuba was part of the foreign mission of the NRA.

In her role as a courier, Gertrude was responsible for carrying the message from the Chairman of the High Command officially declaring war against the government. With the assistance of a driver and a car with a forged number plate, Gertrude hit the streets of Kampala at around 5:30pm with the signed document. Gertrude recalls the Tanzanian soldiers guarding important buildings and how they never suspected a woman of being the one to drop a sensitive message of that nature across the city.

Gertrude describes the early days of the bush war:

"When the rebels attacked Kabamba we were still in Kampala and the first people they looked for, were the Njubas. Government wanted [Sam] Njuba badly because they knew he had links with the rebels. From that day, Njuba never slept in our house until we came back from the war. He had to run away and eventually ended up in Nairobi. He later went to Papua New Guinea – we usually joked and said that he ran to the end of the world.

I did not run along, I stayed. First we thought that I could stay with the family but it was not possible because soon we realised that they were looking for me too. Those days almost nobody was sleeping in their houses. You would open it during the daytime and then in the evening you moved either to the forest or wherever. You had to ensure that the house was left open and even leave something on the table for the soldiers should they come to your house. You don't lock because if you lock they break the house. I would leave some money, some whiskey, and some beer then go away from the house. Those were the first days. At that time, we had a house in Ggaba. People thought Njuba was a brilliant lawyer, he worked well, and he was the chairman of the Uganda Law Society. He had a car, I had a car and we were doing well.

Njuba ran and then they started looking for the wife. I took my children to my sister and I also started living like that - today here, the other day there. In the meantime I got somebody who took me to the



Gertrude Njuba, her son Sam Njuba Jr (left) and Moses Masagazi her business partner, during a visit to London seeking partners for gold mining in Mubende.

forest where our people were hiding and I started doing guerrilla work. I would go to the bush, get instructions and come back to town. I started out as a courier within Buganda region based in Kampala. Besides taking information to and from the bush, I was responsible for recruiting army deserters into our camp.

From February to August 1981, I was working between the bush and our various contacts in Kampala. There would be soldiers who wanted to defect from the government army and we would organize for them to be taken. There were soldiers who were not ready to go but [assisted the liberation movement]. We would organize if they got a gun or some bullets for us, to collect and ferry them to the bush. So in those months, I was doing a lot of networking. At first I used my car, then I couldn't use it anymore because they knew it. At that time, I thought I could not even walk long distances. Museveni told me 'you can't do guerrilla work in a car' and I said 'how shall I do the work, you are telling me to go here and there?' He told me, 'you will walk'. Slowly I learnt but at first I didn't think I could walk such distances.



Getrude with her son Michael Mulyanja Njuba during a visit to her family in Papua New Guinea.

From August 1981, there was an operation 'called Panda Ggali'¹⁰. When Panda Ggali started, Museveni told me 'you can't stay in Kampala, you will be arrested'. And you know I couldn't run because of this bad leg, I could walk but I could not run, I wasn't swift enough to be able to do guerrilla work in town.

When I went to the bush, there was a woman called Joy Mirembe. She was a trained soldier and taught me a lot because she had joined FRONASA army, the one that fought Amin. We had known each other during the UPM days. But the person who did most of my guerilla work training was Matayo Kyaligonza. In all my networking assignments, Museveni would give me instructions but my immediate commander was Kyaligonza.

Gertrude's Encounters with Matayo Kyaligonza

"After war was declared, because we were already working with Museveni during UPM days we got a message from him. Our contact called Abdu Kyeyune came for me and we drove to meet Mzee [Museveni] in a forest in Luweero. I recall him telling me that he was sending me to open a front in Mukono. I then told him I had never held a gun, to which he said 'I will get some people to help you'. Museveni told me that I was going to work with a man called Kyaligonza. I had never seen Kyaligonza before then, but he said 'I will direct him to your residence and he will give you the details of the assignment'. My job was going to include collection of information and talking to people quietly to find out who wants to come and join the liberation war. That included talking to people who were already in government or the army, who wanted to go.

I described the place where I was residing to Museveni so he said 'I am going to tell Kyaligonza to come and look for you', which he did. There were no mobile phones at the time but Kyaligonza found me in Kikuubo (current downtown Kampala). When we met, Kyaligonza said 'we are going to start a camp like the one where you found Museveni. We had to start it along Jinja road. It was a Sunday; we went to a place where we could see a forest behind houses near Mpoma, Mukono as you take the road that goes to Kayunga. We stopped there and just turned into a certain home and greeted them. We said we are looking for land but want to buy land with a forest. The man had land that went down to the forest but was not selling so he offered to take us to his neighbour. Along the way just before we entered the forest Kyaligonza told him the truth. As we walked we had been discussing the political situation because it was a conversation between anybody even if you didn't know them. The man asked us 'why are you buying land at this time when things are bad?' So the conversation led us there and we told him the truth, that we are going to fight this government, we want a place [forest] to start building our forces and we shall want many areas. The man asked, how can we fight a government, and what do we have? And Kyaligonza told him, "We have you". We assured the man that once we get more people, we shall organise ourselves, get together, once we train a little bit we shall get the guns and we shall be able to fight. The man was called Zziwa. Zziwa said he was not going to take us to the other man because he didn't know how his neighbour would react. He offered to give us land on his side of the forest, which was near a well, and this is the type of place we wanted. So we came back, he talked to his wife and they accepted. That is how we started the Mukono road camps".

11 Critical step of initiation into the guerrilla war. From there on, Gertrude and Kyaligonza recruited in the areas of Mukono and Kampala into their rebel camp. To her, mobilising and recruitment were much easier because of the number of government killings and general insecurity at the time. Gertrude and Kyaligonza used a workshop for woodwork as a cover for new recruits until they would be taken to the

Womanhood Across Enemy Lines: Faking a Threatened Abortion

"One of those moments I will live to remember occurred in Rubaga. We had made arrangements with one of our soldiers who was still in the army; he wanted to give us some bullets. He had collected some bullets and this is how we were arming our people's army. So we came a bit early, about 4 o'clock. We talked to him and he said you can't come at this time; you need to come when it's a little bit dark but people were not allowed to move a lot at night those days.

We decided to wait at the Malwa drinking joint. We ordered for Malwa (local brew) but you know it's very easy to know when somebody is not drinking. People noticed that we were not malwa drinkers. They were suspecting us but they didn't want to talk to us openly. Somebody reported us so when it was about 6:30pm we left that place and went to pick our things. We picked [and] put [the things] in the back seat. You get the seat off, put the things there, [and] put back the seat. I was putting on a traditional dress [busuuti] and was supposed to be pregnant. So I was pregnant. Why are you moving at night? We are going to the hospital. Hospital to do what? Because I am having a miscarriage, I need to go immediately, I can't wait for tomorrow.

Each time we moved into an operation you had a story and that story was to help you avoid being arrested. Usually when we would be arrested, we would be interviewed separately so you must have a story that matches, otherwise they will know you are telling lies.

When I sat in the car, over the bullets, Kyaligonza told me 'whatever happens don't get out of the car, even when we are arrested, don't get out of the car, I will do the talking. Remember, you are very sick, you are pregnant. Even if they start beating you don't come out of the car, because if you come out of the car I am going to leave you there.'

Kyaligonza was armed. We were with another boy, his name was Musoke Deku (R.I.P) who was also armed. When we drove towards Bakuli, Mengo, we found soldiers had just disembarked the truck. They stopped us and asked where we were going. 'Why are you moving at this time get out.' Kyaligonza knew a bit of Acholi they started talking in Acholi. Of course at that time I didn't know what they were talking about but he later told us, he told the soldiers 'we are going to the hospital this woman has a threatening abortion and we have to go to the hospital now-now.' The soldiers asked, 'why did you leave Mengo Hospital [behind you]?' He told them 'Don't you know the foolishness of women

camp in Mpoma. With this on-the-job training, Gertrude soon mastered the art of guerrilla war between the camp in Mukono and the urban residence in Kampala. Gertrude not only commuted between the two points but also continued working her government job in the income tax department).

instead of taking medicine from here she went to Mulago and now we have to go where her file is'. They still insisted that I come out but remember the instructions were clear – for Gertrude, no moving out of the vehicle, if the soldiers on the roadblock insist, Kyaligonza will drive off, and Deko has instructions to start shooting as soon as Kyaligonza start driving. The idea was if we must be arrested we should be taken dead. Fortunately we didn't get to that level. Kyaligonza told the soldier, 'If that woman gets out, there will be blood all over because she is in a bad situation'. They [shone the torch on] my face and with all the fear, I really looked sick. They told Kyaligonza, 'You gentlemen if you are lucky to get to Mulago don't come back until morning because rebels have been seen around here and that's why we have just deployed'.

A Guerrilla in Busuuti

"We [would] take soldiers who were defecting from the army to join the rebels so I did most of my guerrilla works in busuuti (women's traditional dress). It was easier because when you are in busuuti you attract sympathy. You are a woman, you know, doing your business. People don't suspect you very much. The easiest way to think of you is that maybe you are just a housewife or a mother.

One time I was taking three soldiers in my car and we came across a roadblock. Usually when we took the soldiers we didn't put guns in the car; even if the soldiers had come out with their guns we would take guns separately. You take the people, drop them, then another time you come and take the guns or bullets. So that day we had the soldiers and we came to a roadblock. They asked me where I was taking them and I told them, these are my children, who I am taking to my farm to work. They told me these old people cannot be my children. Indeed they were too old to be my children. I told the soldiers on the roadblock that they are my husband's children from another woman therefore they are my children. They allowed us to pass.

The following day I came back without the boys and found the same roadblock. They asked me 'you passed here yesterday with people. Where are they?' Sometimes you can't say you are clever, God just gives you an answer. It happened that the following Monday was a holiday, so I said you see I have small children that I left at home. I can't leave them for many days but Monday is a holiday and we wanted to use it to continue the work on the farm. So I left the boys to check on the children. They said ok. I survived yet again by the grace of God.



Gertrude addressing a church congregation after.

By a Whisker of Luck

"As someone who was doing bush errands, I ran the highest risk of being discovered and captured anytime. In one incident, we were taking guns to our camp in Namugongo with Kyaligonza. It was a Sunday and we had avoided several roads preferring to take the road through Gayaza. Shortly after Kalerwe, we fell into an abrupt roadblock. One soldier asked what we had in the boot of the car to which Kyaligonza answered 'we have guns'. We all laughed and the soldier simply allowed us through. To him, it was a huge joke for someone to dare say he was carrying guns in a car boot.

Settling in the Bush

"One day in April 1982, I went to Luweero as usual and then Museveni told me that it was becoming too dangerous for me to continue operating in the city. He told me that the operations had become very swift and therefore he wanted me to stay in the camp. I had a problem with my leg and could not work as swiftly as some young people. By that time, I had put all my kids into boarding school and had told my parents and relatives that it was dangerous for me to remain in touch with my children. Separation with the children was not easy, but they knew that we had problems. They had seen us running from our house to sleep in the bush. They also knew their father had run into exile. Conditions in the bush were at first quite difficult since I had until then been a mobiliser and not a fighter. However, I quickly started to enjoy my political lessons conducted by Mzee himself. He convincingly explained to us the reasons why we were in the bush. My first job was actually an administrator to Mzee himself. I actually remained in that job for almost all the time we were in the bush.

On the Message to the World from the Bush

"While I worked as a courier, I carried the message of why and how we were fighting. In our message, we talked about the fact that human rights abuses in Uganda were the order of the day. There were so many killings, there was no freedom, and everybody lived in fear. Having political power meant that you also had power over people's lives. You could decide who would live and who would not. Mainly the killing of people was what took us to the bush. Then the fact that elections were not elections, even when we tried, it didn't happen. People voted but something else was announced. Take for instance when Sam Njuba contested for Kyadondo constituency. We were [registered in] Mpigi district and that meant that we had to go to Mpigi District headquarters to be nominated. We lived in Gayaza, but we could not go along Masaka road to go to Mpigi because we knew we could be arrested on the way. There were many

roadblocks and that was a trick that was played on many people. They arrested you at a roadblock and they released you two minutes to the closure of the nominations. Nominations were conducted in one day. All contestants had to be nominated that day and only at their respective district headquarters. They knew that you were going to move through a specific route. So what did we do? From Gayaza, we went to Hoima road then through short cuts to Mityana road through those small paths to Mpigi without passing through the roadblock. But remember at that same time there was a problem of fuel so we had to work hard to make sure we had enough fuel before the nomination day¹². We managed to be nominated and Njuba contested but lost the seat.

So the message was always how we were not contented with what Uganda was going through and how we were fighting it. We told them we are fighting a war that would take time because we wanted people themselves to do their own fighting. All we were doing is teaching them how to fight. We emphasized that the liberation should not be claimed by a few and we should not bring in people from other countries like we had done before when Tanzania brought a new force. We needed to train our own people so that they would know how to remove this terrible government.

Of course they could not understand, they said 'but how will you get the guns, how will you do this?' We only assured them that we would. We said, let people first of all understand the politics - the theory of why we are at the level of development we are at and Europeans are where they are and the Americans are where they are. You can't fight them because they are too strong. So you fight the guerrilla way, you attack soft targets, when they come to attack you, you know they are coming and if you can't manage them, you run away. So even the big powers when they come to talk to you, you gauge, give in on this and refuse on that. We used to have a slogan "dead people don't fight". If you want to liberate people, you must remain alive. At the same time, you can't remain alive by running away from the people. If you are running away you must run away with your people or remain among them fighting and organizing them.

The other thing, which was made absolutely clear to every fighter, was that "you are fish, the population is water". Water can remain alone and live on but fish without water cannot. So if you are fish don't disturb water. If you want to remain alive, let the water be. Just use it to remain alive but in the end, train the people to liberate themselves.

12 This represents one of the many manoeuvres by the Njuba family against political oppression. They circumvented state oppression against the right to stand to be voted for.

The National Resistance Army's focus on Women in the Liberation

When asked whether the National Resistance Army (NRA) set out to intentionally recruit women into the liberation struggle. Gertrude had her view on this.

"I think it was intentional. It was everybody's war. If you say it is a people's war and you exclude a woman, it can't be a people's war because in terms of numbers and influence, if women don't want to fight they will not allow even their sons to join the liberation war. They might tell their sons to join but when their sons come, they will always have mum's word in their ear. If mummy says there is no alternative we have to fight, they will always go and fight for mummy."

"What the struggle would have missed had I not joined?"

Gertrude explains, "The role which I think I played well is that I looked after Museveni's personal health, making sure that even if we are in extreme hardship at least let him get clean water and food. Clean not in terms of colour, but boiled. Let there be some little food to eat at least once a day because left alone, he would sometimes miss out on meals. There was very little food and you needed somebody to take care of that. Majority of the fighters were young - teenagers, and when you are a teenager, you may not think about other people very much. Mrs. Zizinga and myself were women, we had ran homes so we were able to plan for tomorrow even with meagre resources."

We were able to curb excesses; when punishments became very harsh, we would come in and say, no, we are going too far, and fortunately they did listen to us. Even the commanders were twenty to twenty-five years old, they were children and we would sit in the Army High Command meetings and say no, Afande, I think we have gone too far."

Olive Zizinga and myself were appointed by the NRA High Command to take care of the personal welfare of the Chairman of the High Command. At first there was a threat and this is how we came to be personally responsible for him. There was a threat that people (among the new recruits) had been sent [into the NRA camp] with poison. Every day we would recruit people but then you would not know the people you recruit. The High Command sat and decided that there must be somebody responsible so that when something happens we know it is this one. Being responsible meant that before he ate anything you had to taste it so if you are careless and something bad is put there, you will die before him. So even if you never wanted to protect him, you would want to protect yourself."

So they appointed me, I had this bad leg so there are things that involved moving which I could not do well. So my work

was usually within the camp. They knew first of all that I was old enough, I could see dangerous things. I was put in charge then after a few days I realised one person can't do it. You can't ensure the security of someone on your own. That is when Mrs.Zizinga was brought and then they gave us a young boy to do the running around.

My worst experience in that role was when Museveni fell very sick and almost died. When his personal doctor diagnosed him, he said that Museveni had taken poison. The commanders said that if it is poison and these people are running around not sick, it must be them. The High Command sat and said we must deal with them. Fortunately for us, the chairman's problem was not in the head, it was in the stomach. So he [Museveni] said okay before you deal with them get me another medical opinion. They called in Dr.Batta who had joined the liberation struggle from Nakaseke Hospital. The commanders even said 'in the meantime let these women get away from the High Command first but the chairman said no, 'they are the ones who gave me poison, let them be the ones to bother until I die'. He was very weak. That was one of the experiences that I will never forget, when nobody wants to talk to you. The incident was known to very few commanders but you could see rage when they were looking at you. Dr. Ronald Batta came, he examined the patient and in a few minutes he said 'no this is not poison, this man's liver has been attacked by amoeba.' Within 2 days he was up and running and we were exonerated. If it had not been Museveni to request for the second opinion, we would not have survived. It would have been easier to say, let them die first.

Out of the Bush to the External Missions

In 1985, Gertrude left the bush and was deployed to Nairobi. She left the bush at a time when the war had become more active, involving a lot of walking and running which she could not cope with. Gertrude went to Nairobi along with Jovia Saleh as an ambassador of NRA to the diaspora¹³. By 1985, the NRA leadership realized that they had lost touch with many people in the external wing. The struggle had advanced so much politically to the extent that the actors in the bush and those in the diaspora were no longer thinking the same. The High Command therefore sat and assigned Gertrude yet again, the responsibility to go and explain to colleagues abroad the progress on the war front. Gertrude described her role at this time as:

"Explaining to the diaspora why we had chosen to fight a protracted guerrilla war and not gone into urban terrorism as most of them preferred, delivering letters to [then president of Tanzania] Mwarimu Julius Nyerere, President Arap Moi, and others and visiting embassies to explain why NRA was fighting the regime of the day."

From Nairobi, she travelled to Tanzania, Sweden, London, Denmark and Papua New Guinea, among others.

"When we went to the bush, majority of the people were young and had never travelled but I had a passport and I could travel. I had been [abroad] so I could manage better outside and the others could manage better inside. So the Nairobi deployment was about putting people where they can perform better.

By the time Gertrude went to Nairobi, she was in charge of the financial resources of the struggle as well as a custodian of all the secret documents – letters of the liberation.

"I had all sorts of letters on me so in order to read my letters you had to actually capture me but if you don't capture me and am lucky to run a way, I go with my letters".



Gertrude Njuba with her daughters Veronica Njuba and Norah Njuba in Papua New Guinea.

Woman, Wife, Mother and Fighter

The liberation struggle involved a number of women in different capacities. Women actors included Joy Mirembe, Oliver Zizinga, and Proscovia Nalweyiso. In 1982, Jacob Asiimwe brought several students to the bush with a good number of young women while Dr. Batta came along with several female nurses from Nakaseke hospital¹⁴. Other women who joined the struggle along the way included notable woman leader, Winnie Byanyima¹⁵. In one of her conversations with scholar Amina Mama entitled *Living Feminist Politics*¹⁶, Byanyima indicates how her entry into the liberation was resisted by Museveni who argued then that it was not yet safe for women to participate in the liberation struggle. Byanyima wondered how a woman could hope to be an equal participant in the liberated

14 Daily Monitor, February, 9th 2004. "Dr. Batta came from Nakaseke hospital he was the head of that big hospital. So one day our people went to collect medicine and Dr. Batta said, well, after you have taken medicine I am going to be killed so you better take me too, don't you need a doctor? We said we certainly need a doctor. Then he asked the nurses 'who wants to go, these people need medical staff'. He came with many staff from the hospital and for the first time, we had a fully-fledged medical team."

15 Winnie Byanyima is among the women who were involved in diplomatic work and political negotiations. She was involved in the Nairobi peace process negotiations. The diplomatic work was not simple, because at that time Museveni was perceived as a communist.

16 (Mama, 2004)

Uganda that Museveni was trying to build, if she could be told “you cannot participate in the struggle at this stage because it’s too rough”.

“I remember him telling me that a good woman should remain in the background and give support from there”.

The experiences of Gertrude Njuba and the many other women of the liberation movement show them defying the role dictated to them by culture, while others exploited the image of the ideal African woman to contribute to the success of the struggle. Women’s presence on the frontlines did not leave the conceptions of women and war the same.

Gertrude recalls:

“We had a big number of women peasants who had grown up deep in the villages. They taught us how to live in the forest because when you have been living in the village, living in the forest is a step back but not very far. One day in the meeting I said that we the women are suffering a lot because we need sanitary towels. I remember Museveni getting shocked. He said I hadn’t thought about this at all, how have you been managing? From there on, it became the duty of the army to look for at least cotton because we said if we get cotton we shall manage. And every time our forces went to raid the hospital, we would be looking for penicillin and cotton. We used to have what we referred to as strategic supplies and supplies of a daily nature. From the time I raised the issue of sanitary towels, cotton was upgraded to a strategic supply. Other strategic supplies included bullets and guns. Women would also make soap out of the tree-barks commonly used by men as well as for laundry work.”

On more than one occasion, Gertrude was summoned to the High Command for sabotaging the effective building of the army through emotional and motherly expressions inside the rebel camps. Gertrude tells of the many young soldiers who would break down for whatever reason, cry and needed someone to listen to them. Her concern for these soldiers, most of whom were lower in rank brought her in conflict with the High Command. She was told that by attending to the emotions of soldiers, she was obstructing the ideal, hardened image of an army officer. Gertrude found herself at fault again later, when she was accused of crying along with Olive Zizinga while in the military camp. Mrs. Zizinga had just received the news of the death of her children. Gertrude sat to comfort



Gertrude with her daughter and grand daughter Norah Bwaya (former Guild President of Makerere University) and Biko Nakyanzi Guma.

her and both women, themselves members of the High Command wept. The duo was reported by the soldiers to the commanders.

"It was an offense; we were called into the court of High Command and asked why we were crying. They asked us 'why are you crying, do you want soldiers to run away?' Mrs. Zizinga said she was crying because her children had been killed in war."

While it was clear that Zizinga was crying for her children, the court did not understand why Gertrude had been crying too.

"I told the court in Luganda that 'while I was trying to comfort her I broke down *nemukaabirako*'. They told me *okumukaabirako* (crying in support of someone) doesn't work in the army."

In defying the masculine norms of the army, Gertrude and her female colleagues re-defined the nature of war and women's participation. From the disciplinary cases they won against acting emotional, to taking personal care of the Chairman of the High Command, participating in the peace talks and using their femininity to cross enemy lines, Gertrude and her fellow female combatants were key actors rather than mere victims of war. Gertrude used her womanhood to survive and to contribute to the success of the liberation struggle.

Women were not invited to the liberation struggle but rather they forced their way into it. While some joined because their husbands were in the bush, others decided on their own to take up arms on behalf of the revolution. Most women served in civilian roles. Some were sent to locate enemy positions and determine their strength. Women went behind enemy lines to look for food, and some were involved in political organising. When soldiers were injured, they needed to be hidden with families, cared for and transported to hospital, tasks women often did at great risk. Some women were involved in diplomatic work and political negotiations. Women like Proscovia Nalweyiso, today a brigadier started out as a mobiliser looking for food. She scouted routes for the rebels to ensure there were no enemies and when she joined the bush struggle, she became the head of the first female military camp.



Gertrude at home with her children and relatives. Front row; Henry Njuba, Michael Njuba and David Njuba. Back Row; Wasswa, Edward Mulika and John Njuba.

Reflections from Olive Zizinga and Matayo Kyaligonza

Captain Olive Zizinga, and Gertrude Njuba were the only two women on the NRA High Command. The High Command was composed of 12 members with Yoweri Museveni as the Chairman. Zizinga remembers that when she first met with Gertrude in the bush, the two women were not immediately deployed.

"They didn't give us any responsibility. At first we were in the political wing and we would attend meetings in the camp. Mzee [Museveni] knew that Mrs.Njuba and I were married women so he asked us 'don't you know that I have to return you to your husbands after the war?' So in the end, we deployed ourselves. We saw how the young soldiers were preparing the meals of the Chairman of High Command and we felt we needed to intervene. The young man had a kettle where he boiled water so they put tea leaves and once the tea is warm they take to him but the water would be unboiled. As married women, we decided 'why can't we go through his food?' We requested to take care of the food of the Chairman of High Command and the High Command gave us permission.

Zizinga also remembers the time when she and Gertrude Njuba were accused of poisoning the Chairman of the High Command, only to be saved by a second opinion. Zizinga argues that had it not been the two women taking turns to watch over Museveni day and night as he took his medicine, he would have been claimed by the rivalries in the rebel ranks.

Zizinga notes of Gertrude

"She was good at reading letters, she used to keep civilian secrets and she never told me what was in those letters. She was so good that a secret was a secret despite the friendship we had."

"Museveni one time said that those two women [Zizinga and Gertrude Njuba] are the lives of this country" Zizinga says. "It's my conviction that if we were not there, Museveni wouldn't have won the war 100%."

"There was information circulating amongst the government forces that wherever you see those two women, that's where Museveni will be."

Zizinga and Gertrude Njuba served the High Command at great personal risk. They formed part of his security detail and ensured that no poison reached him. In effect, these two women risked their lives for the liberation struggle.

Brigadier Kyaligonza on Gertrude Njuba's Clandestine Missions

Brigadier Matayo Kyaligonza one of the NRA commanders now Uganda's ambassador to Burundi says this of Gertrude's contribution to the struggle:

"It is true she started with me. I would assign her duties. When she went to Kampala, she would get in touch with fellows who wanted to join the struggle and soldiers running from the government army. One day when we were around Kalerwe, on Gayaza road, there was a roadblock which we could not avoid. We were going to one of our camps, to take a few things to the fighters.

I told her to pretend she was pregnant so she got some cloths and put them under her dress. I said I was taking her to local doctors for treatment and then they asked me what do you have I said I had guns. I put my pistol on the dashboard and they just laughed off, they thought I was one of them. It was by mere luck and they let us through. Mrs.Njuba was dying in shock because she thought I would either choose to fight or run away but then I knew she would not run because she was incapacitated.

It was just by sheer luck because there are certain things which some of us did and when you reflect you start wondering, was I mad?

She was always getting in touch with me in Namugongo camp, she would get people and direct them there. She would bring them in her husband's car. When her husband ran away she still remained behind. We made arrangements for her to go to the bush and when she went there we asked her to be part of the High Command. She became part of our fighters but not active fighters except for politics.

She would go to wanainchi [ordinary people] tell them our political doctrine with some people like Moses Kigongo and Mr.Kibirango. We would go to the villages and teach the people why we are in the bush fighting, talk about the bad government and democratic rights of the people. So essentially, Mrs.Njuba was part of the urban guerrilla warfare. She coordinated a lot especially with soldiers who were running away from persecution or running away from other units. She also had key contacts throughout Kampala like Dr.Makumbi and at times Dr.Luyombya. There is another doctor who was a gynaecologist who used to live around Kiira road opposite the museum. Those were the main operatives.

There is a time when Mrs.Njuba and Zizinga were accused of wanting to poison the chairman so the High Command decided that whoever did that must be executed. Mrs.Njuba was being accused when the Chairman of the High

Command was sick and her respect for me is just because I prevailed over all those accusations, and the Chairman also could not accept that Mrs.Njuba can conspire to kill him.

Generally, I worked with Mrs.Njuba in urban clandestine work. Sometimes when we were caught between the waves we could not manage to avoid we tried all sorts of strategies to survive.

Gertrude after the War: Women in Post-liberation Governance

Towards the end of war, after the Nairobi peace talks failed, Njuba was summoned to a meeting in Masaka along with the other members of the High Command. A unanimous decision was taken by the High Command and National Resistance Council (NRC) that NRA should march into Kampala. Two weeks after the meeting Gertrude Njuba returned to Nairobi. The army advanced towards Kampala and captured it on 26th January 1986. Immediately after the end of war, Museveni made quick political capital with urban women. In response to their participation in the liberation struggle, he appointed women who were strong NRM supporters to very prominent positions. Gertrude Njuba, was appointed Deputy Minister of Industry, Betty Bigombe was tasked with pacification of the North, and Victoria Sekitoleko became Minister of Agriculture. Two years later, Museveni appointed two women lawyers (Miria Matembe and Mary Maitum) to the Constitutional Commission and also created a Ministry of Women in Development. Gertrude Njuba later served as the Deputy Minister for Rehabilitation and Deputy Minister in the Office of Prime Minister.

Gertrude notes that while everyone can contribute to the liberation struggles in a variety of responsibilities, there are various factors that determine one's participation in the post-war government. The formal requirements of functioning in a public office which include a certain level of education meant that some of those who contributed to the armed struggle would not be among those picked to constitute a new ruling government. As Brigadier Olive Zizinga puts it

"when the liberation ended, most of us women started to look for their academic qualifications in vain."

With an Ordinary level education¹⁷, Gertrude was appointed deputy minister. Government efforts to encourage

17 Ordinary Level of education Certificate in Uganda is obtained after seven years of primary schooling and four years of Secondary

former female combatants to return to school were still hampered by the cultural norms in Uganda. While many of them were recruited at a young age, by the end of the war, these women, many of whom were now mothers felt too old to get back into the education system.

Women's position post-1986 liberation is described as a bag of mixed fortunes. Byanyima says,

"When we came to power, there was a need to neutralize the existing dominant political forces. Mobilising previously excluded groups was seen as a key strategy to neutralize the old political forces. So the project was not really to empower women in their own right - the real agenda was to empower the grassroots in order to neutralize elitist forces. Women were thus an instrument for another political agenda."¹⁸

She adds that even while spaces were being opened for women in the state, their capacity to organize autonomously was being challenged. They were being co-opted. Politics of co-option and patronage is seen as one of the barriers to women's effective engagement in Ugandan politics¹⁹. In the context of militarism and patronage, only those with the approval of the state are able to seek appointments and enjoy political privilege. In exchange for this patronage women who participate are expected to perform to a set tune.

Museveni, staying silent about Gertrude Njuba's role, wrote this about the late Eriya Kategaya and his critical role in urban clandestine work

"Eriya Kategaya had a particularly important role to play in the struggle, although he never took part in the actual fighting. He was in the bush in



Post-war governance Question: Gertrude Njuba, was appointed Deputy Minister of Industry in the post 1986 government. She later served as deputy minister for rehabilitation, Director of Mass organisation and political mobilisation in NRM secretariat, a political presidential advisor and currently, Director of Land matters in State House.

school.

18 Mama, 2004.

19 Isis-WICCE, 2014

Politics of co-optation
and patronage
is seen as one of
the barriers to
women's effective
engagement in
Ugandan politics

Luweero for some months but more as a political than a military leader. Mostly he was doing clandestine work in the town, either in Kampala or Nairobi. What many people did not realise at the time was that being in town was in fact more dangerous than fighting in the bush. In the bush, a cadre is free to defend himself and there is a certain safety in numbers. When doing urban clandestine work, on the other hand, the cadre is really on his or her own and survival really depends on total concealment. The contacts that are made may not always be reliable and then cadres are very vulnerable because the contact has information about their identity and movements. If a cadre were found out by the regime, there would be no questions, trial or investigations, simply execution – and thus it was extremely dangerous.²⁰

Museveni adds,

"that kind of work needs a person with a special kind of courage, patience, and stability. Kategaya is just such a man and as such he has always been central to the work we have done over the years".

A similar description would befit the person of Gertrude Njuba, who played a similar role and more despite limitations placed on her by her gender and physical disability. The documentation of the critical actors in the liberation struggle keeps silent Gertrude Njuba's role and values the roles of men over women like her, but we will not. Her contributions in the war and since, are worthy of mention and celebration.

20 Museveni, 1997; 151



Margaret Dongo:

A Colonial and Postcolonial
Rebel's Journey

"I would like to say to this Parliament today that when I die I know people will be happy because they think that I say too much but I will not stop saying what I know is the truth."
- Margaret Dongo

Margaret is a freedom fighter who joined the nationalist independence struggle for Zimbabwe at the age of 15, a founding member of the Women in the National Liberation War Collaborators Association...

Margaret Dongo's journey tells many stories alongside her own. Born on the 14th of March 1960 in Zimbabwe, she is the daughter of former political activists. Margaret is a freedom fighter who joined the nationalist independence struggle for Zimbabwe at the age of 15, a founding member of the Women in the National Liberation War Collaborators Association, facilitator for the Movement of Independent Electoral Candidates (MIEC), Presidential candidate for Zimbabwe Union of Democrats (ZUD) the party she founded, and former parliamentarian. Many have regarded Margaret as by far, one of the most formidable and 'rebellious' women leaders in the public life of Zimbabwe. Her story is an astonishing record of courage, resilience, iron determination and achievement.

Born into Politics

Margaret was born a year before the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the party that would come to lead Zimbabwe's struggle for independence, was constituted. She speaks of herself as being strong willed, stubborn, highly intuitive and opinionated right from childhood, traits that followed her into adult life. Her parents were partners in marriage but also independent from each other. "While my father was one of the founding members of the African National Council (ANC) led by Ndabaningi Sithole, my mother supported the opposition, United African National Council (UANC), headed by Bishop Abel Muzorewa" she explains. This reality taught Margaret to be comfortable with disagreement and difference of opinion.

Born Margaret Mutetwa in Manicaland province, she is the third child in a family of eight siblings. Her father was a builder and her mother took care of orphans at a mission hospital. She was raised in a household that was also the meeting place for nationalist freedom fighters. She remembers that as a young girl of around seven years old, she would hear her father in conversation and strategy meetings with the Black Nationalist leader and revolutionary, Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole.

"They would sit at the dining room table discussing the ways in which they were going to bring about an end to racial oppression and segregation by the colonialists," remembers Margaret. Rev Sithole, founded the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), a black militant political organization that in July 1963 led an uprising in opposition to the Rhodesian government.

"Our home was a hub where numerous meetings took place in the lounge and just as often my father was arrested by police who came in their khaki shorts and disrupted every meeting they found out about. It became my chore as a seven year old to take food to my father in the prison cells. I remember how scared and angry I was that before school each morning I had to take food to my father. Above all I remember being aware that this was happening because we were black. It was a feeling I was to know many times during my life - the fear, the frustration, the consciousness of injustice, and the profound instinctive belief that things needed to change."

Her memories include horrible experiences of the intimidation and degradation of black people.

"[The] things that had happened in town. Somebody was walking and they were harassed, there were violent beatings, even spitting in the face and all these other things. That time, you know, the [colonial] regime had intense surveillance to the extent that each time there was a meeting in our home, I could tell that we were going to have a raid. The CID's (criminal investigation department) the MaBhunus (colonial police force), Ma Joni (police) would come."

"When my mother, who was in her ninth month of pregnancy and engaged in many income-generating projects including planting crops, fell while trying to run away from municipal police I felt the frustration of being a racial second class citizen. We would have to go to the open spaces that we were illegally cultivating as early as 4 a.m. because, by 7 a.m., the Municipal Police would start to patrol. We cultivated in terror but we had no choice, this was about survival. On this day my mother feared she would go into labour before she had finished cultivating her land so we stayed longer than usual and had to run when the patrol officers appeared. My mother fell which induced her labour and she ended up delivering the following day. That incident really upset me. I thought, "I can't keep watching my mum go through this."

Joining the Struggle: The Power of Conviction

As a teenager in boarding school, Betty, a friend of Margaret's brought up the idea of joining the freedom fighters. They then made a plan to leave and join the liberation struggle as did many other youth their age. At this time, freedom fighters often came into schools to inspire students to join the liberation struggle and large numbers disappeared to join. Margaret decided that if she was going to join the war, it would be for the sake of her parents whom she had watched suffer under colonial rule. Margaret and her friends packed their bags at night and stole away from their boarding school setting out on a journey of over 300 kilometres to join the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army. She recounts,

"The things we had were heavy for us. We could not carry them. Even the food was heavy and we were extremely tired. Yet we remained fixated on the destination, walking by night and resting by day for fear of being caught before we reached the Mozambican border."

Intolerance for segregation and a desire for her parents to live a life of dignity drove Margaret through the dark and transformative years of her adolescence. The liberation war had a precious mystique in the minds and hearts of the public as it did for Margaret. There was a palpable excitement about the imminent end of racial domination and oppression. But what a young Margaret and her friends discovered when in 1975, they crossed the border into the training camps in Mozambique was brutal suffering. They discovered the harsh realities of the training camps.





"We were taken to the barracks and interrogated. It was then that we began to see the horrors. Young boys and girls who had left our school were now in refugee camps. I saw one of the captains of my former school. He was in rags and said to me, "Margaret, why did you come?" I replied, "You didn't write and tell us not to... We wouldn't have come." And I really meant it."

Nothing could have prepared Margaret for this life.

"There's no shelter, you are almost living like an animal, there is no preferences in terms of sex - a woman and a man are treated in the same manner. I thought life was going to be easy - it wasn't - but for me it was about the ideals of the liberation struggle."

Margaret's conversion into a cadre of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) began at the new arrivals holding camp in Mozambique. She changed her birth name and became Comrade Tichaona Muhondo, meaning 'we will get even on the battlefield'. She went through security vetting to ensure that she and her friends were not enemy agents. Once cleared, she was moved to Chibawawa refugee camp.

"The conditions there were no better than they had been at the holding centre. There was never enough of anything, not food, nor clothing, nor bedding. There were thin, flea-infested blankets and a scarcely-resourced kitchen which sometimes had no food fit for human consumption. You could boil the monkey peas for two days and they would still be raw', she explains, 'but you had to eat because there was absolutely nothing else.'

After a few months at the Chibawawa camp Margaret moved to Chimoio.

Grounded by Experience

At Chimoio Military Camp, Margaret came face to face with the worst oppression of women within the struggle for liberation. The leaders of the freedom movements designed to emancipate people from domination were also the abusers of young female recruits. A powerful and aggressive network of leaders, often working in alliances with women operatives, was in charge of rounding up and selecting young female recruits for the 'entertainment' of the generals. Tears well up in Margaret's eyes as she remembers the collective humiliation girls went through, living under predators who organized the rapes of young recruits. It was a crime that was understood, almost condoned. A crime that was not spoken of then and even today.

"A whistle would blow and we knew we had to run and hide. If you didn't hide, that was it," says Margaret.

Margaret summoned all her strength and wits to resist becoming a trinket for an influential, lustful man. A man who would, once independence came, continue to have command over her political opportunities and destiny. Margaret was as rebellious as ever. She dismissed sexual advances and fought against any kind of abuse with the contempt that she knew they rightly deserved. Her defiance came at a price.

"I was selected to go overseas for further military and educational training. It was meant to be in Yugoslavia. The man told me that because I had refused him I would never set foot on an airplane. Instead he had me shipped off to another Mozambican military camp called Doroï camp. There I saw death"

In Doroï Camp Margaret became a military nurse, trained by the veteran physician Dr Mudzingwa (now deceased). There she ran the camp's hospital post. From 1977 to 1978, she served in the Tete province of Mozambique, receiving and treating guerrilla fighters injured on the frontlines of a gruesome battle for independence.

"It was terrible. You would see people with their intestines leaking out of their stomachs, crying in agony, people with broken legs, broken limbs. People sick with diseases we did not know even existed. We learned to bury people without coffins. Difficult as it was it was a very good experience because it strengthened me both mentally and physically."

Margaret's skills as a soldier grew. She would wake up at 3a.m. and take part in the training drills.

"We had to run, even if we were hungry we had to continue the journey because we were deep in a jungle. If you did not keep up with the rest, you would be killed by wild animals."

Margaret was handed her first gun. She remembers the feeling of cradling it in her hands.

"The first time I held my gun, I knew it meant freedom. Freedom for me. Freedom for my family. Freedom for my country."

But how does Margaret reconcile her military background with the widely held notion that women should be peacemakers not war brokers?

"It's simple. I was defending myself against an enemy. Women must be brave and strong and courageous enough to defend themselves from any enemy".

Towards the end of the 1970s, word started to spread in the bush war camps that the colonial powers and the liberation movements had struck a deal to hand over power to a Black majority government. The peace talks were to be held at a place called Lancaster in the United Kingdom. Margaret grieves that in spite of all the contributions women made to achieve this pivotal accomplishment, not one woman was included in the peace talks.

"When we were in the struggle there were no rubber bullets for women. The training was the same and you could not train women differently. If anything, it was even more difficult for women, as there was no rule of law – there was only jungle law. While we were fighting the nationalist struggle women had to fight other struggles that were playing out on our bodies. We were fighting to end colonial rule...[and] fighting to survive sexual predators from amongst our own at the same struggle though. It is after the struggle that the differences between how women and men are treated could no longer be ignored. That is my motivation for fighting gender inequality and injustice. Now it's a question of what the government can give you. Now we have to go to Beijing and SADC in search of equal rights for women. In the struggle we were all equal in how we contributed.

Right after independence all those discriminatory laws should have been repealed because if the liberation struggle did not have women involved, we would still be fighting. And yet even though we are in a liberated country, we are still begging. I am talking from a former freedom fighter's perspective. What we gained was political power but we are not liberated. We didn't manage to get that power shared with women, we didn't get economic power. We need a second struggle, which the feminists need to take up. We need the three C's – courage, commitment and confidence – otherwise, we will keep asking for protocols and treaties which are not implemented. This is where women's leadership becomes critical"

A Decade of Political Leadership

Margaret had left Rhodesia, soon to be Zimbabwe, as a teenager. She returned five years later as a woman matured by the battlefields. She had given up her childhood, her education and her comforts to fight for her country's freedom. Even so, she took the news of the ceasefire with a sense of scepticism as leaders jockeyed for power in the new government. Margaret began to think carefully about her next manoeuvre.

Once home, she enrolled in a secretarial school and took a typing course, obtaining a diploma. According to a friend, Joyce Makwenda,

"Going back to school was extremely important in terms of remaining relevant and preparing Margaret to participate in politics without being marginalised on grounds of academic qualification".

With the academic qualification in hand she went to work. Remaining loyal to the ruling ZANU PF party, she performed a variety of duties and responsibilities. She worked as a receptionist with the Zimbabwe Inter-Africa News Agency (ZIANA) from 1980 to 1982. From 1982 to 1983, she worked as a proof-reader of the Hansard, the parliamentary journal, in the offices of the ruling party's commercial printing firm, Jongwe Printers. Her attention to detail and work ethic led to Margaret's service in the office of the then Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe from 1983 to 1990. She was officially an aide. Unofficially, she was intelligence operative. It was here that she worked most closely with Zimbabwe's first lady, Sally Heyfron Mugabe, the Prime Minister's much-adored Ghanaian first wife. These were important years for Margaret's social, political and emotional growth. It was in these years that Margaret's leadership aspirations and journey began to grow.

"Sally Mugabe groomed me to be a politician. She told me she wanted me to run for political office. I asked her how she believed I could run when I was so young. She told me she believed in me and thought I was talented enough".



At that time Margaret had started an organisation for women war veterans because they had become destitute, their homes destroyed. ⁶



"The organisation was severely attacked for only focusing on the plight of women war veterans so I changed its name to War Veteran which brought its own struggles. Many accusations were made against me by the government, 'She has brought them together to fight us.' [They said about the organisation] I was not intimidated by the harassment. I grew up in that context.'

'I decided to run for political office and the veterans campaigned for me. I was elected at the district level. Three weeks later, I was elected at the provincial level and soon after into Congress. Following which I was elected as a Central Committee member. This shocked a lot of people. They said I was supposed to have been endorsed by the whole [political] body. The First Lady called me and warned me, she said, 'Can you prepare for that fight? If so I will support you.' In a meeting the following day, speaker after speaker refused to endorse me. I put my hand up and kept it up though I was being ignored. Sally Mugabe sent me a note encouraging me to keep my hand up as she was convinced they would become embarrassed and eventually let me speak.

Finally I was given an opportunity to speak and I said, 'Your Excellency, I am glad you have given me the opportunity to speak. Yes, I am young, but let me ask you: when I decided to become a fighter, none of you recruited me. I walked from Chipinge to Mozambique to fight for liberation while some of you avoided death by boarding planes and going to London and educating yourselves. Others got jobs and when the war was coming to an end those who had friends in Mozambique were called back to grab opportunities because we were about to become independent.' There was loud applause and one lady from Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union (ZAPU) stood up and said, 'My sister, you are right. I was in solitary confinement for 11 years. My children have mental health problems.' The first lady called me at night and said 'Margaret, I am proud of you. I wish Zimbabwe had ten women like you.' After this moment there was no turning back. I knew many more challenges would follow but I was not afraid."

As Margaret committed to a political career, the health of her mentor and biggest supporter was deteriorating. Sally Mugabe, chronically ill with kidney failure that took her away from her public life and duties, would not live long enough to see Margaret serve her first term as a Member of Parliament. Margaret entered parliament in 1990 along with a number of war veterans following pressure on the ruling party to allow war veterans to participate in parliamentary elections without hindrance. During her first term Margaret's source of inspiration Sally Mugabe died leaving Margaret feeling alone and bereft. Yet encouraged by the faith Sally had in her she forged ahead.

Margaret brought the dynamism of her complex identities to a Parliament that was conservative. She challenged the ZANU PF leadership on the contentious issues of corruption, women's human rights, and building a democracy that carries out the wishes of its citizens. Margaret spoke about the plight of war veterans and challenged the nationalists in parliamentary debate on the subject, particularly Nathan Shamuyarira who was one of Robert Mugabe's recruits perceived by the war veterans as a sell-out. Margaret's challenging the old guard nationalists marked a turning point in the war veterans struggle against the elite politicians²¹. In August of 1993 the Defense Amendment bill was tabled in parliament proposing to reorganize the command structure of the defense forces bringing the Army and Air Force under one command. Margaret raised concerns:

"Too much power can corrupt and given how much corruption and abuse of power already exists in Zimbabwe, how will we ensure accountability from an individual awarded so much power?"

Margaret was fearless and asked questions many others would not have the courage to ask. Margaret served in key parliamentary committees, always bringing questions and evidence and demanding answers and accountability. On the Public Accounts Committee, she scrutinized budget allocations for bids that benefited the elite over the needs of impoverished communities. On the Parliamentary Reform Committee she proposed that Parliamentarians spend an allotment of their time working inside their constituencies rather than in the comfort of their capital city offices. She said MPs needed to be grounded and in touch with the realities of the communities that voted for them.

"Margaret is very authentic, she does not 'dust' her writing, speeches and responses to the media. She gives it as it is", attests her friend and fellow feminist activist Hope Chigudu.

21 ZW Sadomba War Veterans in Zimbabwe's Revolution: Challenging Neo-colonialism and settler and international capital 2011 Weaver press 103

An Independent Candidate

As a result of her loud voice and radical proposals on behalf of the ordinary Zimbabwean, she fell out with the ZANU PF leadership. In the 1995 election, she was dropped from the selection lists for the parliamentary elections as ZANU PF candidate for the Harare South constituency²² and replaced by a woman ex-combatant Vivian Mwashita who held a similar profile. Like Margaret, Vivian was a ZIPA-period²³ recruit from Manicaland province. It seemed that once again, Margaret's comrades had become her enemies.

Where many would have surrendered, Margaret refused to be silenced. She set up the Movement of Independent Electoral Candidates (MIEC) and took to the contest as an independent candidate, going head-to-head against an official of her former ZANU PF party. "Zimbabweans really admired her for extreme courage and refusal to be subjugated" says Chipo Mapfumo, a therapist based in Harare.

"Due to the fact that I was outspoken in parliament, I became the first woman in independent Zimbabwe to be petrol bombed, though I was fortunate enough to escape. I remember it very well, it was on the 15th of August 1995. Even though I am a freedom fighter, they had the audacity to throw a petrol bomb at me. I fell out of favour with the ruling party in the early 90's when I disagreed with them regarding corruption, nepotism and tribalism I became a victim of their insults and attacks. But I continued."

Her opponents did not stop there. Crowds of people were deployed to her campaign rallies and to her residential neighbourhood where they taunted her, called her a whore and threatened her with physical violence. The election was rigged and she lost. She went to the High Court, successfully challenging the results and forcing a re-run. "That she was able to collect and amass evidence, credible evidence of the rigging is a graphic statement of how much energy she was capable of deploying especially given the political circumstances" says Hon Mukwekweze²⁴ a former parliamentarian and colleague of Margaret.

"In 1995 I had to run as an independent candidate; the first Independent Member of Parliament in an Independent

22 Zimbabwe operates under a system of proportional representation in which parties make lists of candidates to be elected, and seats get allocated to each party in proportion to the number of votes the party receives.

23 In 1975 a movement of young Marxist-inspired guerrillas formed the Zimbabwe people's army (ZIPA)

24 Hon S Mukwekweze is a former member of parliament who served in parliament with Margaret during the 1995 – 2000 term

Zimbabwe. When that election was rigged I became the first woman to challenge the electoral system successfully in high court. Those days, there was barely any opposition, it was like a one party state parliament and there were only two House of Assembly seats from the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM)²⁵ and I held the third as an independent candidate".

Margaret's victory paved the way for others to run as independent candidates, and establish alternative political parties and institutions. This was a clear challenge to the dominance of the ruling party and a confidence boost to the electorate who saw that democratic progress could be made against the ruling party. In the words of Hon. Mukwekwezeke,

"From the ashes of that electoral war in Harare South constituency, Margaret earned for herself immense admiration and a high moral ground from both friend and foe. This also emboldened her to fight even harder against injustice in general and corruption in particular. Given her energies, successes and high moral ground against her not-so-big body size she indeed is true dynamite that comes in small packages."

In 1998 Margaret transformed the MIEC into a political party the Zimbabwe Union of Democrats (ZUD), a sign that opposition politics in Zimbabwe was evolving. By the time the next elections rolled in, there was a critical mass of individuals running as opposition party and independent candidates. In that respect, Margaret had blazed a trail for others to walk and inspired many women.

25 The Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) was a short-lived political party led by Edgar Tekere who opposed Robert Mugabe as presidential candidate in 1990



Taking a Leap for Women's Rights

In 2002 Margaret earned her Master's degree after taking an academic sabbatical to study for a Master in Public Policy (MPP) degree at Harvard University in the United States. She returned to Zimbabwe emboldened. Memories of her experiences in the liberation struggle fighting both the colonial state and sexual violence within the liberation movement still stung.

The continued refusal to accord former female combatants the same respect and privileges as men who fought in the liberation was still a sore injustice. Even women who made it to parliament found themselves being ridiculed and their opinions trivialized. "You are a bitch, go and cook in your house," Margaret remembers being told. Margaret decided it was time to take on a legal battle for women of Zimbabwe.

"Her unassuming down to earth nature but above all I think her fearlessness in picking up a fight when matters of principle are under siege and her hatred for corruption are the gem in the crown," says Hon. Mukwekwezwe about his former colleague. "Margaret's raw courage, bravery, tenacity and self-belief truly set her apart," adds another former parliamentary colleague Hon. J. Tsimba.



Margaret extreme right with fellow Zimbabwean feminist activists from left to right Isabella Matambanadzo, Everjoice Win and Thokozile Matshe © Nana Darkoa.

Margaret challenged Zimbabwe's Guardianship of Minors Act in the Supreme Court after the Registrar General, Tobaiwa Mudede, barred her from assisting her son to apply for a passport on the grounds that she was not lawfully his guardian. The Guardianship of Minors Act at the time stated that the father of children born of legal union is their guardian and his consent must be given for legal acts performed on behalf of the child. Together with the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers' Association (ZWLA) Margaret argued that Zimbabwe wrongfully denied married women the right to help their minor children acquire passports. They argued that the Guardianship of Minors Act discriminated against women on the basis of their gender, and violated Zimbabwe's constitution. In a landmark decision in 2010, the court ruled that both men and women who are custodians of minor children could assist those children to obtain a passport. The decision did not change the guardianship law, which would have been a greater victory however, allowing women to obtain travel documents for their minor children was no small victory for women who had experienced humiliation due to unavailable or unwilling fathers. "Vesevasinavana Babandatimiraiuko (all those without fathers please stand aside)", would echo through the passport office as women tried to explain in quiet voices that they needed a passport for a minor child whose father was estranged or just absent. After Margaret's battle women no longer need to fear such incidents and can be sure of recourse should they occur.

Mother, Wife, Friend and Fighter

Margaret is not just a politician but also a social activist, a wife, mother, sister, auntie and friend. She supports her family both nuclear and extended. Her sons adore her as does her husband. In the words of a close friend Joyce Makwenda, "Margaret is a loyal friend, she is someone I can call at any time. She likes to see other women achieving. When I am working on a project it does not matter how complicated, she will give me support".

Margaret is also involved in organising women in economic activities. Many speak in praise of her. "We were trying to organise and not going far. When Margaret came into our community she mobilised us and now we are making some money from the land", says Chipso Maposa a woman in Mondoro, an area where Margaret has her small farm.

"Margaret is a friend, colleague, wife and companion," says her husband Casper



Lessons for Women's Movements

Nationalist narratives of struggle and liberation often miss the experiences of the subordinated. Margaret's narrative shows this. In the words of Patricia Mcfadden²⁶, "I do not think that liberation struggles guarantee the reconstruction of egalitarian societies. This is the lesson that we have learned in Africa." McFadden emphasises that after liberation wars it becomes clear that the wars do not inevitably lead to egalitarian societies that are non-sexist despite the stated intentions of liberation movements. What does this mean for how women's movements engage in nationalist discourses, which see women who agitate for equality as problematic? How do they ensure that women's experiences are not erased? One solution may be the deliberate creation of spaces within nationalist movements for feminism. Women have always been a part of nationalist movements and are equally entitled to benefit from their success.

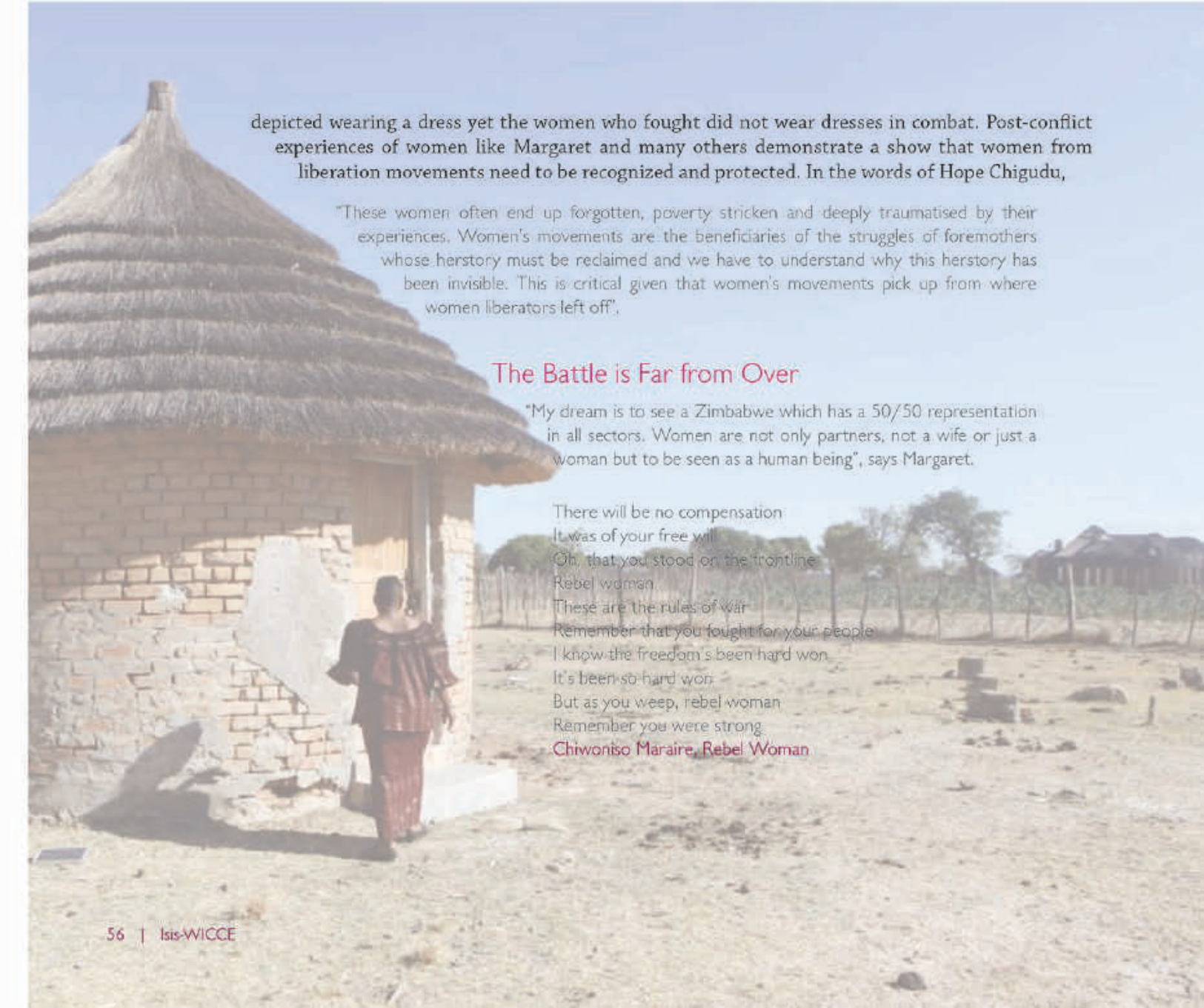
As the Zimbabwean nationalist movement demonstrates "women who are not empowered to organise during the struggle will not be empowered to organise after the struggle"²⁷. A third of the 20,000 guerrillas in Zimbabwe were women²⁸. This number does not account for positions of power which remained the preserve of men. From these positions men defined the 'common history' designed to unite the new Zimbabwe; in which women's contributions were erased and therefore not valued or rewarded. It is not enough for women to be part of nationalist struggles as we have seen how women's bodies and contributions can be used to legitimise nationalist movements without benefit for them.

Still, conflict and national struggle destabilises patriarchy and women's position in societies shift during such times. Women who do manage to challenge traditional ideas about gender during the struggle are confronted with efforts to re-domesticate them once they return. A fierce debate in 1981 in Zimbabwe on whether former-combatants made good wives shows that the status of these women in society was changed by the liberation war, yet the responses in this debate tell us that while men returned from the struggle as heroes, women returned as 'murderers and prostitutes'. The 'tomb of the unknown soldier' in Zimbabwe memorialises those who lost their lives in the liberation struggle. While the two men on the statue wear combat uniform, the one woman is

26 P. Mcfadden & M. Tillinghast, 'Women and liberation movements' 1991 Yale Journal of Law and Liberation Vol 2.

27 McClintock, 1991 page 122

28 Reported by Dr Naomi Nhwatiwa, Deputy Minister of Women's affairs



depicted wearing a dress yet the women who fought did not wear dresses in combat. Post-conflict experiences of women like Margaret and many others demonstrate a show that women from liberation movements need to be recognized and protected. In the words of Hope Chigudu,

"These women often end up forgotten, poverty stricken and deeply traumatised by their experiences. Women's movements are the beneficiaries of the struggles of foremothers whose herstory must be reclaimed and we have to understand why this herstory has been invisible. This is critical given that women's movements pick up from where women liberators left off".

The Battle is Far from Over

"My dream is to see a Zimbabwe which has a 50/50 representation in all sectors. Women are not only partners, not a wife or just a woman but to be seen as a human being", says Margaret.

There will be no compensation
It was of your free will
Oh, that you stood on the frontline
Rebel woman
These are the rules of war
Remember that you fought for your people
I know the freedom's been hard won
It's been so hard won
But as you weep, rebel woman
Remember you were strong
Chiwoniso Maraire, Rebel Woman

A portrait of Jessie Majome, a Black woman with short dreadlocks, wearing a white top with purple and yellow patterns and a thin gold necklace. She is gesturing with her hands while speaking. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with green grass and trees.

Jessie Majome:

Destined for Leadership

"Leadership is a practice based on the premise that everything one does matters. Even in the face of challenge, one should have a stance and remain true to oneself."

Jessie Majome

Bearing the Right Name

Anchored by the power of two women, Jessie bears the name of both her maternal and paternal grandmothers.

"My mother's mother was called Jesman and my father's mother was called Jessie. My father's side of the family claim that I am named after his mother and mother's family make the same claim."

Jessie's father adds,

"My family treasures Jessie, she is the living memory of my late mother, so she is seen as the mother of the entire family."

Jessie was born at Harare Hospital on the 20th of December 1971. Her mother, a formidable woman and one of the founders of a famous girls' secondary school, was a nurse and midwife at Harare Hospital.

"Before Zimbabwe attained independence in 1981; when a woman became pregnant, that was the end of her job", states Jessie matter-of-factly. One had to leave work and then re-apply or find a new job after having a child as there was no maternity leave. Following her birth, Jessie's mum resumed her work as a nurse. A woman whose daily ritual was to help other women deliver babies had to trade her livelihood to bring her own child into the world.

After independence, the Legal Age of Majority act (1982) was passed. For the first time in Zimbabwe, the Act established the principle of equality between men and women, opening up the way for other reforms. It gave adult status to all Zimbabweans over the age of eighteen, allowing for women to vote, own and register property in their own right without the permission of men.

"My father is an economist who obtained his Bachelor of Science Honours degree from the then University College of Rhodesia in 1966." Despite having a degree, during a time when few blacks did, Jessie's father had to resort to teaching as there were no jobs for black economists at the time. Eventually he got a job in local government training and moved to Domboshava Training Centre in the province of Mashonaland East, Zimbabwe. 1966, the year of her father's graduation was a significant moment in Zimbabwe's history. On the 28th of April 1966, seven men from the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) made the first nationalist incursion, following Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain on November 11, 1965, against the British South

Africa Police in what has come to be known as the Battle of Sinoia (today Chinhoyi). All seven men were killed after they ran out of ammunition but this moment of courage inspired other nationalists who engaged in guerrilla war and did not end until victory enabled the establishment of independent Zimbabwe in 1980. As Margaret's account makes clear, the liberation struggle upended all aspects of social and political life, and disrupted pre-existing gender relations and cultural norms.

Despite women's intensive involvement in the liberation struggle, the emerging leadership of an independent Zimbabwe did not define any specific strategies for ensuring women's equal rights. At independence in April 1980, the freedom that came was not to be enjoyed by women without further struggle. Jessie became part of that struggle.

Early Years

"Seeing both my parents occupy positions of service as they worked with the public, and hearing them talk about their work was my orientation into public service. For many in public service the work becomes routine and a matter of ticking boxes. The level of commitment and values required to effectively serve, fall to the wayside especially in disempowering contexts; political volatility, extreme repression and failing democracies and where there is little or no motivation"

What Jessie learnt from her parents were critical values of public service that generate substantial public trust and confidence. These values have been key in informing her leadership.

"My parents have inspired me to be principled and to work with integrity and humility. They continue to be sources of stability and security against the storms that often ravage my world, and like a beacon they give me bearings when it gets difficult to find my way".

These qualities passed on by her parents are visible in her work. H.E. Rudo Chitiga, Zimbabwe's Ambassador to France and the Vatican, a feminist and activist leader confirms "Jessie Majome is a member of Parliament, as well as a gifted administrative leader whose attention to detail and technical capacities are remarkable."

A child of the liberation movement, Jessie's early years were during the peak of war and conflict. She started school in 1978, at a Catholic mission school called Gokomere in Masvingo (in South-eastern Zimbabwe). She was the only girl who was a boarder in grade one because her family lived outside of Masvingo town and insecurity made commuting to school dangerous for a six year old.

"At that time, good quality education opportunities available for black children were limited. One would need to go to a missionary school to get a good education". As the daughter of two professionals, her parents ensured she got the best education they could afford. At a young age, Jessie was living what she describes as a very Spartan and militant life in the boarding school. Challenging as it was for a little girl, it built her character. Jessie's older brother was in grade four (primary four) at the same school. "He is a few years older than me. He used to spend all our pocket money. I didn't understand money. I hope I can claim it back from him one day," says Jessie with a smile. Jessie's brilliance in adulthood was reflected in her school grades from an early age.

"One night, the guerrillas (liberation war fighters) came to the school and convened a meeting with all the school children from grade five upwards. Someone must have informed the Rhodesian security forces, as they were called before independence. They bombarded the school and fought the guerrillas. There were killings. I am not sure if there were school children who died but from that night, I still remember the sound of bullets whizzing over the roof. I don't think I really quite understood what was happening, but I just knew that there was something terrible and frightening that was going on."

REPORT CARD

NAME: Jessie M. Moyo GRADE: 1 DATE: 1978

TEACHER: Mrs. Moyo SUBJECT: English

Subject	Grade	Comments
English	100	Excellent
Mathematics	100	Excellent
Science	100	Excellent
History	100	Excellent
Physical Education	100	Excellent
Art	100	Excellent
Musical Education	100	Excellent
Religion	100	Excellent
Character	100	Excellent

Overall Grade: 100

Teacher's Signature: Mrs. Moyo

Parent's Signature: Mrs. Moyo

School Headmaster: Mrs. Moyo





Her mother says,

"It was a moment of horror, my children were in the school and I heard there had been an ambush. A horrific one in which many people died. When I arrived at the school, the nuns who took care of the children asked me to take my children with me."

Jessie had to change schools, at a young age aware of and affected by the struggle taking place in Zimbabwe. As a child, Jessie remembers having a sometimes difficult relationship with her parents. She was strong-willed and challenged her parents whenever she was convinced about something. They disagreed often but they also understood, respected and supported her. According to her father,

"Jessie was clear about her stance on a number of things and had the courage to say what she wanted. Once convinced, it was difficult to shift her, and we learnt to respect her views".

Jessie learnt that disagreements could be productive and deepen respect and dialogue. She also learnt to stand by what she believed, to face confrontation, and not back down despite resistance and discouragement.

Political Awareness: Confronting Racism

Jessie's radical potential and activism started at an early age. In 1981 Jessie was attending Alfred Beit Primary School in Mabelreign, Harare. It was a year after independence and what had been a white school was now speckled with a few black children. At the age of 9, she was having a very difficult time with racism from both the authorities and fellow students.

"The first thing that I did was challenge the singing of something that was called the 'Pioneer's Anthem'. It was an anthem that was written to glorify, remember and reminisce about the Pioneer Column as it was coming up from the Cape of Good Hope to colonize Zimbabwe in 1890. It would be sung in the first person. 'It's just that my voice is not very good now but I could try and sing a few [lines]. It would go:

"Thou who didst guide our fathers' feet,

Through trackless bush...

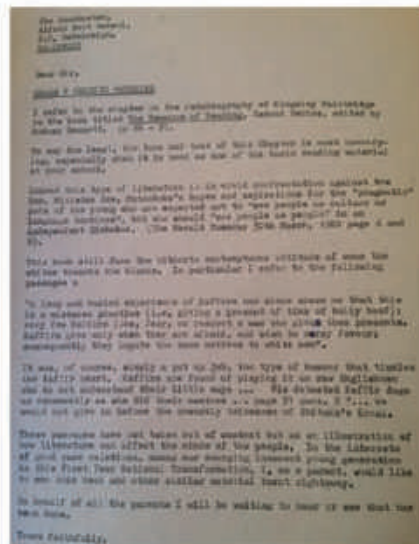
I didn't have any fathers who trekked through trackless bush. It didn't fill me with the intended nostalgia; instead it irked me and did not make any sense to me at all. I didn't see why I had to sing it and so I said I don't want to sing this song. For some reason, I was also annoyed by the Rhodesian national anthem that was pasted inside the school hymn books. I didn't like it. So I complained to my father about it and he wrote a letter to the Herald, the only daily paper at that time, and to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education visited the school and that was the end of the racist hymn and the Rhodesian anthem'.

Jessie learned then that “challenge and persistence can create change” and her activism since shows that she has never forgotten this fact.

Today, the courage she showed as a child has enabled her to grow into the confident parliamentarian she is today. Margaret Matienga, a war veteran and a colleague in Parliament says of Jessie;

“Jessie is a strong courageous woman. She says whatever is on her mind without fear. She does not beat about the bush. She is a star, the first woman lawyer elected to Zimbabwean Parliament”.

Jessie's parents mentored and nurtured her talent for leadership. She was committed to charting her own path in life. In grade five, the class was given a supplementary reader with extracts from the writing of early European hunters in the mould of Frederick Selous, (known for his exploits and cruel exploitations in Southern Africa). The content was extremely racist. In one passage the hunter narrates his hunting journeys and talks about how the 'kaffir' “is very much like the 'kaffir' dog; servile, cunning and how it cannot be trusted just like its kaffir master.” “I despised the book and yet again I took it up with the school through my father who approached the Ministry of Education.” Her father wrote a letter to the Herald newspaper, which led the school to remove sections of the book. “The entire library was then inspected in order to remove racist books.” A young Jessie discovered her power and forced a conversation about racial politics in education. Her protests opened up a space for discussing issues related to the legacy of colonialism in schools in the newly independent Zimbabwe.



Confronting Patriarchy in School

After completing primary school, Jessie went to Goromonzi High School, the same school her father had attended.

"Coming from struggling against race-based injustice it was an interesting transition to be in a school with all black students and yet feel marginalised. I met a new kind of disparity and bias, a gender based one this time. When I was fourteen years old in form two, it became clear that the school culture was based on an academically competitive environment, really brutally so. The boys, I don't know who told them, thought they were more intelligent than the girls. It was their pride and honour. The school would also collude with them in this chauvinism. After school lessons were over, the girls would be locked up in a very confined space in the school and we were told it was for our own good. Whatever the intention, the result is the same, women being deprived of agency and autonomy in the name of protection."



The only space the girls had was a common room where they could sit, read and on occasion watch television. When Jessie was in form three the headmaster decided that the common room would be converted into dormitory space for the junior girls. Jessie could not accept this. During the weekly routine meetings between the headmaster and each senior form called 'Headmaster's Question Time', she raised the question, enraging the headmaster. These meetings with the Headmaster were supposed to be the mark of the democratic culture of the school, allowing students to ask questions or raise concerns with the school leadership. Jessie quickly learnt about pseudo-democracies.

"I was summoned to the senior mistress' office to be 'dealt with' and I resented it. I despised the unfairness with which I was being treated when I knew I had not committed a crime or broken any school rules. Question time was for asking questions. And I did exactly that. Yet subsequently, I was being treated like a bad girl. So I decided that I was not going to go back to that school for my advanced level (A level)".

Jessie recognises that there is always backlash when one challenges power but the solution cannot be silence and invisibility.

"We sometimes avoid confrontation and are willing to back down. We need to be brave and to let go of the mentality of fear that we internalise. We are too silent for fear of offending each other yet our power is most compromised in our silence. We need to let go of victim mentality and seize our own power".

Women's Bodies on Centre Stage

After high school Jessie went to study at the University of Zimbabwe where she obtained a Bachelor of Laws Honours degree. Later qualifications include a Master of Laws from the University of South Africa specialising in Human Rights, Constitutional, Development, and Administrative Law as well as a Masters' in Women Law, and postgraduate diploma in Women's Law from the University of Zimbabwe

Jessie believed that the law could provide justice where power structures were depriving some citizens, particularly women and minorities.



"On 9 November 1992, there was a young woman who visited the university and she was wearing a miniskirt. Some of the men and boys, at the university were intimidated by the way she was dressed. For some reason it made them uncomfortable and they decided that they were going to attack her and to teach her how to dress. They started cat calling and then following her. She ran and they chased her. She knew that she was in danger. She managed to reach the area where there was public transport to get out of the university, she got into a car that was about to leave, the type that were called 'emergency taxis' then. When they caught up with her, they besieged the taxi, rocked it and threatened to attack it, trying to force her to get out. The driver succumbed and made her come out and she was subsequently assaulted."

At the time of the assault, Jesse and a few other students had formed an organisation called the "Gender Forum" to tackle sexual harassment on campus.

"There was a tremendous amount of sexual harassment at the University of Zimbabwe. It was terrible. As a female student you would be made to feel that you should confine yourself to certain areas of the university. I wanted fairness for myself and others. Here I was a registered student like the male students. I contributed equally to student's union subscriptions. There was a Student's Union building for the students' leisure but at that point, a female student could not walk into that building at all to buy a drink, to buy gum or whatever without being cat-called or jeered at and so on. It was just not fair. And so the treatment this

visitor got was a similar thing. This is why, working with fellow students, we formed The Gender Forum to end sexual harassment on campus.”

“Dressed in shorts and miniskirts, we staged a protest against the attack, and a mob of over 500 male students threatened us with violence and called us prostitutes.”

That did not scare Jessie or her colleagues from organising on campus. Jessie continued to challenge sacred cows and taboo. One of the privileges of final year male students was the opportunity to live in a beautiful self-contained residence called “New Hall”. Each student had their own room to study in peace. The fact that it was only for male students however, was a problem.

“I decided that the situation was unfair and drafted a petition which I went round collecting signatures for. I tried to anticipate reasons why they might refuse to put girls in New Hall as well and offered solutions in the petition. I suggested that like other halls where male and female students were mixed, the top floor could be reserved for women. Once I had enough signatures I submitted the petition to the Dean of students. I was so glad I had put in the effort, the Hall was opened up to female students and I was able to stay in New Hall in my final year.”

Jessie's fights against discrimination and harassment did not focus only on alleviating her own pain and discomfort but that of all others who were in the same situation. Jessie put into practice a leadership of service, working with other women to shape the future collectively.

After graduation in 1996 Jessie worked as a Human and Women's rights activist at the Legal Resources Foundation in Bulawayo. In 1998, she joined another human rights organisation Zimrights, and then joined the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers' Association and also worked in a private law firm before founding her own. Jessie realised that as a human rights lawyer she could only do so much. If she wanted to influence the law at a macro level, then it was important to join mainstream politics.





In the Seat: Public Leadership

Armed with experience, Jessie informed her parents that she wanted to join mainstream politics by running for office in a local government election for Hwange Local Board. Her mother says;

"It was a difficult and dangerous moment in politics and being in the opposition was a difficult place to be. When we realised Jessie could not be discouraged, we took up the task of advising her and supporting her.

We helped draft her first parliamentary campaign materials together, here in this home and it was such an amazing feeling when she won in the elections. It was quite a momentous occasion for all of us," remembers her father.

When the seventh Parliament of Zimbabwe opened in 2008, Jessie, representing Harare West, was among the 20%²⁹ of women members of parliament. She was re-elected in 2013, one of 124 women sworn into the eighth Parliament. Jessie chairs the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. In her political party's (MDC) shadow cabinet, she has served as the Shadow Minister for Justice.

In 2013, Jessie played a big role in Zimbabwe's joining more than 30 countries worldwide using the electoral quota system to increase women's representation in Parliament to at least 30 per cent, which is considered the minimum for collective action. The quota is included in Zimbabwe's Constitution, which was approved by referendum in

²⁹ In the 7th assembly there were 34 women in Lower House of Assembly out of a total of 210

March and signed into law on 22 May 2013. As a result, women now comprise 124 of the 350 MPs in Zimbabwe's new Parliament, including 86 women in the National Assembly – 60 in the reserved seats and 26 elected directly to the 210 constituency seats.

The ultimate objective of the quota system or affirmative action, as understood by Zimbabwe's women's movement, is not only that women attain the numbers needed to influence decision-making, but also to move away from centuries of oppression towards a future of truly equitable relations.

The day Jessie entered parliament for the first time, as a member of the main opposition party is not one that is easily forgotten. For the men from different political parties, this perhaps would be the strongest division among them but for women in parliament there was an additional layer, that of being women and also largely unwelcome in the House.

"In spite of the jeers, it was very exciting to be in Parliament. To actually walk through those doors, it felt like walking through the doors of history to be in that space. It felt like there was a big load on my shoulders. I had a sense of that burden and responsibility, carrying hopes and dreams of the people who had elected me. I was also nervous and anxious because I didn't actually know what it was going to be like but I was happy that I had gotten the opportunity to represent my constituency"

From agitating for change in her immediate environment, Jessie was now sitting in parliament with the mandate and opportunity to create change for a broader group of people. Jessie felt that women's lives needed to be an important part of political processes and that she needed to do her part. This meant that although political tensions were high, the women in parliament would need to set aside party differences and stand together for the sake of women's rights. This unity across party lines was to become extremely important in the constitution-making process in Zimbabwe.



Breaking Down Barriers

The height of Jessie's journey thus far is her input into the constitution-making process.

"My most special achievement has been to live to see the dismantling of the gender discrimination that was entrenched in the legal system of Zimbabwe and particularly in the constitution, which, in its text, gave society and institutions license to continue discriminating against women and kept women subordinated as unequal. That was a tremendously sore point for me because when I studied law at the university, I quickly learnt that I am not an equal human being in terms of the law. I did not have equal status and I was determined to end this inequality."

There was a list that I put down for myself of thirteen things that absolutely had to go into the new Constitution so that it could be one fit for women. At that time I was privileged to be the Deputy Minister for Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development. I got the Ministry to adopt the thirteen demands for women. I was also the spokesperson for the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC) which helped me in advancing the demands. Today those 13 key demands for women's equality are in there, including the provision for equality of everyone before the law. And secondly, that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, marital status and pregnancy. We have got all that in there and perhaps that may be the highlight of my career."



Ruramisai Dube, an activist and scholar said,

"Jessie used the constitution-making process not only to secure political victories for women, but to shift mindsets, unravel the very norms and institutions at the core of women's inequality and social exclusion and then work towards building a society that embodies deep democracy crucial to a more just, equal and sustainable world"

The 13 demands for women brought together women from across political parties. Bringing women to work collectively across political parties was not a small achievement considering that political parties are sites of power struggles themselves. As Jessie describes,

"There is a tremendous amount of cat fighting in there. Sometimes it gets so intense that I dare say it is forgotten that a political party is merely a vehicle for us to get to a particular destination, instead it becomes an end in itself and the destination is completely obscured"

Jessie also expressed apprehension over women's wings in political parties as an end in themselves.

"They turn into women's ghettos. Women's political wings can't go on forever; they are set up as an affirmative action tool, to get women to join, to get them into the political parties. They are essential in the infancy of a political party but after a while gender and women's rights issues must be mainstreamed into every aspect of the party.

"A political party is a vehicle that I get onto in order to get to a particular destination. And my particular destination and experience of life as a woman is that I want to live life as a free and equal human. I want clear and tangible outcomes for women and spaces for everyone's participation. And if my political party decides that it doesn't want to do that anymore, I can't continue to travel in their vehicle. There will be no seat for me there."

Thokozile Ruzvidzo, a feminist activist and a staff member of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) recognises Jessie's persistence in fighting for women's rights.

"Jessie is a brilliant Member of Parliament, spot-on, an asset and extremely effective. She continues to put issues of women's rights on the parliamentary agenda. She is an example of the importance of having a feminist in parliament."

Winnet Shamuyarira, a young feminist activist echoes Ms.Ruzvidzo,

"Jessie is a feminist trailblazer who is a bridge between the women's movement and parliament. She constantly battles

the burning issues of the day in a practical, political and no nonsense way. Jessie is not afraid of radical thinking and solutions. She is truly an ally who uses her feminist analysis to shape the field. She leverages collective political power at all levels of decision-making to positively influence and hold accountable decision making institutions and structures. She is a hands on parliamentarian who exploits the power of social media³⁰ to keep her constituency informed about development in parliament"

Innocent Gonese, a fellow lawyer, a Member of Parliament, the MDC Chief Whip and Provincial Secretary Foreign Affairs and National Council member in the MDC party, praised Jessie for communicating with her constituency using social media, "which most of us can't do" He also praised Jessie as a brilliant thinker, and compelling debater who has done stunning work in her constituency.

Zimbabwe and Africa at large are marked by gender disparities and violence of all kinds against women and girls. Jessie has strengthened local to global linkages and campaigns around gender, including the fight to end child marriage.

In a post on social media, we see her communicate to her constituents the progress on campaign promises

"Dear Harare Westerners

Yesterday I debated on the Gender Commission Bill after the two Committees of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development and the Thematic Committee on Gender gave a report of the Public Hearings on the Gender Commission Bill that were held from 26 April to 4 May 2015...".³¹

Joyce Mutasa from Jessie's constituency says,

"Jessie, is an amazing cosmopolitan individual, she is not ashamed to declare her feminism openly. It would help if we had many other Jessies in parliament to disrupt patriarchy and challenge oppressive power. She also remains in touch with us, her constituency, and makes us feel like we are part of the debates that go on in parliament. I am sure we are the most informed constituency in the whole country".

30 Jessie has an electronic newsletter for her constituency. It updates them on various issues related to parliament and other citizen rights

31 From Jessie's virtual office on Facebook



In her journey, Jessie has celebrated other women's entry into leadership positions but she grieves over how quickly they come out of office. She gave an example of a major political party that kicked out a woman vice president and replaced her with two men.

As a single mother of two boys, Jessie knows that she must find an anchor so that she does not fragment. She finds her life's breath in the gym and in her church choir.

Leadership Challenges for Women

Jessie is clear that the leadership road is not an easy one but that it is one worth taking. She accepts that being in a political party is a tough place to be. She compares it to being on public transport.

"You get in because you want to get somewhere and not necessarily because the vehicle is perfect. You might not like the crew, or the way they drive but that is the only vehicle that will take you where you are going. And so you don't always agree with the way that things are done. But to get to your destination you get on that bus and you do the best you can to get along with your fellow passengers."

She adds that the driver should be reminded to watch the road carefully and know when to slow down, avoid knocking over pedestrians and ensure that they listen intently to passengers.

"It is difficult but it is a journey. And it is the biggest test also of one's own leadership, and one's capacity to influence the way things are done. Some battles are won right in there and some are lost" she says.

Jessie gives the example of Learn more Jongwe (former member of the Movement for Democratic Change MDC and Member of Parliament who murdered his wife then killed himself) who is celebrated within the political party for his political stamina with silence around the killing of his wife. Jessie says that the case of Learn more was not isolated; it is reflected in many forms in our societies when men individually or collectively fail to carry the load and then shift it to women with terrible consequences. She warns that women leaders can also carry a heavy burden, if the pressure is not released, they can crack under it.



Sharing the Load

Women leaders will on many occasions find themselves in need of support. Jessie, with her long years of experience, still has moments of struggle. She shares some suggestions for supporting women in politics:

- * Women in leadership both emerging and 'seasoned' need support from women's organisations and civil society. Women's organisations can help articulate the challenges faced by women, develop solutions and support women leaders to drive for change at policy level and in the spaces where they have influence.
- * Ideology is essential and often politicians have ideology but are not always firmly rooted in it. It is easy to gravitate around personalities and forget the ideologies that frame one's political aspirations and goals. Women in leadership need help so that they stay grounded and remain aware of the ideology that guides them.
- * Women are often forced to choose between their private family lives and politics. It's not fair. Women leaders need to be affirmed by other voices that celebrate them not condemn them for not being full time mothers or wives as well as leaders. Every dance is decorated by cheering and supporting.
- * Many women in leadership have struggled with balancing loyalty to their political party with loyalty to the cause of women and women's rights. Knowing that they have support from women's organisations and movements is a huge comfort and being advised on how to negotiate their political space can be useful.
- * Political campaigns need resources and often women have limited access to resources and political networks and end up drained and still failing to compete with the deep pockets of male counterparts. Women need ways of mobilising resources outside of a female candidate's personal wealth. The Zimbabwean system offers no administrative support to a parliamentarian and must change.

Jessie met many trials on her path to political leadership and learnt to carve out space for herself. Her own presence in parliament was a result of women leaders who went before her and made such a dream possible for her as a young girl. She now looks forward to coming generations of African feminist leaders for whom she has a few pearls of wisdom. "Change is not possible without sharing leadership challenges and lessons learnt at least with other sisters"

- * Be true to yourself, whatever career you have chosen. If your choice of life partner takes you away from that which matters most to you, if it hinders you from being the best of who you are, then perhaps it is a union worth rethinking.
- * All you have to do is have faith in your passion. It really makes your life a lot better. Don't doubt yourself or what you bring to the table; the knowledge, experience or resources at your disposal. It is not as scary as it feels from the outside and once you are in and have a conviction you will thrive.
- * If you have the desire to enter politics, then join a political party. The party is necessary but not an end in itself, it is a vehicle and one must always remember that. Whilst in there do not forget you have the power to influence processes. The end goal is service; politics is about serving the masses.
- * There is no need to wait to see hordes of women in parliament before daring to enter the political stream. Women need to individually and collectively expand space in the political arena by joining. The few women in politics are not always very well-educated; they are just bold and determined. With the added advantage of education and exposure young women can go far in politics.
- * There will be no preferential treatment once you get there. There is no shuttle to ferry you to the desired destination. Taking up space is about agency and so is maintaining it once you occupy it.
- * Remember you are not built as a leader for the sake of being built. You are supported, built and anchored by others because you show commitment and drive activism. You mobilize them to take risks, stand up for what is both innovative and just and you give the best of yourself.
- * In the political realm, it is essential to engage authentically, assertively and courageously if you are going to educate, influence, challenge and continue sharing.

- * Burnout is a common condition for many women leaders whose multiple workloads at work and in their families add to the stress caused by political fights and organizing. For many women, especially those challenging sexual and gender norms, speaking out within their parties, and society, provokes stigma and isolation, even retaliation. Over many years and especially in violent or risky contexts, the physical and emotional trauma women leaders experience can leave deep emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual scars if unacknowledged and these can undermine their agency. Find a process that enables you to deal with the exhaustion, intimidation, fear, anxiety, shame and self-blame.
- * You are never too young to get involved in politics. You might not necessarily vie for office but get involved with a political party whose values you align with. Learn the ropes, observe and keep growing. When the moment is ripe you will know and you will have the advantage of understanding the political terrain. For example at the early age of 28, in 2000, I became the youngest female commissioner in the National Constitutional Commission. In 2002 – 2006 I was the National Spokesperson of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA). At 31 I was elected Councillor for Ward 1 in Hwange & Chairperson of Hwange Local Board (equivalent of Mayor) in 2003. I was Vice Chairperson for Harare North District in 2004 – 2005 (M.D.C. party) and in 2006 – 7 became Member of National Executive Committee of MDC & Deputy Secretary for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. Not only did I become a member of parliament in 2008 [to present] but I rose, at 37 years to the position of Deputy Minister of Justice & Legal Affairs in 2009–2010 and thereafter Deputy Minister of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development. Just remember that no one owes you anything but you owe yourself everything.
- * Do not give up; there will be good days and terrible ones. It is a tough arena and one must develop a thick skin and a clear head. It is essential to know who you are or you will be swallowed whole. Sometimes you fall and there is no one there to catch you. Create your own support system; you will need it in those dark and heavy moments.
- * Sit powerfully in your authenticity and truth fellow sister; the path is made more easily when we trample the wild grass repeatedly and collectively.



She rejects sceptics who believe that "the system" cannot be overhauled to create a better and more honest one. "I believe in people and their commitment to change."

Jessie acknowledges those who have walked the road before her.

"I know that even with all the hard work - and with any talent that I have, I wouldn't have gotten where I am if it wasn't for the women leaders before me. The people who took chances and the people who fought for their rights and fought to be heard and fought not to just be silly, flowery women in the background. The women who excel and when the world becomes uncomfortable with their visible presence do not cower and hide, the women that sing louder when they are told to sit down and shut up. I am who I am today because of the support of those who did not require me to contain my light. The warriors that live outside of the cage of lady-like-ness and lady-ship, go out and make real lasting improvements in other women's lives. Those that have faced the violence that comes at you when you are seen as a transgressor. I salute all the women, especially my mother, whose courage gave me permission to fully be my authentic self even when I knew the risks of doing that."

Jessie's story reflects both the passion and courage vital for an activist, women's rights defender and politician along with the creative energy and vision that mark her journey. She rejects sceptics who believe that "the system" cannot be overhauled to create a better and more honest one. "I believe in people and their commitment to change," she says.

Jessie Fungayi Majome, daughter of a formidable woman of the Nyati (buffalo) totem has overcome obstacles and challenges that life continues to throw at her. Nurtured by the hands of the women's movement, she too has flattened the grass, paving the way for women to take up political leadership. For her courage and dedication we celebrate and acknowledge her.

A photograph of Alice Alaso Asianut, a Black woman with short hair, smiling and gesturing with her hands. She is wearing a vibrant, patterned dress with teal, black, and white geometric and organic shapes. A thin necklace with a small cross pendant is visible. The background features a brick wall on the right and a dense bush with green and reddish leaves on the left. The lighting is natural, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Alice Alaso Asianut:

The Making of a Woman
Political Leader

Alice Alaso Asianut is an astute politician in today's Uganda. Hers represents a political career path that emerges almost miraculously from a childhood riddled with poverty, complex family relations, and a home characterized by armed insurgencies in Soroti (current day Serere) District. Alice Alaso is a child of the post-independent Uganda, a three-time member of parliament (2001 - 2016) and a symbol of women's political leadership in post conflict states. Her journey to parliamentary politics shed light on some of the barriers to women's political leadership in Africa including poverty, lack of access to education, domestic violence and child abuse. Alice emerges not only as a professional teacher with a Bachelor of Arts in Education from Makerere University but also takes on political leadership as an opposition member of parliament. Alice continues to struggle against social injustices such as corruption and marginalization even though her contributions often go uncelebrated, shelved away in parliamentary record books. Herstory can help to illuminate the great paths traversed by women political leaders even in militarized or undemocratic political settings.

A Childhood in 1970s Soroti

Both of Alice's parents were primary school teachers and at the time, as Alice describes, "if two teachers decided to get married, one of them had to stop teaching". This meant that one of Alice's parents had to drop teaching and look for an alternative means of livelihood. In a patriarchal setting, where it did not matter how educated a female was, or how optimistic her future looked, the decision was fairly obvious. Alice's mother (Lydia) opted to remain the housewife while her husband continued teaching. No longer a teacher and now confined to domestic and subsistence work, what followed was 7 years without childbirth, an issue that worsened household and clan relations. In the culture and tradition of Alice's Teso³² community, delayed conception or barrenness was always the woman's problem, and a bad omen to the man and the clan. Lydia found herself under intense pressure from her husband and the clan to not only give birth but also to give birth to a boy. Alice's father succumbed to clan pressure and married another woman who would bear him and the clan a child. However in the same year her husband took a second wife, Alice's mother gave birth to Alice Alaso Asianut. "That is what I call divine intervention," Alice says.

"Because my parents had stayed together for 7 years without a child, when I was finally born, I was named Asianut, which means the Grace of God. I was highly regarded as a miracle child".

32 Ethnic group in eastern Uganda and western Kenya

Alice's mother later gave birth to a boy, a great relief from cultural expectations that saw a girl child as less valued. So Alice was born into a complex web of patriarchal relations of clan members and relatives, in a polygamous family. Women were valued according to the male heirs they produced forcing women to compete.

"Whenever I related with my step mother, it was always the feeling of running away. Whenever my father would come in the evening, reading to him and proving to him that I was a good girl gave me a lot of satisfaction as it would relieve me from thinking about my step mother's mistreatment. It would also show that there is someone who believes in me and it would also instil in me some confidence and belief in my inner potential.

The economy also shaped Alice's formative years. In the Teso of her childhood agriculture flourished and cattle were the wealth of almost every homestead. The Ugandan government had built the first abattoir in Soroti district which was not characterised by cattle rustling as it would later come to be.

"Before that time, there were some inter-tribal raids mainly along the borders. These raiders managed to penetrate the region with the aid of guns from the NRA; catalysed by the vacuum that existed around the time that Tito Okello overthrew Obote. In that period, the political dynamics changed for the people of Teso region especially with the failed Nairobi Peace Accord between Tito Okello and Yoweri Museveni. When Museveni overthrew Okello in 1986, Teso region fiercely resisted Museveni. The whole of Teso region went into rebellion supported by individuals like Peter Otai, Max Omeda, Hitler Eregu, and Jesus Ojirot. This rebellion brought in a new political and administrative dynamic in Teso region leading to the general breakdown of law and order. The Karamojong cattle-raiding phenomenon, in addition to the new government that was being resisted changed the economic fortunes of the population."

Alice would have been around 16 years old at the time these changes were taking place. She witnessed the political upheavals in the region that decimated the economic wealth of the population especially the plunder and looting of the cows that formed the economic backbone of Teso region. There was a lot of displacement and death of civilians with continuous military operations and cattle rustling. These increased the tempo of gender-based violence, with women raped, killed and subjected to abject conditions in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. The region quickly became impoverished and families who survived did so just marginally.

In the first four years of her primary school life, Alice stayed with her father and stepmother. Her mother and father had separated under abject poverty and intense competition with her co-wife. Alice got the opportunity to spend Primary 5, 6 and 7, with her mother after her father had been transferred to a nearby school. In these two,

sometimes hostile homes, Alice learned household work and discipline.

"My mother just like any other woman in Teso had to use the grinding stone to make millet flour. She would always ensure that she left me some portion of millet to finalize. With every task she did, she would always ensure that she left me a portion to work on. That was the type of grooming that my mother subjected me to that was later going to be useful for me as I grew up.

Alice finished primary school in 1980, enrolling in Kamodo Senior Secondary School where she attained her O-level education four years later. When due to lack of school fees and the political insurgency at the time, she could not immediately enrol for her A-levels at Bubulo Senior Secondary School, Ochom John, a neighbour, secured her a placement at Ngora High School in the second term. "I joined the school in the second term of senior five. This was quite irregular, I had to work hard to catch up."

In the last week of the term, the headmaster Joash Olupot, who had been arrested by the National Resistance Army³³ (NRA) on suspicion of collaborating with armed rebel groups, was released from prison.

"When the head teacher found me in the school, he noted that it was already too late for me to be in senior five and insisted that I should wait for another year. He said, "however brilliant you could be; you would not pass senior 6 after joining senior five in the second term".

Alice pleaded with the head teacher to be examined on her competence, a test she passed. Alice was able to continue her studies, pass the national examination and was admitted to Makerere University as a state sponsored, non-resident University student.

33 NRA was the army that had taken over government in 1986. Alaso's Teso region however experienced extended political insurgencies due to different armed groups resisting the 1986 NRA government.



Back to Teso, the first group of students in the Senior 5 Arts class pose with Teacher Alaso



Alaso (Squatting) with friends Hedwig Arabo & Akello Jane S.5



Alaso in the centre together with Azima Francis, Arabo Hedwig, Aiso Ebokokait & other S.6 students in 1989 Ngora High School

Securing University Residence

Arriving at Makerere University, Alice wore her first pair of shoes.

"After receiving the news of admission at Makerere University, I went and checked into the university. The first shock was that I was booked in as a non-resident student. Non-residents were students who had been admitted into university but had to find their own accommodation outside the official university halls of residence. I knew this was another trouble. I was advised to present my case to the Dean of students whom everyone at the University knew as Uncle George Kihuguru. When I went to the Dean, I raised the issue with him and he calmly told me that I should not worry because the university would give me money to stay outside. I looked at Uncle George straight in the eye and with tears running down my face, I told him that without getting accommodation in the university, it would be the end of my future and termination of my education. I told him that in such circumstances, the only option I have was to go back to the village. Uncle George was touched by my state of affairs and he immediately called Africa Hall and insisted that the Warden finds for me a place to stay.

Securing university residence was just one of the many hurdles that Alice had survived in her education life. She thrived despite never having been given the necessities; be it school fees, dress, scholastic materials or accommodation.

"When holidays came, we applied to remain at the University and offer our services in all ways in the university. Since the security situation in Teso had not improved, we only had to make ends meet by staying at the university and working."



Alice gets a handshake from Uncle George Kihuguru, dean of students during one of the University functions in MUK.



Alice and friends from Africa hall including Suzan and Judith Aguga.

Prior to university she had lived in the homes of four different relatives, (each with its own demands and expectations) because her family could not afford to pay boarding school fees.

"I have gone through all sorts of hurdles; being denied food, extreme poverty and humiliation to get to where I am today. I have lived in more than four homes throughout my life; Jinja road with Uncle Okitoi, Uncle Charles's home and a number of other families in the village. Every home and situation was a blackboard of experiences that taught me human nature and how to react; by gradually shaping me up socially, politically and economically.

Alice's sister Lucy Akiteng attributes Alice's survival and persistence to divine intervention. "In our family, we have seen water flowing towards a hill; actually uphill. This is what has happened in our home and we give glory to the Lord as we did not expect to be where we are today"



Lydia in the centre & Alice and relative peel potatoes



Growing in salvation MUK christain fellowship

Alice at Work

Alice Alaso obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Education at Makerere University. After qualifying as a teacher, Alice requested the Ministry of Education to post her to Teso College within her home district. From the comfort of an elite university life that Alice was getting used to (actively engaging in university political campaigns, as a lawn tennis champion and growing broad social and academic networks), Alice's desire to return and revive war-ravaged Teso College was an indication of service beyond self. Alice's agenda to restore Teso College to its former glory was clear.

"When I reached Teso College around 1992, I found that the school was a shadow of its former self. The school structures were bullet holed and totally rundown. The motivation was greater than the risks involved.

I was the only woman amongst the college staff and the children did not have much hope. Our immediate task was to revitalize the school and bring up performance as a way of giving hope to the children. We also had to work on the functionality of the school. I prayed about this new assignment and asked God to change the attitude towards the Arts section that was not performing so well.

My immediate task was to revamp Senior 5 and 6. I worked with both classes to bring them up to speed with the curriculum. Apart from being assigned the task of reviving the history department; I also took on the task of fieldwork and being patron of the Scripture Union.

Since the children were using the bushes as toilets, I volunteered to ensure that the toilet facilities become functional again. I asked for two months and resources to make sure that the water system in bathrooms and the pit latrines were working again. Gradually the system started working again and students resorted to the normal toilet system.

Around 1993 and 1994, the next assignment for me was to close all the footpaths within the school and we successfully worked on a school hedge. The next action was to introduce weekend exams; which was also embraced by the entire school and the students. With a start on the school farm, it became clear to all of us that eventually life at Teso College was returning to normalcy."



A dream & a pledge come true with friends during graduation ceremony LR Olive zaale, Akwango Grace, Okillan Beatrice, Adiyo Lucy & Alaso Alice

Policing of Women's Private Lives

While Alice's reconstructive work at Teso College seemed steadily progressing, it was not devoid of challenges especially relating to her status as an unmarried woman. Alice remembers being accused of "sexually using" one of the male students under her custody.

"I remember there was this orphan called Eryagu who one day confided in me that he was staying with a brother and was experiencing problems as a result. He therefore requested to stay with me during the holidays and offered to help me out with farm work. I also had other relatives staying with me in the house. Unfortunately, rumours started that I was a concubine of the small boy. I confided in my pastor about the rumour and he laughed at me and asked me to be strong if it was not true. Of course it was not true; but unfortunately the story became so bad and spread to the church parish who were the boy's main sponsor."

This is not the only incident in which Alice's unmarried status brings her into disrepute. Alice describes another controversy in which she was accused by the deputy head teacher's wife of having sexual relations with her husband.

"The wife of a deputy headmaster thought I had a relationship with her husband and there was no amount of explaining that would help the situation. My daily chores meant that I would interact with the deputy often and the wife would snoop around to see what we were doing. I tried to explain to her that I was a born-again Christian and there were standards that I would not dare cross because of my Christian faith. Subsequently complaints were made to the head teacher and he summoned me to explain myself".

Such repetitive accusations around one's sexual life tend to condemn women only. It is women whose sexual lifestyles are always under the microscope. Perceptions, whether of the 'self' or by 'others', of sexual deviance or immoral behaviour have an impact on how women can effectively deliver on their leadership roles³⁴. It disorients women; diverts them from their work and achievements and affects women's self-expression and esteem. A consistent use of sexualised jokes or derogatory statements about women normalizes the perception and treatment of women as inferior and as sexual symbols rather than committed political actors. Attacks on women's behaviour like those experienced by Alice are commonly visited on women who defy societal expectations as Alice did with her unmarried status and public achievements.

Getting Further Into Public Service

Alice applied for a public service position as a test of confidence, having served in the revamping of Teso College School.

“There was this advert from Soroti district administration for a district Gender Officer. After about four years of teaching, I got the curiosity of seeing whether I could pass a job interview. I therefore applied for that job reluctantly, not that I wanted it, but simply because I wanted to test my confidence and communication skills. I was subsequently invited for the interview and I found about four other people waiting. The fact that I was not looking for a job then probably relaxed my situation.

Alice says that to her own surprise, she emerged the best candidate and although she at first considered rejecting the job offer, the head teacher and the Chief Administrative Officer encouraged her. By December 1996, Alice took on the position of Soroti District Gender Officer to coordinate gender mainstreaming in recovery programmes in Soroti, Teso, Acholi and West Nile. “My work was therefore clearly cut and they organized training for me in partnership with the Royal Netherlands Institute and Makerere University in the area of gender” she explains. Alice’s new portfolio gave her a broad spectrum in terms of geographical area within which to extend her service, new prospects of occupying strategic positions of leadership as well as an opportunity to learn gender discourse. By 1998, after just two years as a Gender Officer, Alice was promoted to head the Department of Community Service at the district. Alice’s regular interface with communities during her service delivery programmes and the positions of leadership provided her with political leverage and were an inspiration for her political aspirations at national level.



Contesting for Woman Member of Parliament

After a year, people started coming to me requesting me to stand as a Member of Parliament but I declined their requests. Immediately after Katakwi district was founded, two senior women leaders came to me and requested me to stand. I had a lengthy chat with the women and they insisted that I would be voted because I have been advancing the causes of women. They convinced me but I told them that I did not have money. At that time, elections were not monetised like it is now. All that was required was to make my posters and just go around paying my agents. The old women started spreading the message that they had gotten someone to stand as a woman Member of Parliament for Soroti district. Before the year ended, I started receiving delegations from different counties, which were the electoral colleges. In 1999 and 2000, the delegations had become bigger and I was amazed at how the people thought I was up to the task. I was quite young then and it was not common to have young people in parliament. Although I casually accepted to contest, more delegations continued coming.



Mother & Father escort their daughter Hon. Alaso to the swearing in ceremony of 2011

I contested with my friend Ms Margret Oumo Oguli who was working in the Ministry of Justice and is now Judge of the High Court. She came from a very popular family and I was sure she was much stronger than me; but I believed in God.

Many odds were against me. Most of my fellow contestants were married and my single status worked against me but I worked around it. I remember during one of my campaign moments when a man came up accusing me of not being married, I turned around and asked him whether he was ready to marry me. I challenged him to come before my parents, pay up whatever they demanded and take me as his wife. From that moment, that became my response to the many demands by men who questioned my single status.



Chairperson select committee on internal displacement in the North & East addresses internally displaced people.



Comprehending the suffering of children in the North during select committee visit 2003, LRA insurgency.

Alice Alaso joined Parliament in 2001 and has served as a woman MP in the seventh (2001-2006), eighth (2006-2011) and ninth (2011-2016) parliaments. A three-time consecutive woman MP in opposition politics in Uganda is by no means a small achievement. For Hon. Alice Alaso her first two days in parliament set the tone for her long political career.

"In the first session the Speaker of Parliament, the Rt. Hon Ssekandi, welcomed us and told us to return the next day to approve the rules of Parliament. In a flash, I stood up and told the Speaker that before I approve the rules, I must look at them. Everybody looked around at me. The Speaker then looked at me and said that actually it is true; everyone should have a copy before the approval of the said rules. I did not need to have a maiden speech like everyone else to put such an issue to the Speaker on the floor of Parliament.

The second sitting was when the president was giving the State of the Nation address. And when he was done, I stood up and wondered why the President could conclude his address without talking about the state of the people in Teso who were in camps. I wondered whether he simply did not know what was happening. I did not have the opportunity of making a maiden speech but I simply dug in and rolled off. My initial statements marked me out for what I stood for and what mattered most. Gradually, we settled and I was enrolled into committees. I think I served in most of the committees at that time.

But also in 2001 to 2005, the real thing which I concentrated on and which touched me strongly was the invasion of Teso by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Strangely, when we tried to communicate to government about the prevailing state of

affairs, they could not understand. By then, Soroti had been divided into two with the creation of Katakwi district. It so happened that Katakwi, which was first attacked by rebels, was being represented by a Minister [aligned with] the ruling government and she did not want me to talk about her part of Soroti; thus it became personal between me and her. Girls were being abducted and rebels were playing football in the gardens. As a Member of Parliament, when I heard that the girls had been abducted by the rebels, I jumped straight onto the vehicle and went to Teso College and told the head teacher to send the boys home that day because I feared they would be abducted as well. Reluctantly, the headmaster sent the boys away but unfortunately the next day, girls were again abducted from Lwala Senior Secondary School. I came back to Kampala with that anguish but kept pressing for consideration of the matter on the floor of Parliament.

That prompted the Rt. Hon Speaker to get concerned, he then arose to the occasion; and set up a select committee to study the issues of the war. He even went ahead to make me the Chairperson of that committee. This was my first term in Parliament. I would get up in that house and submit while tears would be rolling down my cheeks. Later, Hon Matembe cooled me down and told me that the Hansard does not see the tears. Later, I composed myself and continued talking on the issues but with passion.

We then moved with a team and headed to the affected districts of Lango, Acholi, Pader, and Kitgum looking at the conditions of Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) camps. As Kony's [rebel leader of the LRA] people were still active in the villages, it was a big risk of course for the committee members. We could see that some of the places were still fresh from the LRA attacks but with God's grace we made it through. We had security from the army and used to move in a convoy. Unfortunately, barely a day when we had left Lango, the Barlonyo massacre³⁵ was committed the following day. When they connected to Teso, my emotions overwhelmed me. The damage that had been done by the LRA and Karamojong cattle rustlers was horrible; children had been abducted, women had been raped, people's ears had been cut off. Anyway, I brought a report to Parliament in which we proposed three major things:

Firstly, that there should be put in place a comprehensive post-war reconstruction program for Northern Uganda. We again proposed a Truth and Reconciliation program for the whole country. This was because when we reached the north, the northerners were blaming the westerners for their misery. Northerners believed that Kony was a product of the westerners who armed him to defeat Lakwena³⁶. The central region also had issues with the northerners

35 On February 21 2004 between 300 and 500 people in the IDP camp at Barlonyo village were massacred by the LRA in one day

36 Alice Lakwena was a female rebel leader in North East and Eastern Uganda during the early days of the National Resistance

especially with the Obote factor. The people of Teso were accused of being Obote's henchmen who facilitated the atrocious actions of his regime. Those feelings are so deeply rooted in this country that someday, we shall need to hear the truth first and then agree to forgive each other.

We also recommended that the Karamojong be disarmed as a way of ensuring peace in some areas of Teso region. Whereas initially there were tendencies of trying to protect the government, this time there was a unanimous decision that something needed to be done. We asked for psychosocial support and trauma healing as being a major component of the recovery process.

I insisted that we bring in a video recording in the house and we asked the speaker for permission to play it for members to see for themselves the extent of the atrocities and damage that had been committed. With the permission of the Speaker, Parliament had the first ever video session in which Parliamentarians saw for themselves the deplorable situation the people were in. As a result, when we made those presentations the house was touched and members generally adopted the report. Although some of the proposals have never been fully acted upon, we had brought out issues that were pertinent. When we came back with that report, we made it clear to everyone that the conflict in the Northern region was a national problem. We told others that those children in Northern Uganda, who were not going to school, would be the same people standing at their gates in Kololo [an upscale residence in Kampala city] and on the streets demanding for hand-outs. Today, we see the same situation on Kampala streets; a missed opportunity for that generation.

There were people and MPs from Soroti who had chosen to be silent on issues that were affecting the community. There were leaders in government from Soroti but they had chosen to be silent on certain aspects and the people somehow chose to trust me. I remember the President had a meeting in Soroti about the IDPs and a decision had been made for people to return home [from the IDP camps]. When all had been said and the president had ordered for the people to return home, I stood up before the meeting would end and told the President that it was not bad for people to return home but there was no security in those areas and there was a risk of people being massacred. The president then adjourned the meeting. When we resumed however, a position had been taken that it was not right for the people to return when it was not yet safe. Therefore, my first two days in Parliament set the tone for me for the rest of my time in Parliament. I never would sit back to ask myself what people would think before I made a particular statement. At that time, people looked at delivery and what better way to deliver than highlighting their plight on the floor of Parliament.

Alice's initial contributions in parliament surpassed expectations of a maiden speech by a first-time, young, woman MP. By 2005, Alice was an essential actor in the formation of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) – the largest opposition party in Uganda following a merger between two political pressure groups the Parliamentary Advocacy Forum (PAFO) and Reform Agenda (RA). Alice says, “the moment we defined ourselves as FDC, we became enemies of the state”. As reported by state-run newspaper the New Vision at the time

“PAFO and RA leaders met in Johannesburg, South Africa, and discussed how to form a coalition. They also discussed how to harmonise their vision and programmes. RA chairman Col. Dr Kizza Besigye, living in exile in South Africa, reportedly chaired the meeting on June 19, to which PAFO chairman Augustine Ruzindana led a team. Present were Jack Sabiti (PAFO treasurer), Dr. Chris Kibuuka (the RA external coordinator), Reagan Okumu (RA first vice-chairman) and James Garuga Musinguzi (RA secretary for economic affairs).”

The meeting is portrayed as a club of male politicians seeking for a political solution to Uganda's governance question. Alice Alaso's narrative, however, highlights her role vividly.

“PAFO merged with Reform Agenda in 2004, Besigye had already fled the country to South Africa and we had to line up alternative potential names for leadership. A substantial number of people in Reform Agenda also expressed support for Dr Besigye despite other names that had been presented. At the time, he was a favourite of many; especially because of



Young legislator 2003

his admirable courage to confront the leadership he had belonged to³⁷. We therefore went to South Africa and that is the first time I had a close discussion with Dr Besigye. He pledged that he would come back and offer leadership. When he came back, we held the first delegates conference and formally adopted and structured the party.



Political responsibility, swearing in as secretary general after the launch of FDC party

Indeed, Alice presents herself as part of the South African delegation, discussions and ultimate merger and formation of FDC. By 2005, she was also elected the FDC party General Secretary with Dr. Kizza Besigye as the party president in preparation for the 2006 presidential and parliamentary elections. Erasing women in such critical political manoeuvres is not strange but rather one of the ways in which patriarchal political systems work to confine women outside the realm of public politics. Also later served in the Secretary General position for 10 years (2005-2015), keeping FDC at the helm of opposition politics. She also chaired the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in the

Ninth Parliament of Uganda (2011-2016), ran for Serere Woman MP in the 2016 general elections and lost her seat to Helen Andoa. She later petitioned court over what she termed as electoral malpractices ultimately winning the poll petition in July 2016 after the court nullified the election, declared the seat vacant and ordered for fresh elections. She describes this period as a time of learning, experiencing favour and maturing in politics.

37 as a former member of the ruling party

"While trying to inculcate values in the management of the party, the Secretary General (SG) is always at the centre of everything. It was therefore perceived that I was very strict and did not want to release party money. The culture of accountability is something that has eluded many people in this country up to now and I was not surprised that I got a lot of fire for sticking to the rules.

As an individual and a firm leader, I was targeted and fought physically and psychologically. It became a clear battle against me on so many different fronts: within the party and even with the state itself. The SG office showed me how people can decide to play it dirty in politics, no matter what. To withstand all this, means you must be committed and ready to lead in whatever adverse circumstances. I experienced bashing from my women colleagues just as I experienced it from men. From men, I was not surprised about the uncertain and always the knuckles-under warfare either for money, position or privilege but from women, I had expected a solid front where we would all move together to achieve common objectives we have been struggling for as a gender for a long period of time."

While women bashing fellow women in previously male-dominated leadership positions may disappoint us, it teaches the covert ways in which patriarchy operates as a system that promotes male values, a practice within which both men and women are agents. It also highlights the need for feminist movements to mobilise and educate around common women's interests to realise the relevance of collective engagement instead of presuming a pre-existing set of interests labelled 'women interests' that all women are invested in advancing.

Alaso Alice Asianut is an astute politician in today's Uganda. Her journey portrays a starring political career that clearly highlights women's stoicism, resilience and ability as leaders. Beginning as a young civil servant, Alaso contributed to improved governance in Uganda. She shaped the environment of competitive politics in Teso region as a woman leader of repute that has remained open to approach. She has not only continuously spoken openly against an unjust realpolitik that has marginalized women but has also castigated corrupt authorities responsible for the impoverishment of a majority struggling to rebuild their lives amidst conflict.

As is the case with the many women who stick out their necks against injustice, Alaso's contributions have been shelved away in the Hansard in the Parliament where she has served for more than a decade. Yet her story illuminates the great paths traversed by women leaders who contribute to the values that shape democracy and governance even in militarized settings.

Women's Political Journeys

While profiling women politicians in Uganda, scholar Sylvia Tamale³⁸ argues that regardless of the woman's class, religion, cultural background, ethnicity, all of these come second to gender in the realm of politics. Reflections on the life herstories of the four women from Uganda and Zimbabwe prove just the same. While Captain Gertrude Njuba, Hon Alice Alaso, Hon. Margaret Dongo and Hon. Jessie Majome come from different contexts, their experiences as women in politics reveal the many hurdles women go through to participate in the political leadership of their countries. They all struggled individually and collectively against male-dominated politics, expected to prove their worth, far beyond what is expected of male politicians. Each of them navigated hurdles and experiences unique to women that impacted their lives and careers, be it Gertrude's early exposure to colonial education for domesticity, Margaret Dongo's denied participation in the peace talks that birthed independent Zimbabwe, to Jessie's experience of a racialized education system, or Hon. Alice Alaso's struggle to pay for education.

A common theme that emerged across the four cases is the way women's sexuality became a focus in their journeys. Gertrude Njuba and Margaret Dongo show how in liberation struggles women, unlike their male counterparts, experience multiple levels of oppression including under those supposed to liberate them. Policing women's bodies also featured strongly in Jessie's remembering of her University and parliamentary days through verbal and physical harassment of students and women MPs. Accusations levelled at Alice as an unmarried schoolteacher and later as a politician saw her being labelled a concubine and a

They all struggled individually and collectively against male-dominated politics, expected to prove their worth, far beyond what is expected of male politicians. Each of them navigated hurdles and experiences unique to women that impacted their lives and careers.

38 (Tamale, 1999)

Individually and collectively women are active agents in their destinies and the destinies of their countries. None of these women sat back in the face of injustice and oppression, they each used all the resources available to them to resist and imagine and expanded roles for the women of their countries

husband-snatcher. All of these are experiences common to the female gender, through which society attempts to limit women's public roles.

Women's entry in politics in the two countries changed societal understanding of women in politics. Gertrude Njuba performances around being a 'mother', 'pregnant woman', her domestic knowledge and maternal attributes enabled her penetrate enemy lines and were critical in the liberation struggle success. Drawing on feminine attributes, women find strategies to engage in and issues to advocate for. Jessie's desire to serve and remain constantly in touch with her constituents, and Alaso's tremendous heart for service, visible in her emotional delivery in parliamentary debates, were key to their individual successes.

It is also important to note the differences between the four women, in temperament and personal beliefs. Whether it was the gentle, silent Njuba or the calm, emotional and deeply religious Alaso, or the assertive, and quite often 'rebellious' Dongo and Jessie, their different styles of engagement were all geared towards achieving a common objective – attaining gender equitable development. All of them, through their groundbreaking careers have created space in political leadership for women's participation

Individually and collectively women are active agents in their destinies and the destinies of their countries. None of these women sat back in the face of injustice and oppression, they each used all the resources available to them to resist and imagine and expanded roles for the women of their countries

References

- Goetz A.M. 2002. 'No Shortcuts to Power: Constraints on Women's Political Effectiveness in Uganda' In *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Dec., 2002), pp. 549-575, Cambridge University Press.
- Heise, L. Violence Against Women: An integrated, ecological framework, 1998, cited in *Population Reports/CHANGE*, Volume XXVII, No. 4, December 1999, available on <http://www.jhuccp.org/pr/l11edsum.stm>.
- Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), 2009, *Is Parliament Open to Women? An Appraisal Conference for Chairpersons and Members of Parliamentary Bodies Dealing With Gender Equality*, Geneva
- Isis-WICCE, 2014. *Making a Difference Beyond Numbers, Towards Women's Substantive Leadership*
- Isis-WICCE, 2015. *Think Tank Four, Strengthening Women Leaders Base Camp*, Nairobi
- Jagger& Rosenberg as cited in Walby S, 1990, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Blackwell Publishers, Ltd, Oxford, UK & Cambridge, USA
- Mama, A. 2004. 'Living Feminist Politics' in the *Journal of Feminist Africa*, Issue 3. 2004. National Politricks.
- Museveni, Y. K. 1997. *Sowing the Mustard Seed: The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Uganda*, Moran, Publishers, Nairobi.
- Nakanyike, M. 1991. "Women, Elite Polygyny and Buganda State Formation" in *SIGNS: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 16 (4).
- O'Barr, J & Firmin-Sellers, K. 1995. 'African Women in Politics' in the Hay, M.J and Stichter, S. *African Women South of Sahara*, Longman Group, UK, Ltd.
- Obasola, K.E. Gender Discrimination and Cultural Anachronisms in African Societies: Implication for Girl Child Education, *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, 2013, Vol 3, issue No 4
- The African Women's Journal*, Issue 03, July-December 2011
- Walby S, 1990. *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, UK & Cambridge, USA
- White, A. M. 2007. 'All the Men are Fighting for Freedom, All the Women are Mourning Their Men, But Some of Us Carried Guns: Fanon's Psychological Perspectives on War and African Women Combatants' in the *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2007, vol. 32. No. 4

Appendix: List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANC:	African National Council
COPAC:	Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee
FDC:	Forum for Democratic Change
LRA:	Lord's Resistance Army
MDC:	Movement for Democratic Change
MIEC:	Movement of Independent Electoral Candidates
NRA:	National Resistance Army
NRC:	National Resistance Council
PAC:	Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee
PAFO:	Parliamentary Advocacy Forum
RA:	Reform Agenda
SG:	Secretary General
UANC:	United African National Council
UPM:	Uganda Patriotic Movement
ZANLA:	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU:	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU:	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZUD:	Zimbabwe Union of Democrats
ZUM:	the Zimbabwe Unity Movement
ZWLA:	Zimbabwe Women Lawyers' Association

