LUND
UNIVERSITY

Women's Empowerment in Southern Africa

The Case of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique

Kristian Olsson Selerud

Abstract

In Africa, women's status in politics, their economic standard and their position within social hierarchies and practices is subordinated to that of men. The aim of this thesis is to examine how colonialism, liberation ideology and women's movements have influenced the empowerment of women in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique and attempt to account for why women in South Africa have attained a higher level of political empowerment than women in the other two countries. This thesis uses the theory of intersectional to analyze the intersection and interaction of gender, displacement and tradition in order to account for the creation of female identities and how these have influenced women's empowerment. Similar historic events and processes have been compared and discussed using the method of Similar Systems Design to pin point differences between the countries. I have found that women in South Africa, in contrast to women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, were able to access colonial urban centers which in turn gave them the opportunity to gain organizational and institutional experience. Such experience together with greater gender awareness and the advantage of learning from developments in Zimbabwe and Mozambique has meant that South African women have attained a high level of political empowerment.

Key words: South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Intersectionality, Women's Empowerment

List of Abbreviations

ANC- African National Congress

ANCWL- African National Congress Women's League

FRELIMO- Frente de Libertação de Moçambique

FSAW- Federation of South African Women

MCDWA- Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs

MK- Umkhonto We Siswe: The Spear of the Nation

MSSD- Most Similar Systems Design

OMM- Organizaqio dos Mulheres de Mozambique: Mozambique Women's Organisation

UN- United Nations

WNC- Women's National Coalition

ZANLA- Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army

ZANU- Zimbabwean African National Union

ZAPU- Zimbabwean African Peoples Union

ZIPRA- Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

Table of contents

1   Introduction

We live in a world where women are subjugated to men politically, economically and socially. Even though Western countries can boast with a better standard for women in those three areas, women are far from equal to men. But repression too has levels, and when comparing women's status in politics, their economic standard and their position within social hierarchies and practices, the third world falls well short of western countries. The literature on African women all too often focuses on cultural and anthropological aspects of African society without establishing these within a greater analytical framework. African feminist scholars have pointed this out on several occasions, and their own work is starting to highlight the plight and multiple oppressive structures African women face. In Africa, the inequality between men and women is staggering in practically all areas involving aspects of power. Yet, there is one country which is continuously pointed to as a glimmer of hope. South Africa is generally referred to as a success story in the field of gender equality and the prospect of political and social power for women. It is often discussed as the anomaly or exception to the power imbalance between men and women on the African continent[1].

1.1   Purpose of Investigation

South Africa and its neighboring countries Zimbabwe and Mozambique share a number of features that must be regarded decisive as for the level of political and social empowerment of women. The three countries have a similar political history of colonial oppression followed by a struggle for independence, and finally independence itself. They also have a near identical social and traditional background that has led to a similar cultural view of women and their status. Despite this, there is still a remarkable difference in gender equality between the countries. This is illustrated by the fact that at independence, Mozambican women received 12% of 226 seats[2] in 1975; Zimbabwean women received 7% of the 150 seats in parliament[3] in 1980; while South African women moved from 141st to

---

[1] See Gisela Geisler, Hannah E. Britton, Ran Hirschl, Gay W. Seidman and several other for further discussion
[2] Hanlon, Joseph quoted in Geisler, Giselle *Women and the remaking of politics in Southern Africa* p. 115
[3] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the remaking of politics in Southern Africa* p. 107

seventh in the world in terms of how many women occupied seats in the National Parliament with more than 26%[4] in 1994. Important to note is also that in Zimbabwe and Mozambique the number of women ministers did not exceed one in the first 10 years of independence[5]. In South Africa, women held 42% of the ministerial positions within 5 years of independence[6]. This thesis will therefore analyze the three seemingly very similar countries in an attempt to locate differences within crucial historical events and processes, cultural and social systems as well as examine disparities with regard to the way women's movements have organized and positioned themselves and chosen to pursue their objectives. The aim and purpose of this thesis will therefore be to answer the questions:

How has colonialism, liberation ideology and women's movements influenced the empowerment of women in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique?

Why, despite the similarities between the countries, did South African women attain a higher amount of political empowerment upon independence than women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique?

The analysis of the three countries and the answers to the questions above will be affected by the specific context within which similar processes and structures can be distinguished. Hence, the investigation of the specific social and political processes involved in each historical instance is important. Therefore I will primarily focus on the impact that colonialism and white minority rule have had on each of the countries. Thereafter focus will shift to the organization of the three liberation movements, liberation discourse, liberation ideology, its leaders, and women's efforts during the struggles. Finally I want to examine the three countries women's movements, their structures, their achievements and their interactions with the three liberation parties the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) and the African National Congress (ANC).

---

[4] Britton, Hannah E. "Coalition building, election Rules, and Party Politics: South African Women's Path to Parliament" p. 33
[5] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the remaking of politics in Southern Africa* p. 107
[6] WIDSSA "Beyond inequalities 2005: Women in South Africa" p.6

1.2 Limitations and Material

In order to answer the questions at hand, this study will focus on what I will argue are structures, events, and organizations decisive as to the empowerment of women. Even though there may have been several political parties and organizations involved in key historic events and movements, I have deemed these as less significant in regard to the development of women's empowerment in comparison to the key liberation movements FRELIMO, ZANU and the ANC. These movements have later formed the parties that govern the three countries. I would also like to dismiss the theory that women's empowerment is inherently linked to the economic development of a nation. According to several studies, including that of the United Nations, there is no correlation between women's political power and economic development[7].

In this thesis I have primarily used secondary material in the form of books, articles and various UN data. There is a rather vast amount of literature written about women in Africa. However, this literature is usually written by European authors whose primary interest is to analyze various forms of anthropological phenomena in Africa. These studies are interesting in their own right, but considering the aim of this study such literature tends to investigate the result of structures rather than their root causes. Similarly such literature tends to focus on how female identities influence societies rather than to look at the actual construction of such identities. The literature that instead focuses on women's political activism has been useful. I especially want to mention Gisela Geisler's comprehensively researched book *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa*. The book took twenty years to complete and includes contributions by leaders of practically all women's movements in Southern Africa. The detail, scope, material and comprehensive discussion the book contributes with has been indispensible for me. I would also like to mention Patricia McFadden who elegantly and sometimes angrily clarifies and obviates structures in African society as well as their foundations. I have tried to keep a critical and independent approach to my material and with regard to my theoretical starting point as well as the subject of my study, I have tried to balance my material in the sense that I have been careful to choose sources written by both western and African authors. While they dictate the same historical developments, they focus on different aspects and different power hierarchies.

---

[7] UNDP "Human Development Report 1994" p. 35

1.3   Theory: Intersectionality

The long historical process dealing with women's emancipation, empowerment and societal influence has led to several different feminist theories and analytical stand points. To take a historical perspective on feminist theory would show that women movements and the theoretical discussion regarding women's positions and situations in society could be grouped into several epochs or phases. Each of these phases, as with most theories regarding societal phenomenon, have been characterized and influenced by the political, social and scientific thinking of the time[8]. This in turn has had the result that there has been a range of standpoints within the feminist perspective, a trait which has increased with time to the degree where some might question whether feminism still exists as a single coherent project[9]. Instead of maintaining then that feminism offers a unanimous or complete meta theory of its own, perhaps it is better viewed as a kind of developing and ongoing dialogue around a constant and common but ever evolving agenda.[10] Despite encompassing different theoretical perceptions and analytical departure points, feminism emerged as, and continues to be, a movement and body of ideas aimed to enhance women's status and power. It questions the skewed power relation between women and men that for so long has been accepted and perceived of as "natural".

The reflection or idea that there is an interaction between several different categories has been present in feminist thinking since the 1970's and can be found within theories that connect feminism with socialism, post colonial feminism as well as queer theory. Similar to intersectionality, these theories concentrate on socio-cultural power orders[11]. The term "intersectionality" was coined by Kimberley Crenshaw in 1989 when she discussed issues of black women's employment in the US in relation to the multi racial feminist movement[12]. Intersectionality refers to "both a normative theoretical argument and an approach to conducting empirical research that emphasizes the interaction of categories of difference (including but not limited to race, gender, class, and sexual orientation)"[13]. The theory claims that women suffer oppression not only because of their gender, but equally much due to their economic situation (class) and their ethnicity. However, intersectionality scholars would not willingly speak of so called "triple oppression" arguing that there is no such thing as suffering from oppression "as black", "as a woman" or "as a working class person". Each of those social divisions has a different ontological basis, which is supposedly

---

[8] Ljung, Margareta "Feministisk teori" p.221
[9] Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry *Theory and methods in political science* p. 109
[10] *Ibid*
[11] Knudsen, Susanne V. "Intersectionality-A theoretical inspiration in the analysis of minority cultures and identities in textbooks" p. 61
[12] Yuval-Davis, Nira "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics" p.193
[13] Hancock, Ange-Marie "When multiplication doesn't equal quick addition: Examining Intersectionality as a research paradigm" p.63-64

irreducible to other social divisions. Oppression hence comes in the form of a multi layered blanket[14], where various social divisions interconnect and are "intermeshed with each other to obfuscate damaging power relations and construct, while paradoxically obviating, identities of the self"[15]. Class, gender or ethnicity can not be discussed on its own, it is far too connected to each other and additional social divisions that either alleviates or entrenches the oppression one category produces.

Many feminist scholars agree that intersectionality might very well be the greatest theoretical contribution that women's studies have made so far. However, despite the emergence of intersectionality as a major paradigm of research in feminist studies and other related fields, few researchers have concerned themselves with the task of exactly how to study intersectionality. In other words, there is as of yet only vague and timid attempts to create a method for intersectionality studies[16]. Despite attempts by for instance Leslie McCall to produce an opening analysis and dialogue regarding an intersectionality method, scholars continue to disagree on how best to conduct research using the theoretical foundation of intersectionality[17]. This contributes to making intersectionality further complicated, and regrettably creates a situation where few researchers are willing to fully pursue studies using predominantly intersectionality as their theoretical departure point. However, it is recognized that particularly case studies and comparative research can adequately incorporate an intersectionality approach, and hence I will be using the intersectionality thinking in order to compare women's movements and levels of empowerment in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The point as Yuval-Davies states is "to analyze the differential ways in which different social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other and how they relate to political and subjective constructions of identities"[18].

Categories of difference vary with regard to the subject and the context in which the study is conducted. Needless to say, an intersectionality study of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique will look different to a ditto study of the US. Gender interacts differently with ethnicity or class depending on the context in which such social divisions intersect. Therefore, while examining the classic interaction of gender, ethnicity and class may produce a somewhat reasonable picture of oppression in American society, the same social divisions may not necessarily be as substantial in an African context. Yuval-Davis therefore notes that "one can not assume the same effect or constellation each time and, hence, the investigation of the specific social, political and economic processes involved in each historical instance is important"[19]. To begin with, even though

---

[14] Yuval-Davis, Nira "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics" p.195
[15] Valentine, Gill "Theorizing and researching Intersectionality: A challenge for feminist geography" p.12
[16] McCall, Leslie "Complexity of Intersectionality" p. 1771
[17] *Ibid*
[18] Yuval-Davis, Nira "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics" p.205
[19] *Ibid* p.200

ethnicity must always be considered a major social division, the way in which society is divided according to ethnic lines is different in America and Africa. Furthermore, such divisions have changed in both Africa and the US, but perhaps with a larger overhaul of political and social institutions as a result in Africa. Thus, it is my opinion that whilst ethnicity was a central category of difference with regard to empowerment during colonialism, its importance in an intersectional analysis is limited following the transition to majority rule in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. The reason for this being that an overwhelming majority of the populations in these countries have the same ethnicity.

The problem with discussing class is that as a concept class is most often operationalized as self-reported income[20]. Class can also denote an individual's access to power, their potential to influence, or merely their possibilities to change their own realities. The discussion of class fits in very neatly in an intersectionality study of the US, where the concept together with ethnicity and gender is very prominent and easily distinguishable in society. In Zimbabwe and Mozambique it is difficult to talk in terms of a classical class society. These countries are composed of small elite, a tiny educated middle class and an enormous working class within which distinctions in terms of income or influence is minimal. South Africa may look slightly different, but here too it is difficult to discuss the existence of any form of influential or substantial middle class and the country leans closer to the composition in its neighboring African states than any Western class society[21]. Therefore, I would like to discuss geographical displacement instead of class. It is my belief that political and social empowerment is highly connected to access to urban centers. Influence increases substantially, or at least has a far greater chance of doing so, with access to Southern Africa's main urban centers, centers that have continuously shut African women out maintaining that "their place" is with their children in the villages[22]. Therefore, what I have chosen to call rural displacement will be important to analyze as a possible source of women's oppression.

In Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa there is another category of difference that greatly influences women's empowerment, namely culture. As with most ideas or views of indigenous culture around the globe, women are at the centre and thought of as keepers of the intrinsically traditional. One way to make sure that the institution of tradition is not altered or distorted is the use of traditional customary law. Customary law and tradition differentiates between women and men and is therefore a profound social division and category of difference. Working in tandem with rural displacement in particular, the re-invention of culture as the central trope of nationalist discourse worked to

---

[20] Hancock, Ange-Marie "When multiplication doesn't equal quick addition: Examining Intersectionality as a research paradigm" p.72
[21] Mandaza, Ibbo "Imperialism, the 'Frontline States' and the Zimbabwe 'Problem'" p. 146
[22] McFadden, Patricia "Cultural practice as gendered exclusion" p.64

"position women outside the most critical social, political and economic institutions in both colonial and neo-colonial societies"[23].

The perspective an intersectional approach and theoretical foundation provides may help uncover and pinpoint the reasons why South African women have reached a higher degree of social and political empowerment than women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, reasons that would perhaps be blurred or impossible to see if merely focusing on gender as an oppressive social division. The intersection of gender, displacement and culture will presumably look different in the three different contexts, and while several aspects will be similar, it is within the differences that I hope the answer to this study's questions stand to be found. It is therefore my hope that, by examining how different social divisions in my three countries overlap and create ways in which women are oppressed for reasons more than their gender, that I can explain why South African women have attained a higher degree of social and political empowerment than women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique

1.4   Method

The intersectionality approach has influenced and contributed to the method I have chosen to use in this study. While the theoretical foundations of intersectionality provide an approach to my subject that transcends merely focusing on gender, it has subsequently influenced how this study will be conducted and organized. In order to do the intersection of gender, displacement and culture in three different contexts any justice, each context will need individual analysis. As mentioned while discussing the theory of intersectionality, it is important to observe that gender relates differently to for instance ethnicity in different geographical and historic contexts. It is the comparison of the intersection or gender, ethnicity, class and culture in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique that can help deduct why women in South Africa have reached a higher level of social and political empowerment. To correctly make such a comparison I have chosen to use the so called Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD).

Primarily based on J.S. Mill's method of difference, the MSSD attempts to identify the key features that are different among similar countries, and which in turn accounts for the observed political outcome[24]. In my case that means identifying what it is that is different in South Africa in comparison with Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and if that in turn accounts for the higher level of female sociopolitical empowerment in that country. There is a theoretical and intellectual justification for area studies in that there is something inherently similar about countries that make up a particular geographic region of the world

---

[23] *Ibid*
[24] Landman, Todd *Issues and methods in comparative politics* p.29

such as Europe, Asia or Africa. "Whether it is common history, language, religion, politics, or culture, researchers working in area studies are essentially employing Most Similar Systems Design"[25]. Focus on countries from geographical regions effectively controls for those features that are common to them while looking for those features that are not.

When it comes to South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, it is important to note that they share a number of common features that I consider decisive for the development and current political situations in those countries. They share a history of oppression in that all three countries have been colonized and subjected to white minority rule. Zimbabwe was primarily a British colony under the name Southern Rhodesia until declared independent from British rule by Ian Smiths racist elite which remained in power until independence in 1980, Mozambique "belonged" to the Portuguese until they won their independence in 1975, and South Africa was subjected to the cruel and highly racist apartheid regime until Nelson Mandela became the country's first democratically elected President in 1994[26]. All three countries therefore share a similar history of white domination, settler colonialism and ethnic oppression from which they have fought to free themselves. Zimbabwe and Mozambique took up arms in their efforts to liberate their countries, and while South Africa's transition to majority rule went along more peacefully, violence and military confrontations regularly took place[27]. Historically and politically then, the three countries under investigation share a number of decisive features, albeit these need to be understood within their own unique historical context. But equally important for this study is that South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique are also similar in cultural practices as well as the judicial framework and legal impositions traditional practices have created. Hence, the political history and cultural traits that I will argue have the greatest impact on women's (dis)empowerment are similar in the three countries. Left to explore is women's specific roles and treatment in each country's politically important stages, and whether cultural practices in Zimbabwe and Mozambique treat women differently than in South Africa.

---

[25] *Ibid* p.30
[26] http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=/ancdocs/about/umzabalazo.html
[27] http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=/ancdocs/about/umzabalazo.html

2 Colonialisms impact on gender relations

Anything prior to colonialism was so profoundly changed by colonialism itself that the introduction of European rule must be regarded as an appropriate starting point for this investigation. The colonial state was a tyrannical, racist, and unjust apparatus aimed entirely at maintaining European dominance and exploitation of the African people and their continent. However, although colonialism indeed affected all Africans in a most gruesome way, women bore the brunt of European oppression. The main reasons for why and how African women were ultimately subordinated men can partly be accounted for by the "housewifization" of African women, the invention of tradition and culture as well as the laws that governed it, and finally their forced exile to rural areas.

The colonisers brought with them not only the weaponry and means to militarily control Sub Saharan Africa, their baggage also included the European idea and notion of male and female spaces. In short this meant that women's previous predominance in production was neglected in favour of African men who were targeted for improved agricultural production techniques and cash cropping[28]. In fact, the system with exclusively forcing men to work in agricultural production was also enforced by a European theory that this would free up women from intense labour so that they could devote themselves entirely to their families thus becoming "housewives" in a true European sense[29]. Training was supplied to women by the colonial state aimed at teaching them various forms of home craft activities in turn entrenching them or if you wish locking them in their homes. By contrast then, colonial taxation policies forced men into wage labour, and also made sure that in the agricultural sector policies for owning land favoured men to the extent where women were entirely refused access to any form of credit or extension service. Thus men systematically, with the help of the colonisers, extended their power and authority over women. Women who subsequently lost everything: entitlement to land, control over products, and since they unpaid worked their husbands fields and cash crop plots, even their own labour[30]. It is therefore indeed ironic that even though women's importance in production increased, their control decreased and the European ideology "of the

---

[28] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the remaking of politics in Southern Africa* p. 19
[29] Arnfred, Signe "Sex food, and female power: Discussion of data material from northern Mozambique" p. 145
[30] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the remaking of politics in Southern Africa* p. 19

domestic domain as the proper place for women consolidated this loss of control"[31].

The exploitation of women's labour in domestic modes of production reproduced the dominant capitalist mode of production under colonialism. The European administrators were keen to keep women in the rural areas to guarantee a reduced cost of migrant labour and ensure its flexibility with regard to this, it was in the interest of the colonisers to extend and consolidate their power over African women. As it happened, this was an interest that they shared with African men. Rural elders were very keen to keep African women in the rural areas in order to tempt young men from the cities to bring their money and goods that they had earned back to the villages. In the end, matrimonial laws turned out to be the most efficient way to exert power over both African women and young men[32]. Hence the introduction of what the colonisers chose to call customary law gave rural elders an excellent platform for expressing their own very biased and self improving versions of tradition. The colonial imposition of permanent minority status thus bestowed formal control of all African women on the African men of the colony[33]. The codification of both real as well as manufactured customary law ultimately turned out to be one of the few and the by far most effective ways, in which African men could assert any power or influence during colonialism.

> "The registration of marriages and divorces, increased marriage payments (*lobola*), and the favouring of patrilineal over matrilineal rules of inheritance all contributed to greatly diminish women's ability to decide over their own lives"[34]

Indeed, as Patricia McFadden readily points out, one of the earliest expressions of cultural exclusion as a gendered expression of women's "outsiderness" can be seen "in the manner through which African and white men colluded to keep African women outside the emerging urban spaces of the colonial town and city"[35].

---

[31] *Ibid*
[32] *Ibid* p. 20
[33] Barnes, Teresa "Am I a man? Gender and the Pass laws in Urban Colonial Zimbabwe, 1930-80" p. 64
[34] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the remaking of politics in Southern Africa* p. 20
[35] McFadden, Patricia "Cultural Practice as gendered exclusion: Experiences from Southern Africa" p. 64

3 Fighting for freedom

Few countries in Africa, or for that matter in the world, have as violent a history as that of Mozambique. During Portuguese rule the country was exploited according to "colonial norms" and its male population was forced into either the cotton fields, the cities industries or exported to South Africa as cheap migrant labor[36]. Women were, as mentioned earlier, isolated from the urban centers, refused access to any form of wage labor, and hence imprisoned in the rural country side to serve as housewives, and subsistence farmers. Colonialism is by its very nature a cruel and repressive system of governance. However, given Portugal's fascist politics and the more "intense degree of exploitation Portugal required of its colonies to compensate for its own economic backwardness in the European context, Portuguese rule was particularly vicious"[37]. The national liberation struggle in Mozambique was therefore initiated as a complete negation of the established Portuguese political ideology and colonial system. FRELIMO was founded in 1962 and the liberation front's platform centered on the demand for unconditional and complete independence[38]. Unfortunately such objectives were hardly welcomed by the Portuguese colonial administration which quickly made it clear that Mozambican independence would not be achieved peacefully. 1964 therefore marked the beginning of a long and violent independence struggle with the launch of the first FRELIMO guerrilla units which by 1974 would control roughly 25% of Mozambican territory[39].

In Zimbabwe, the colonial power was British. From 1890 until 1980 Zimbabwe was a white settler colony under the name of Rhodesia. Just as in Mozambique, and practically all other colonies, white supremacy meant that the best land was reserved unconditionally for the colonial administrators. The African population was left with poor agricultural land on which it was impossible to support a growing population. As a result, they had to sell their labor and toil for the white settler colonialists as farm hands, miners, and industrial workers. Colonialism in its very essence depends upon and thrives of a distinctive system of exploitation maintained by force and cruelty, to sustain economic as well as political domination. Such a system was contested by Africans in all areas of

---

[36] Meyns, Peter "Liberation Ideology and National Development Strategy in Mozambique" p. 43
[37] Kruks, Sonia & Wisner, Ben "The State, the Party and the female peasantry in Mozambique" p. 108
[38] Meyns, Peter "Liberation Ideology and National Development Strategy in Mozambique" p. 47
[39] *Ibid* p. 48

social life[40]. By the 1950's two African political parties were formed whose aim initially was to persuade the colonizers to share power. First out was the Zimbabwean African Peoples Union (ZAPU) which later split into a second party, ZANU. In 1962, as a response to growing African claims of equality and humane conditions, white determination to cling on to power led to the formation of the unequivocally white supremacist party known as the Rhodesian Front. The front gained power and practically crushed all African attempts to organize politically, and even declared itself independent from Britain in 1965. Africans reacted by launching a guerilla war that later took on the characteristics of a socialist liberation struggle. ZAPU launched its armed wing the Zimbabwean African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and ZANU reacted by creating the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA)[41]. By the 1970's the liberation struggle gained momentum and Rhodesia became a war zone.

As early as 1652, white settlers from Holland arrived in South Africa and instantly used their military might to carve out a piece of the country. However, it was not until 200 years later that the African inhabitants were to lose control of the entire country. After nine wars and almost one hundred years of fighting, the Xhosa and Zulu people were forced to surrender. In 1910, the British handed South Africa over to the Boer and British settler themselves, who formed the Union of South Africa, a government that recognized only the rights of the white inhabitants of the country[42].

The ANC is the oldest resistance movement in Africa and was formed in 1912. The movement initially opposed all forms of violence including demonstrations and protests. Instead the ANC leadership advocated dialogue and persuasion. However, the realization that the increasingly violent and racist South African regime would stop at no means to maintain their superiority over the African people soon began to influence ANC policy and ideology. Struggles with police and military forces erupted in the 1950's, and in 1961 the ANC finally took up an armed struggle with the regime[43]. The ANC was banned and went underground to form the Umkhonto we Siswe (MK: the spear of the nation) under the leadership of Nelson Mandela. After several clashes with the South African forces and over 200 acts of sabotage, the MK leadership were finally apprehended and sentenced to life imprisonment. However, the struggle against Apartheid continued as more and more ANC members left the country for military training. As resistance mounted, the South African regime became increasingly vicious and the 1980 and 90's were riddled with clashes between secret police and ANC activists. South Africa became a battleground, and in the cities and townships the situation can best be described as one step away from civil war[44].

---

[40] Foley, Griff "Progressive but not socialist: Political education in the Zimbabwe liberation war" p.2
[41] *Ibid*
[42] http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=/ancdocs/about/umzabalazo.html
[43] Meer, Shamim "Freedom for women: mainstreaming gender in the South African liberation struggle and beyond" p.37
[44] http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=/ancdocs/about/umzabalazo.html

3.1 Liberation Ideologies

Colonialism, with its inherent fascist qualities and views, is positioned far to the right on any political compass. Since liberation from colonialism is based on the fundamental opposition to the colonial system and everything it stands for, liberation ideology quite naturally follows opposite political and social ideals. Hence, almost all freedom parties on the African continent have followed a path highly marked by socialist and communist ideology and doctrine. Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa are no different in this regard.

FRELIMO's ideology bears strong similarities to socialism and Marxism. The movement, and later the party, built their political views and agendas on the ultimate socialist aims and ethics. The crucial elements of FRELIMO's liberation ideology were the close association with the people in every situation, "the principle of independent and self-reliance and the priority of politics over technical solutions"[45]. Focus was ultimately on the liberation of the masses through armed struggle but likewise through knowledge and education, consistently focusing on the equality of all human beings, including women[46]. In an analysis of the sources of women's oppression the FRELIMO President Samora Machel, following Engels, stressed that the oppression of women must be located within the context of their economic exploitation as a result of a society based solely on private property. A society that Machel argued had existed prior to colonial times, and which was still very much alive within traditional life[47]. In the same speech Machel outlines FRELIMO's view of women's emancipation. He makes no effort to hide the fact that the party views women's emancipation as second to that of national liberation and goes on to say that emancipation should not be regarded as "mechanical" in that men and women are to be equal in regard to all walks of life. His speech clearly points out that women were still most useful as mothers and educators of the coming generation. However, he also clearly dismisses the notions and perceptions that traditional and cultural ideology has towards women, and argues women must "cease to be purveyors of traditional "obscurantist" and "tribalist" ideas"[48]. Overall then, FRELIMO's view of women's emancipation are very similar to those of other Marxist-Leninist movements. Women are perceived of differently than men, but are still seen as invaluable for the progress of the nation. In fact, FRELIMO considered women's

---

[45] *Ibid* p. 48
[46] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* p. 45
[47] Kruks, Sonia & Wisner, Ben "The state, the party, and the female peasantry in Mozambique" p. 114-115
[48] *Ibid*

emancipation a necessary outcome of the socialist transformation of society. Machel has been quoted in 1973 stating that "the liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for the revolution, a guarantee of its continuity and a condition for its success"[49].

Even though there were two liberation fronts in Zimbabwe, ZANU and ZAPU, it was the ideology that ZANU preached which would one day be incorporated into the governance of Zimbabwe. Therefore, it is ZANU's and its leader Robert Mugabe's doctrine which is most influential in post liberation politics and policy. As mentioned above, the struggle for freedom increasingly took the shape and form of a socialist liberation movement. With Mozambique to the direct East having gained their independence in 1975, the ZANU guerilla army had not only a base from which to operate and launch attacks, they were also politically and ideologically aligned. Like Machel, Mugabe preached the need for equality among Africans, a socialist government and social system where profits would be shared with producers and cooperative farms where encouraged[50]. As in Mozambique, the ZANU ideology promoted the emancipation of women, but saw that emancipation satisfied within national liberation. Interestingly, ZANU realized that colonialism had deprived women of access to means of production, but like FRELIMO the party also argued that traditional society had kept women oppressed. Referring specifically to institutions that kept women subordinate, the party stated that "there are certain aspects of our culture which are bad and we must fight against their reactionary tendencies. We do not rebel against our parents, but in the course of the liberation struggle we also have to transform the negative aspects of our own past"[51].

The ANC has revised its methods, its strategy, to a certain extent its ideals, but the congress has never revised its ultimate aim: to first and foremost transform South Africa into an independent, unitary, democratic non racial state, but also to forge unity among the African people[52]. The Freedom Charter from 1955 is the main policy document of the ANC, and in it they state and underline democratic ideals, human rights, and equality. However, there is no mention of an ideology or doctrine to guide the ANC in its quest for liberation. Several aspects of the ANC rhetoric and discourse are similar to that of the socialist liberation movements in Zimbabwe and Mozambique; however, there is no chosen political or ideological path, no proclaimed theoretical ideal, and no aspiration of societal organization but democracy itself. In 1990, Nelson Mandela having recently been elected Deputy President of the ANC following 27 years imprisonment said:

> "The ANC has never been a political party. It was formed as a parliament of the
> African people. Right from the start, up to now, the ANC is a coalition, if you want, of

---

[49] Arnfred, Signe "Women in Mozambique: Gender Struggle and Gender Politics" p. 5
[50] *Ibid* p.3
[51] Seidman Gay W. "Women in Zimbabwe: Post independence struggles" p. 427
[52] Ottaway, Marina "Liberation movements and transitions to democracy: The case of the A.N.C" p.68

people of various political affiliations. Some will support free enterprise, others socialism. Some are conservatives, others are liberals.[53]"

The issue of women's emancipation was initially handled by the ANC the same way it had been handled by FRELIMO and ZANU. Until 1980 the official discourse was that national liberation would pave the way for women's emancipation. However, the 80's saw a transformation on women issues within the ANC and in 1990 the ANC National Executive Committee clearly stated that:

> "… the experience of other societies has shown that the emancipation of women is not a by-product of national liberation or socialism. It needs to be addressed in its own right within our organization, the mass democratic movement and in society as a whole"[54].

So while FRELIMO, ZANU and the ANC strived for a similar society based on equality, it was only the ANC that managed to abandon the idea that women's emancipation was satisfied within national liberation. Addressing women's emancipation as a parallel struggle to that of national liberation ideologically meant that women received greater organizational and institutional support from the movement.

3.2   Women and Liberation

Few things reshape societies more than war. The armed aspects of liberation struggles become renowned, freedom fighters become legends and identities are created as well as destroyed. Therefore I would like to look closer at women's role within the military aspects of liberation.

The participation of women in the struggle for independence in Africa has been massive. FRELIMO resolved to promote the organization of women in the struggle as early as 1962, but faced staunch opposition to the idea by members who still regarded women from a cultural and traditional standpoint arguing that war was exclusively for men[55]. In 1967, at a request of women themselves, a women's guerilla detachment had been formed and operated alongside male detachments under the name Destacamento Feminino. Its main objectives and tasks were to inform and help mobilize the rural and peasant population, a crucial aspect of a guerilla struggle. Even though women's contribution was crucial, it still mainly involved and reinvented traditional women roles. Although militarily

---

[53] *Ibid*

[54] "Statement of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress on the Emancipation of Women in South Africa" 2 May 1990, quoted in Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* p. 64

[55] Kruks, Sonia & Wisner, Ben "The state, the party, and the female peasantry in Mozambique" p. 113

trained and sometimes involved in direct combat, women were as mentioned mainly used for mobilizing and social services tasks[56].

Furthermore, women did not progress from the detachment to the top of the FRELIMO leadership which remained predominantly male[57].The involvement of women in the war also enhanced Machel's stand that political-military training was a forge for national unity and a source of class consciousness regardless of gender. Once again, the important struggle was not that of man against woman, but that of the oppressed against their oppressors. And when it came to the oppressed, women and men were in the same position[58]. The female cadres would later rise to the status of heroes and they became independence legends not only in southern Africa but among leftists and feminist militants worldwide[59]. To support the female detachment, a non military organization was needed. Hence the FRELIMO movement founded the Organizaqio dos Mulheres de Moqambique (Mozambique Women's Organization: OMM) in 1973[60]. The OMM soon gained momentum and grew exponentially as more and more women joined its ranks. Most of its members grew food for the army or transported goods and weapons, thereby carrying out indispensable tasks in the country's struggle for freedom. It is important to point out that even though there was a certain amount of pressure from women themselves for the formation of both the Destacamento Feminino and the OMM, these organizations were not anchored in a women's movement. Both organizations were created by the FRELIMO party and used by the party's male leadership to carry out tasks considered vital for the party[61].

ZANU relied heavily on women's participation in the liberation struggle. Initially ZANU were reluctant to accept female support believing that only men were fit to be cadres. Women were rather thought of as having their place in the private sphere and could only contribute to the struggle by offering support services to the male fighters[62]. In the end, it was the realities of the struggle, the necessities of war and a broadening of the revolutionary base that led to the promotion of women. When Robert Mugabe's wife Sally spoke at the 1980 UN World Conference for Women in Copenhagen she explained that "the protracted struggle for liberation forced some realities upon our own tradition because every human resource was necessary"[63]. All in all, ZANLA (ZANU's armed wing) recruited over 10,000 trained women guerilla fighters, several of whom were appointed to high command. According to interviews with female cadres, there was no inequality between men and women during the guerilla struggle. They

---

[56] *Ibid*
[57] *Ibid*
[58] Cochran, Scott "Class, state and popular organizations in Mozambique and Nicaragua" p. 107
[59] West, Harry G: "Girls with Guns: Narrating the experience of war of FRELIMO's female detachment" p. 183
[60] Arnfred, Signe "Women in Mozambique: Gender Struggle and Gender Politics" p. 5
[61] Kruks, Sonia & Wisner, Ben "The state, the party, and the female peasantry in Mozambique" p. 114
[62] Geisler, Gisela "Troubled sisterhood: Women and politics in Southern Africa" p.551
[63] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* p. 50

shared all tasks in camp, cooked together, washed together and fought side by side[64].

Given that the situation in civilian camps looked much like the old traditional division between women and men, the military struggle and rumors of comradary between the sexes further enhanced women's wish to participate. It also demonstrates Zimbabwean women's wish for equality, and shows that the traditional view of women may have been welcomed by men, but that women needless to say rejected it. In 1977, a department for Women Affairs of the party was formed whose functions were defined as military, political and diplomatic. Mugabe explained that "by waging the armed struggle [the party] had created a process generative of forces that will result in the total liberation of the women"[65]. Even prior to liberation, Zimbabwean female guerillas, activists, and ZANU members further developed a women's wing that was welcomed by the growing number of women sympathizers. Secretary for Women Affairs, Jane Ngwenya, explained in 1979 that the "women's structure, with sections, branches, districts, provinces, and a national executive had facilitated the mobilization of many women"[66]. It had helped build women's confidence in being chairpersons, office holders and in conducting meetings.

In contrast to Mozambique and Zimbabwe, South African women have been at the forefront of South African liberation struggles since the early 1900's even though they were refused membership in the ANC until 1943. Five years later, the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) was formed and was helped to spread its activities by the Federation of South African Women (FSAW) which was formed as an umbrella body in 1954[67]. As early as 1913 women took up the protests against pass laws in the Orange Free State and actually managed to make the regime retract their decisions to monitor and restrict women's free movement. Women waged this struggle again, this time all over South Africa, in the 1950's when pass laws were once more imposed on them, a struggle that heightened their militancy and determination[68].

At the first National conference organized by the FSAW, the 146 delegates representing a combined membership of 230,000 endorsed the Women's Charter. This progressive document, far in advance of popular thinking at the time, claimed among other things full gender equality "stating that the laws and customs that hinder women's progress hinder the nation as a whole"[69]. The banning of the ANC in 1960, all but paralyzed the FSAW's operations as it found it infinitely harder to take its organization underground and evolve into a militant

---

[64] *Ibid*

[65] *Ibid* p. 47

[66] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* p. 47

[67] http://www.anc.org.za/wl/docs/history.html

[68] Britton, Hannah, "Coalition Building, election rules, and Party Politics: South African women's path to parliament" p. 36, Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* p. 67

[69] Meintjes, Sheila "The women's struggle for equality during South Africa's transition to democracy" p.54, Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* p.67

organization like the ANC did. In fact, the banning of liberation movements left a hole in political activism and the women's movement[70].

The 1980's was a difficult time for women activists. Several anti-apartheid and social organizations sprung up, but none of them were keen on promoting gender equality. The dominating discourse was instead similar to that in Zimbabwe and Mozambique in that women were encouraged to join the struggle, but only on the basis and ultimate aim of national liberation. However, South African women were constantly aware that the ideological focus on national liberation would need to be accompanied by their own struggle for emancipation. "What moved strategy considerations along was the acute awareness of the fate of women in earlier liberation movements, particularly in Mozambique and Zimbabwe"[71].

In the earlier years of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto we Siswe very few women were accepted into the organization to act as combatants. But following the Soweto uprising in 1976, the numbers of female recruits increased dramatically[72]. By the end of the 1980's, at the culmination of clashes between the MK guerilla and Apartheid forces, it is estimated that as much as 20% of MK soldiers were women. Similar then to the liberation movements in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, women in South Africa were very much engaged in armed combat alongside men for their national liberation[73]. The ANC women's league had in exile been tied even closer to the main party than prior to the banning of liberation movements. Voices were raised inside the party that gender issues were recognized on paper only and that the organization was falling back into the bad habit of considering women emancipation a by-product of national liberation[74]. However, when re-launched in 1990, the ANCWL worked hard to regain their independence within the party and successfully positioned gender issues on the ANC's agenda. Furthermore the ANCWL was highly involved in forming the Women's National Coalition (WNC) in April 1992[75]. A force that later had to be reckoned with in South Africa.

---

[70] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* p. 68-69

[71] *Ibid* p. 73

[72] Meintjes, Sheila "The women's struggle for equality during South Africa's transition to democracy" p.50

[73] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* p. 51-52

[74] Meintjes, Sheila "The women's struggle for equality during South Africa's transition to democracy" p.48

[75] *Ibid*

4 Women's movements and their accomplishments

4.1 Mozambique

Following independence in 1975, FRELIMO realized that women were more likely to be mobilized by the OMM rather than by the party itself. In a war torn country suddenly left to fend for itself, FRELIMO realized that there was a necessity for mass mobilization on all fronts. The OMM was thus used as a tool for FRELIMO to inform women of the party's policies and involving them in carrying it out. Since most of the female guerrilla fighters had been illiterate peasants, they were removed as representatives of the OMM and replaced by girls educated at mission schools. These girls were literate, but without political fervor, vision, or experience[76]. Despite the loss of political activism that the organization experienced thanks to the removal of its founding members, the OMM was initially very successful, and managed to contact large amounts of women through campaigns around specific events or issues[77]. However, despite the success of single issue campaigns, the OMM had difficulties in mobilizing women in a more continuous manner. One continuous campaign that was successful however was the adult literacy programs organized by the organization. Figures show that 40% of those attending literacy centers were in fact women. Given that the ability to read and write enables political activism and participation, the literacy programs must was a step forward in the political mobilization and participation of Mozambican women[78].

Other OMM campaigns have proved more difficult. Campaigns to involve women in collective agriculture and movements to remove "bride price" and other social problems affecting women did not have the anticipated positive outcomes. It also needs to be mentioned that the OMM were instructed by the party to give courses and lessons in which women were to learn how to be better housewives and mothers. Geisler takes it one step further when she argues that the OMM was primarily engaged in "childcare, social work, and courses in sewing and soap-making"[79]. Courses that, needless to say, had a more negative effect on women's political participation than the earlier literacy campaigns initially had.

---

[76] Arnfred, Signe "Women in Mozambique: Gender Struggle and Gender Politics" p. 7
[77] Kruks, Sonia & Wisner, Ben "The state, the party, and the female peasantry in Mozambique" p. 116
[78] *Ibid*
[79] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* p. 114

Even though the OMM was the FRELIMO party's instrument in reaching women with the policies and political messages of the party, the organization was to begin with also encouraged to make an input on the policy making process with regard to women. However, this is regrettably where the organization is at its weakest. Instead of taking the opportunity to influence political discourse and policy with regard to women, the OMM seems to have done little if anything at all. When asked about what policies the OMM had suggested to FRELIMO, the secretary general of the organization had great difficulties in coming up with an answer. When the organization actually dabbled in more challenging issues such as the future of "traditions" the FRELIMO leadership did not back them. In preparation for its Extraordinary Conference in 1984 OMM engaged in a large research project on the future of customary practices. The party leadership however first postponed the conference and later decided to take over the proceedings all together. For the first time the OMM reacted against the party's handling of women and concerns were raised that the OMM were having problems as soon as they began to threaten the privileges of men. OMM remained a tool of FRELIMO until 1991 with Mozambique's entry into multi-partyism. This change in the political climate forced the OMM to separate from FRELIMO[80].

However, the ties to FRELIMO proved too strong, and at the fifth OMM National Congress in 1996 the organization decided to return to the party fold. At the meeting, the OMM secretary general declared that "it makes no sense to run away from our father"[81]. By then FRELIMO had accomplished more without the OMM then during their time in the party. Mozambique now had a 30% quota for women on all its provincial lists for the national elections and managed to increase women's participation in parliament to 28%, the highest in Africa at the time. In 1999, the Women's Ministry was created[82].

4.2 Zimbabwe

The first year of independence saw ZANU leaders still willing to challenge structures and institutions that worked to keep women subordinate. Early in 1981 the government created a new ministry for women's affairs (later renamed the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs or MCDWA)[83]. In fact, the MCDWA was one of the first new bureaucratic structures set up by the

---

[80] *Ibid*
[81] *Ibid* p. 116
[82] *Ibid*
[83] Seidman Gay W. "Women in Zimbabwe: Post independence struggles" p. 430

ZANU government, and one of the first of its kind in Africa. The establishment of such a structure, and the speed and determination that saw it erected also proves that at least some ZANU officials were serious about their commitment to improving the status and lives of women. In contrast to the OMM in Mozambique, the MCDWA was headed by female cadres involved in the liberation struggle. The former combat leader Teurai Ropa Nhongo became the minister. Nhongo had no educational background, and being the youngest member of a government full of PhD's, she was chosen solely on the grounds of her excellent combat record and outspoken determination to pursue women's equal status[84].

When the MCDWA was first created, Nhongo and her colleagues spoke freely and passionately about their belief that only changes in the traditional and colonial vision of women as mothers first would allow for the full realization of women's aspirations. The progressive and radical discourse included attacks on institutions, structures, and ideas that kept women subordinated men and cemented their position as providers, child bearers and housewives. However, a national debate soon began regarding the payment of bride-price, a traditional practice, and the MCDWA was forcefully pushed down by other ministries and the party itself. Faced with such opposition, the MCDWA were forced to moderate its tone. The loss of confidence and status that the MCDWA faced as a result of being reprimanded by the party leadership ultimately left them with tasks similar to those of OMM in Mozambique. Thus the MCDWA refrained from challenging existing gender relations and instead focused on teaching women to read and write, as well as help former female guerrillas find work in the new socio economic climate created following independence[85]. Nhongo tried several times to challenge the ZANU government stating that they were abandoning their promises from the liberation struggle. Robert Mugabe replied by returning to pre liberation discourse and defining women as most important as mothers and carriers of tradition.

The ZANU Women's League operated alongside the party, and was initially meant to help and guide the newly established MCDWA. It also included Nhongo as the head of the women's section. Members of the Women League however, reinforced the supportive role assigned to them by the party. The League's responsibilities became exclusively those usually given to women; they were fundraisers, recruiters of other women, and a propaganda tool for the party. Their campaigns and projects were solely oriented towards women as wives and mothers and specialized in courses such as cooking, gardening, and sewing. Observers have even suggested that the Women League was kept in a state of ignorance by the party in order to thwart any form of potential influence[86]. As time went, and the liberation discourse that had once spoken of emancipation of women grew more and more distant, the membership numbers in the Women's

---

[84] *Ibid* p. 131
[85] *Ibid*
[86] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* p. 109

League decreased along with its potential influence. In 1987, Mugabe showed no remorse as he suspended the national elections for the executive and appointed the women he favored for leadership himself. This included his wife Sally, and excluded Nhongo who had had been the leader of the League since 1967. Ever since, the Women's League has been viewed as a party vehicle for the ruling party and their activities predominantly include dancing at airports to welcome international guests invited by the male party leadership. Zimbabwean women have been described to have "have remained of politics, not in politics"[87]. Their latest request by the League that one of the four top positions in the party should be reserved for a woman was also rejected by the government. The government did however issue a 25% quota for local government[88]. Several years later however, more as a need to satisfy the powerful former General of the Air force Solomon Mujuru rather than by conviction of women's right to a place in decision making, Mugabe accepted to make Mujuru's wife Joyce Mujuru vice president.

4.3   South Africa

In its first election in 1994, South Africa moved from 141st to seventh in the world in terms of how many women occupied seats in the National Parliament with more than 26%[89]. However, it was prior to this that South African women made sure that their voices would be heard in the new South Africa. The WNC was, as mentioned above, founded in 1992 and represented both a political campaign to mobilize women at grassroots level and an attempt to influence the political process of writing the new constitution. The Coalition is unique in Africa, if not in the world. With an ultimate membership of 92 national organizations and 13 regional coalitions in 1994, covering "most political parties, rural women's organizations, and religious and professional organizations" it caused both astonishment and admiration[90]. The newspaper *The Johannesburg Star* even suggested that women with the WNC displayed a level of organization and force that propelled them far beyond men[91].

Women realized that they were being kept out of the constitutional negotiations that would one day shape their country. They realized that their exclusion from the negotiation process could only be seen as substantial and symbolic and that if left unchallenged could cripple a future women's movement. Despite substantial differences within the coalition on a number of issues, the

---

[87] Hove, Chenjerai *Shebeen Tales: Messages from Harare* p.35
[88] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* p. 111
[89] Britton, Hannah E. "Coalition building, election Rules, and Party Politics: South African Women's Path to Parliament" p. 33
[90] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* p. 81
[91] Britton, Hannah E. "Coalition building, election Rules, and Party Politics: South African Women's Path to Parliament" p. 38

WNC kept its focus on crafting a national platform of action to wrestle its way into the constitutional negotiations and enabling their influence over the electoral system[92]. The central goal of the WNC was to keep the coalition inclusive. It worked hard to reach representatives of all South African women of all walks of life, thereby avoiding an under-representation of non-elite rural women. With its great number of members and its extraordinary organization, the WNC had little trouble wrestling its way into the constitutional negotiations. Once inside, the WNC also made sure that their demands were met. They managed intervene on the status of customary law in the constitution, which the traditional leaders wanted to have excluded from the gender equality clause all together. The WNC also managed to persuade all parties that women should make up at least half of each of the delegations at the negotiation forum and also made sure that they gained representation within it[93]. Today South Africa's constitution has one of the world's broadest and most inclusive antidiscrimination clauses and is generally seen as the most progressive document in Africa.

The WNC not only managed to get its demands through in the constitutional debate. The nature of the coalition also paved the way for extracting pressure on the main political parties to make concessions on behalf of women. Because the women of all parties were working together, they were in frequent contact and collaboration. This meant that they could use one party's position on gender equality as leverage to gain a similar commitment from another party. The male leaderships of the parties did not want to be seen as falling behind the opposition on any major political issues. The ANCWL for example secured a commitment from their party to reserve a third of the ANC seats in parliament for women, which in turn sparked a similar commitment with other parties[94]. However, the top of the lists were still dominated by men, and to deal with that the ANCWL managed to achieve a system where in the 1994 elections, every third person on the list was a woman, thereby ensuring the election of women regardless of the party's popularity[95]. The ANC's commitment to having one third of its seats filled with women has accomplished two major objectives. First of all it has vastly increased the number of women in national government; secondly it has pressured other political parties to in turn increase the number of women on their lists. The decision to make every third person on the list a woman has also led to a greater number of women represented at ministerial level.

---

[92] *Ibid*

[93] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* 82

[94] Britton, Hannah E. "Coalition building, election Rules, and Party Politics: South African Women's Path to Parliament" p. 51

[95] *Ibid*

5   Discussion

5.1   Cultural impact on women's empowerment

As discussed above, African women bore the brunt of European colonialism. The European ideals and theories on women's status were readily welcomed by African men as the primary way of empowering themselves at the cost of women. In societies built and organized on the differentiation of human beings, African women were ultimately positioned at the bottom. The European reinvention of what they referred to as African customs and traditions worked in favor of the colonizers as well as the exploited black men. The housewifization of African women, the social picture generated by reinvented culture and traditions, and the laws that govern the system of oppression has been present in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. In all three countries it has been destructive for the emancipation of women.

Similarly, the societal view of women is often either enforced or rejected by the political establishment. Therefore, the ideology, whether political or personal, as well as the discourse used to discuss women is as important in changing traditional gender roles and women's status as any legal framework. Whether women's emancipation is either seen as a by-product of national liberation or a struggle on its own will inevitably influence the manner in which women's status and roles are discussed. Liberation ideology, rhetoric, and discourse will affect society's view of women, and it will also influence post-liberation policies with regard to gender equality.

5.1.1   Customary Law

As we have seen, African customary law can be argued to constitute the backbone of cultural and traditional practices in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. A legal system which systematizes the use of traditional values and reinforces social norms and views of women is counterproductive in the struggle for increased social and political empowerment of women. With independence, the status of Customary Law as well as the detrimental effect it had on women's lives

was debated in all three countries. However, legislative measures and political handling of the matter took different directions.

Perhaps the most important step for a new democracy to take is the establishment of a new constitution. A legal document meant to stand above all others, founded on the inherent principles of liberation and freedom. In Mozambique, the socialist leadership regarded traditional practices as backward and counterproductive. The new government made clear that their vision for Mozambique was to modernize and develop industrially. For this to happen, educations and insight were main FRELIMO objectives; objectives that had little room for traditional institutions and thinking. The constitution thus stipulated that the role of the family was important to focus on and articles 55-56 included a commitment to the emancipation of women and providing incentives to increase their influence in the country. However, even though the constitution mandated what would be massive gains for the Mozambique women's movement, reality was different[96]. Despite the guarantees in the constitution, women were constantly discriminated against through a number of legal provisions that provided for the supremacy of a husband in marriage, outlawing women from handling property, and a loss of rights upon dissolution of marriage. Furthermore, a male parent had more rights to custody of children than female parents. In other words, the condition claims to address the inequality between men and women and includes antidiscrimination clauses, but these are practically useless considering the legal provisions that seem to exclusively deal with laws adhering to the relationship and power balance between men and women. It essentially means that customary law and the traditional views regarding women have remained unchanged in Mozambique.

Upon independence in Zimbabwe in1980, Mugabe himself made clear that he realized there were aspects of tradition that kept women oppressed. Yet legal developments in Zimbabwe look very similar to those in Mozambique. The Lancaster House Constitution primarily negotiated between Britain, the old Rhodesian regime, and ZANU included all the normal equality and antidiscrimination clauses. Still, the Zimbabwean government made clear that they would not change or even touch customary law until it had been thoroughly debated in all sectors of society[97]. When the seven year provision which stated that no alteration to the constitution was allowed ran out in 1987, the first amendments were made. Article 23 of the constitution clearly states that no person may be discriminated on the grounds of "race, tribe, place of origin, political opinions, color, creed, sex, gender, marital status or physical disability"[98]. However, clause 3 of the constitution makes clear that possible discrimination protected by Article 23(1A) will not be applicable in matters that relate to personal law, nor "the application of African customary law in any case involving

---

[96] SARDC, Beyond inequalities 2005: Women in Mozambique p. 44
[97] Seidman Gay W. "Women in Zimbabwe: Post independence struggles" p. 434
[98] Constitution of Zimbabwe as amended by February 1, 2007

Africans or an African"[99]. Section 23 of the constitution therefore clearly states that custom and tradition shall supersede any rights and entitlements women may have been granted by the constitution, as long as these rights endanger the hegemony of culture and tradition. According to Patricia McFadden "it is the most ludicrous but most fiercely guarded section of the constitution"[100].

South Africa's constitution has one of the world's broadest and most inclusive antidiscrimination clauses[101] and is generally proclaimed as one of the s most progressive[102]. The constitution asserts that neither the state nor a person may discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on the grounds of "race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth"[103]. As in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, there were forces in South Africa very much interested in making sure that no alterations were made regarding the status and legal binding of customary law. In South Africa however, women intervened and made sure that the status of customary law was not excluded from the gender equality clause the way that the traditional leaders wanted it[104]. The intervention must be regarded as a considerable victory with regard to how proceedings looked in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. However, the status of customary law still remained somewhat unclear. However, in contrast to the amendments made to Zimbabwe's and Mozambique's constitutions, constitutional amendments in South Africa are actually beneficial to women. Among other things, the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act in 1998 improved the position and status of women and children within such marriages by introducing measures that brought customary law in line with the constitution and South Africa's international obligations. Here customary law was forced to bow to the constitution, not the other way around. Still there remains an area where the law is unclear, and recommendations have been made that the constitution is amended to make sure that the customary law of inheritance among other things is abolished[105].

[99] *Ibid*
[100] McFadden, Patricia "Cultural practice as gendered exclusion" p.68
[101] Britton, Hannah E. "Coalition building, election Rules, and Party Politics: South African Women's Path to Parliament" p. 41
[102] SARDC Beyond inequalities 2005: women in south Africa p. 55
[103] South African Constitutional Assembly 1996; chap. 2, sec. 9
[104] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* 82
[105] SARDC Beyond inequalities 2005: women in south Africa p. 54

5.1.2 Political discourse

Even though the legal framework that deals with women's traditional status and power is the primary and official foundation upon which men have been able to discriminate against women, the detriment extended to women as a result of traditional practices go beyond the law. The majority of cases dealing with discrimination of women never reach the courts. The reasons for this are seldom because women know they will lose, as is the case in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The reasons are more entrenched in the societal and cultural fabric than the constitution can ever be. Traditional leaders and chiefs wield massive power, a power often legitimized by the general political discourse and rhetoric. The political elite in African countries are not merely in charge of the country's political development, they must also be seen as the nation's primary source of influence when it comes to social norms, political ideology, and gender discourse.

The emancipation of women is not simply a woman issue, it needs to be assessed and discussed as a struggle parallel to that of national liberation, economic development, or democratic consolidation. In Mozambique and Zimbabwe, the emancipation of women remained a women's issue. It was never protruded as a struggle that would consist of society as a whole, but was discussed along the lines of its incorporation in national independence. It was believed that the struggle for national freedom would herald the emancipation of women. That the social revolution projected to take place at independence would naturally pave the way for gender equality. The discourse used to discuss women emancipation not only influences the nature of women's movements themselves, but also alters or deepens the social status of women.

The initial feeling of success in Zimbabwe and Mozambique was prompted by Machel and Mugabe consistently discussing women's vital role within the liberation struggle. It was enforced by the fact that both FRELIMO and ZANU openly criticized traditional values and ways to organize society. Machel, as mentioned before, regarded them as backward and in contradiction to the modern nation he envisaged. Mugabe too admitted that certain elements of traditional and cultural life were contradictory with the ideology on which Zimbabwe was to be founded. However, similar to the way customary law was handled, the language used to discuss the status of women changed dramatically within the first years of independence. From being crucial for the struggle and cadres equal to men, Machel and Mugabe went back to define the value of women as mothers only. A definition that indirectly plucked women out of every reasonable chance of social and political empowerment and back into the arms of a social and cultural system that saw them as the keepers of tradition. The tasks laid on women following independence in Zimbabwe and Mozambique further enforces the status of women as caregivers, housewives and social workers.

South African women were initially told the same things women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique had been told, that national liberation would automatically emancipate women too. At a national consultative conference the Women's Section of the ANC declared that "we must do away with male domination in the

home, village, town, factory, workshop, in politics, economics and religion. In particular, we must fight domination even within our own movement"[106]. ANC President Oliver Tambo made a speech at the conference, a speech that may have had crucial significance for women's status in South Africa. He declared that women's emancipation had to be addressed not only by women, but by the movement as a whole. South African women have therefore again been an exception to women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. They have not fallen prey to a government whose initial promises of gender equality later have fallen short and instead tried to recapture women as mothers and wives. South African women have continued to demand equality from their political parties and have fought all attempts to categorize them as mothers or along the lines of traditional gender roles and views. The fact that South African women have a longer history of organization as well as protest also works in their favor. It means that they had the capacity to fully utilize and capitalize on the greater gender awareness that the ANC leadership incorporated into its political discourse. As a result, women parliamentarians and ministers are not involved merely in women's issues, but are represented on all levels and within a much broader political spectrum[107].

5.2   Displacement

McFadden argues that it is an "othering" strategy in patriarchal societies to keep women away from the urban civic spaces that have a possibility of them getting away from male control and dependence[108]. In collusion with black men, and the rural elders, the colonial regimes quickly agreed to make women "persona non grata" in the growing urban centers of the colonies. The decision to do so is linked closely to the whole notion of custom and culture, at least from the black men's perspective. As mentioned earlier, forcing women to stay in the rural areas ensured that customary law be abided by and that they fell under the close supervision and control or rural elders and chiefs. Likewise it proved valuable to the colonial regime, since it ensured that they reproduced cheap black labor for the growing capitalist industries while giving black men a sense of power and a delusional share of the governing of the colony. For women, the exclusion from urban centers had an immense effect not only on their current status, but on their possibilities of changing that status. Keeping women away from the country's most critical social, political and economic institutions effectively hampered their chances of involvement and organization. It was in the cities and its outskirts that

---

[106] ANC Women's Section, "Meeting of the NWEC with members of the national executive committee held on 8th April 1984" quoted in Shireen, Hasim "Nationalism, Feminism and Autonomy: The ANC in exile and the question of women" p. 447
[107] Geisler, Gisela *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa* 213
[108] McFadden, Patricia "Cultural practice as gendered exclusion" p.66

the liberations movements were created and grew. It was through meetings and organizing that FRELIMO, ZANU and ANC could finally launch an opposition against the colonial administrations.

In Zimbabwe and Mozambique, women were effectively restricted from the cities. South African women too were initially forced out of the growing urban centers. However, in the case of South Africa, the restriction had a different effect than in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. One of the earliest mass protests against the colonial regime in South Africa was waged in 1913 when women in the Orange Free State protested against the pass laws imposed on them in order for the colonial administration to monitor and restrict their movement and access to the cities. Women waged this struggle again, this time all over the country, in the 1950's when pass laws were once again imposed on them. It was a protest and struggle that earned women a considerable amount of respect from both their liberation movement as well as the colonial regime.

As a result of being kept out of the cities, women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique were never an integral part of the formation of the liberation movements. They were not initially allowed membership, and it took the realization of the struggle for the FRELIMO and ZANU leadership to allow female soldiers and party officials. They joined the liberation movements solely on someone else's conditions and were expected to blindly follow the decrees made by the party leaders. Being kept out of the cities had also effectively barred women from political activism, organizational capacity building, and any form of education. While the male leadership envisioned the fulfillment of socialism and Marxism, and boldly spoke of the grand theories of how liberation would allow for the emancipation of women, women were just content with being a part of the struggle. This is not to say that there were not women with political visions whom dreamed of a certain society where their rights would be enhanced and protected. But they were never regarded as potential members of a future government by the liberation parties, and they were never expected or believed to accomplish more than to organize other women and promote party doctrine. This is extremely evident in the way that female leaders during the liberation struggles were removed upon independence and replaced by educated younger women. Women who perhaps had an education, but lacked any experience from the struggle and whose political activism and visions were dictated by the party leadership.

South African women were also restricted from joining the ANC until 1943. However, they were present in the cities; they had mounted their own struggles and protests to make sure of that. Their militancy and activism was an effect of how they, contrary to women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, were able to organize politically and socially. Their presence in the cities ensured that they were a part of the liberation struggle from the beginning. They influenced proceedings, and early on they were accredited with respect by the ANC. They had their own wing and their own league much earlier than women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The leaders of the South African women's movements were also educated. They could handle and discuss ideology, political discourse and rhetoric with the party leadership. And early on they were able to make the ANC aware to the problem of maintaining that women's emancipation would come as

an effect of national liberation. For the purpose of political and social empowerment therefore, access to the cities have had a great impact on women's status during and after the struggle for independence. And South African women's ability to stay in the urban areas during a crucial period in the developing liberation struggle highly favored their future role in the liberation movement. In contrast, Zimbabwean and Mozambican women's restriction from the colonial cities and towns had dire consequences for their mobilization, political involvement, status and future role in the struggle.

6 Analysis: Gender, Tradition and Displacement

Most Similar Systems Design has been used in this thesis in order to control the features that South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique have in common, while looking for those features that are different and that could answer how colonialism, liberation ideology and women's movements influenced the empowerment of women in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique and why South African women attained a higher amount of political power at independence than women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The three countries have a similar historical path to freedom: Colonialism, liberation struggles and finally independence. Women's experiences within the historical process, too, have been similar. The colonial view of women which eventually led to the establishment of customary law, lack of gender awareness in political discourse during liberation, and the attempts to keep women out of the main urban areas was experienced in all three countries. The differences lie with the women's movements, the way that women reacted to these historical processes, as well as in the different historic contexts within which these battles were fought.

The point of an intersectional analysis is to look at the different ways in which various social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other and how they "relate to political and subjective constructions of identities"[109]. It is important to bear in mind that we cannot expect the same constellation between our social divisions each time, the specific social and political processes are important. If we assumed that Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa would display identical intersections of gender, tradition and culture only because they have shared a similar political and social history we would have neglected the fact that not only did these processes take place at different times in history, but they involve specific individuals who's interaction with social divisions requires individual analysis.

The introduction of the European view of women, and the female status this view expressed, affected women in the three counties in a similar fashion. In order to reinforce and maintain the systematic oppression of women, the colonial regimes in compliance with black men created a legal system falsely legitimized in a cloak of "tradition" and "culture". It was an effective way of ensuring that women remained minors in relation to the law and that their claims to property, inheritance, and even their children were controlled by men. Customary Law

---

[109] Yuval-Davis, Nira "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics" p.205

became a power structure in all three countries through which men continuously enacted their power over women, but it also constructed and reinforced a female identity. Not only an identity and view that men had of women, but over time an institutionalized social norm that women accepted and identified with themselves.

Customary Law also effectively worked to refuse women access to the growing urban centers of the countries. The traditional conception of the female identity and women's "place in society" meant that women would be "corrupted" and "polluted" by the colonial urban centers. Tradition and displacement interacted and reinforced each other. Traditional conceptions of women refused them access to cities, thus minimizing their chances of effective organization and mobilization. So their minimal social status has negatively affected their political empowerment, leaving them incapable to confront social norms, views, and practices. Their lack of political empowerment has reversed back to further entrench their social identity by leaving traditional institutions, values, and legal systems intact and unchallenged.

However, this is where we find a fundamental difference between South African women and women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. In Zimbabwe and Mozambique, women never gained access to the urban areas, but were forced to live in the rural areas until the liberation struggle took military action. In South Africa, women refused to accept their expulsion from the growing urban spaces. Their protests against the laws requiring them to carry passes date back to 1912. These protests were, as previously discussed, waged again in the 1950's. The effect was not only that women thereby forced their way into the urban centers, but they also began the process of changing their identity, and not only the way they identified themselves, but also the way in which society as a whole identified them. Their mass demonstrations in the 1950's proved to men, that women were a force to be reckoned with, a force needed in the struggle for liberation. Of the three countries, South African women were the first to be accepted into the ranks of the leading liberation party, they were the first to be able to hold political meetings, and the first to form their own organizations. Consequently South African women gained organizational and institutional experience during colonialism that would prove vital in the future.

Independence in Zimbabwe and Mozambique was won through military campaigns; wars where women very much participated, not only by carrying out traditional women's roles, but also as soldiers. However, the political discourse in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, while highlighting the importance of women's participation, envisioned the advancement of women as a result of national liberation. Women in these countries had been locked out of the urban centers, had not been present in the launch of FRELIMO and ZANU, and they had no political or ideological education to speak of. Participating in the struggle, let be on men's terms and under an ideological banner chosen by the male leadership, was a victory in itself. During the military struggles in Zimbabwe and Mozambique social relations and identities were inevitably overturned. With women fighting side by side with men, both women and men began to challenge the female identity brokered and presented through the African cultural system. Indeed, the liberation wars seemed to open up for a social and cultural revolution

where women had the chance to once and for all transform their identity and challenge society's view of gender equality. The two most influential liberation leaders, Mugabe and Machel, seemed to be on their side when they were often quoted saying that there were aspects of African culture that needed to be revised, and that certain areas of their culture were indeed backward. Perhaps these words and the promises of women's emancipation as a result of national liberation were enough for women? It is possible they never felt the need to challenge the party leadership or pressure them into more concretely outlining women's future in society and politics. Following independence there were therefore initial attempts to hold on to the new identity that female soldiers and members of the struggle had won, but all such hope was successfully crushed by the new regimes. FRELIMO and ZANU chose to go back to traditional values and customs, where women were once again seen as the keepers of the intrinsically "African". Hence women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique found themselves drawn back into a system fundamentally based on the superiority of men, where the concept of women, gender and the female identity was left unchanged.

South African women found themselves in a different position to that of women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. They had been involved in the struggle against Apartheid for decades, and their militancy can in fact be argued to have superseded that of men's. Their presence in the cities, their accomplishments during their refusal to carry passes, and their growing influence in the ANC altered their status. From being viewed much the same way women were conceived of in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, South African women, in recognition of their accomplishments, were given a new identity within the liberation movements. Women were, alongside men, sent overseas for political and military training, which provided them with the tools to ideologically challenge the ANC leadership. South African women had yet another advantage; they had been able to follow the developments in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and could consequently analyze and pin point where Zimbabwean and Mozambican women had faltered. However, even if this was a tremendous advantage it would have been of little value had not South African women earlier been able to access the cities which allowed them to develop the organizational, institutional and political skills needed to challenge their own liberation movement. Aware therefore of how things had turned out for women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, South African women accused their organizations of committing to gender equality on paper only. The greatest evidence of how women in South Africa managed to change their identity and status can be seen in the political discourse used by the ANC. To proclaim that women's emancipation was a struggle in its own right, and parallel to that of national independence was a remarkable acceptance of the need to change society's view of women's status and identity. That statement not only showed that the ANC accepted that women emancipation was not a byproduct of national liberation, but proved a commitment to gender issues in the sense that it acknowledged that the subordination of women was very much men's doing. It positioned the struggle for gender equality on the same level as that for independence, thus elevating

women's status immensely which in turn entrenched the new female identity women had constructed through their political activism and accomplishments.

The female different identities created during colonialism and later during the struggles for liberation in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique have influenced the political empowerment of women at independence. It is symbolized by the way that women in the three countries reacted in connection to self-rule. Zimbabwean and Mozambican women's political activism was tightly anchored within the greater struggle for independence. They subordinated themselves to the policies and aims of FRELIMO and ZANU, and they rarely challenged or questioned these. South African women were not as dependant on the ANC or other movements. The way in which women in South Africa constructed an autonomous, country wide organization to help influence the constitutional debate remains their greatest accomplishment. It also proves the level of organization, commitment, and political awareness South African women possess. But more than anything, it proves that women in South Africa have an identity that is not entrenched in a social and subjective construction positioning them as subordinate to men. The fact that the WNC were successful in their demands, that they managed to wrestle their way into the constitutional negotiations similarly shows that the identity that South African society has of women is noticeably different to that of men's view of women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

In retrospect, South African women's ability to force their way into the cities may very well have been fundamental for their success. The detrimental female identity that, much like in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, had been forced onto South African women during colonialism was slowly but determinately transformed through political activism, which resulted in an increased social status and empowerment. Presence in the cities gave South African women the opportunity to relatively early gain the organizational, political, and institutional abilities that would later be necessary in order to confront and challenging political discourse and the way in which the political movements discussed women's emancipation. Women made sure that they were seen as intrinsic members of the liberation struggle and that their own struggle for emancipation was prioritized. By enhancing their social status through their political activism, accomplishments, organization, and demands women managed to transform their identity from that of mothers and care givers, to freedom fighters, politicians, leaders, and equal. This in turn weakened the power Customary Law held over women, thus elevating their social status even further. To put it bluntly women in South Africa experienced the reverse cycle to that of women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. South African women's growing social status paved the way for an increased political empowerment, while Zimbabwean and Mozambican women's lack of social status kept them from acquiring political influence thus further entrenching their lack of social empowerment.

The political and subjective construction of women's identity in South Africa therefore differs from that of Zimbabwean and Mozambican women. This identity is a result of women's success in pointing out and obviating damaging power structures in relation to gender equality. It is predominantly an effect of a successful and inspirational women's movement, based on political and social

activism, whose level of organization, courage, commitment, and militancy has projected it into a unique position in African politics. Ironically, South African women's success can also be seen as a result of Zimbabwean and Mozambican women's failures.

7   Conclusion

Despite South African women's success, women's status and empowerment remains a key issue in southern Africa. In fairness, it needs to be said that South African women did have one advantage in comparison to Zimbabwean and Mozambican women. The South African women movement was able to witness and analyze the problems and failures that took place in its neighboring countries. They could clearly see the difficulties that women were to face if the discussion regarding women's emancipation was incorporated into national liberation. However, even if this was an advantage, South African women had the influence, organization, knowledge, and strength to challenge the ANC leadership. Even with such knowledge at hand, women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique would not likely have been able to force ZANU and FRELIMO to commit to women's emancipation rhetorically and ideologically the way ANC did.

   With regard to women's continued empowerment following independence, another clear distinction emerges between South Africa and the other two countries. While Zimbabwean and Mozambican women operated solely within the liberation party's of the two countries, South African women were able to launch an autonomous movement. This distinction between the countries is crucial as to the future of women's status, empowerment and identity. In Zimbabwe and Mozambique, the lack of strong, educated, and organized movements outside the formal party structures meant that women were completely dependent on decisions and policies formulated at government level. Once these decisions had been made, there was little chance to challenge them. South Africa women, as an effect of being locked out of the constitutional negotiations, launched the WNC. As mentioned above, the size, organization, and efficiency of this coalition is unmatched on the African continent. It was this initiative that guaranteed that women had a voice in the constitutional negotiations, which in turn ensured that women's place in parliament and decision making bodies was established once and for all. It also led to a victory in regard to the diminished power of Customary Law, whose negative effects on women's status have been fully analyzed above.

   Thirty years following independence from colonial rule, Mozambique is finally beginning to implement gender equality reforms, reforms which have led to a substantial increase of women in parliament, where they now hold 30% of the seats. However, this improvement cannot be attributed to an organized and effective women's movement, but is rather an effect of international and SADC agreements. Nevertheless, it is a significant step forward, and opens up for the continued advancement of Mozambican women. Zimbabwe on the other hand, in combination with general political turmoil and economic stagnation, has still not made any advancement in the area of women's empowerment. In the latest elections, while ZANU had a gender quota, the opposition did not and women

remain underrepresented at all levels of decision-making. South Africa has continued on the path set out in the first elections, and women wield a considerable amount of influence. However, even though South African women are well represented at decision-making levels and in formal government, voices and concerns have been raised that the autonomous women's movements and organizations have lost their influence and power. What this will mean for the future of South African women, only future can tell.

What remains clear is that in all three countries women remain oppressed under a system of culture and tradition that undermines their status and social position. While the level of oppression varies in the three countries, this is an area of African society that needs addressing. It is therefore disturbing that some westerns scholars still salute the existence of traditional rites and social divisions as a foundation for the essentially "African" to coexist with modern systems of governance. Traditional society and Customary Law is nothing more than a powerful weapon against women's demands for equal rights within their societies. To claim otherwise, is to contribute to a backward and undignified understanding of women and a system that opts to keep African women oppressed.

8 References

Arnfred, Signe, 1988. "Women in Mozambique: Gender Struggle and Gender Politics", *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 15, No. 41, pp. 5-16

Arnfred, Signe, 2007. "Sex, Food, and Female Power: Discussion of Data Material from Northern Mozambique", *Sexualities*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 141-158

Augustus B, Cochran III & Catherine V. Scott, 1992. "Class, State, and Popular Organization in Mozambique and Nicaragua", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 105-124

Barnes, Theresa, 1997. "'Am I a Man?': Gender and the Pass Laws in Urban Colonial Zimbabwe, 1930-80", *African Studies Review*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 59-81

Britton, Hannah E, 2002. "Coalition building, Election Rules, and Party Politics: South African Women's Path to Parliament", *Africa Today*, Vol.49, No. 4, pp. 33-67

Chenjerai Hove, 1997. *Shebeen Tales: Messages from Harare.* Reprint edition Harare: Interlink Pub Group

Constitution of Zimbabwe -As amended by February 1st, 2007. Harare: Ministry of Justice

Coldham, Simon, 1999. "The Status of Women in Zimbabwe: Vaneria Magaya v. Nakaya v. Nakayi Shonhiwa Magaya (SC 210/98)", *Journal of African Law*, Vol. 43, No. 2, pp. 248-252

Foley, Griff, 1993. "Progressive but not Socialist: Political Education in the Zimbabwe Liberation War", *Convergence*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 8-18

Fórum Mulher, SARDC WIDSAA, *Beyond Inequalities 2005: Women in Mozambique,* Fórum Mulher/SARDC, Maputo and Harare, 2006.

Geisler, Gisela, 1995. "Troubled Sisterhood: Women and Politics in southern Africa: Case Studies from Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana", *African Affairs*, Vol. 94, No. 377, pp. 545-578

Geisler, Gisela, 2004. *Women and the Remaking of Politics in Southern Africa: Negotiating Autonomy, Incorporation and Representation.* Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet

Hancock, Ange-Marie, 2007. "When Multiplication Doesn't Equal Quick Addition: Examining Intersectionality as a Research Paradigm", *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 5, pp. 63-79

Hassim, Shireen, 2004. "Nationalism, Feminism and Autonomy: The ANC in Exile and the Question of Women", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 433-455

Knudsen, Susanne V, 2006. "Intersectionality-A theoretical inspiration in the analysis of minority cultures and identities in textbooks" In Bruillard, E. et. al.

(ed.). *Caught in the Web or lost in the Textbook?* IARTEM, IU-FM, Base-Normandie. Paris

Kruks, Sonia & Wissner, Ben, 1984. "The State, the Party and the Female Peasantry in Mozambique", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 106-127

Landman, Todd, 2003. *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge

Ljung, Margareta, 2000. "Feministiskt teori" in Månson, Per (ed.) *Moderna samhällsteorier: Traditioner, riktningar, teoretiker*. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Prisma

Mandaza, Ibbo, 1980. " Imperialism, the 'Frontline' States and the Zimbabwe Problem", *Journal of the Faculty of Art and Social Sciences University of Dar es salaam* Vol. 05 No. 1 pp. 129-164

Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry, 2002. *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. Wales: Palgrave McMillan

McCall, Leslie, 2005. "The Complexity of Intersectionality", *Journal of Women in culture and Society*, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 1771-1800

McFadden, Patricia, 2004. "Cultural Practice as Gendered Exclusion: Experiences From Southern Africa" in Sisak, Anne et. Al. (ed.) *Discussing Women's Empowerment-Theory and Practice*, Sida Studies No. 3, Stockholm

Meer, Shamim, 2005. "Freedom for Women: mainstreaming gender in the South African liberation struggle and beyond", *Gender and Development*, vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 36-45

Meintjes, Shelia, 1996. "The Women's Struggle for Equality during South Africa's Transition to Democracy", *Transition*, Vol. 30, pp. 47-64

Meyns, Peter, 1981. "Liberation Ideology and National Development Strategy in Mozambique", *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 8, No. 22, pp. 42-64

Mzabalazo, 2008. "A History of the ANC" at: http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=/ancdocs/about/umzabalazo.html

Ottaway, Marina, 1991. "Liberation Movements and Transition to Democracy: The Case of the A.N.C.", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 61-82

Seidman, Gay W, 1984. "Women in Zimbabwe: Postindependence Struggles", *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 419-440

Seidman, Gay W, 1993. "'No Freedom without the Women': Mobilization and Gender in South Africa, 1970-1992", *Signs*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 291-320

United Nations Development Program, 1994. "The Human Development Report 1994"

University of Western Cape Gender Equity Unit, University of Witswatersrand Centre for Applied Legal Studies and SARDC WIDSAA, *Beyond Inequalities 2005: Women in South Africa*, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Harare, 2006.

Valentine, Gill, 2007. "Theorizing and Researching Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography", *The Professional Geographer*, Vol. 59, No. 1, pp. 10-21

West, Harry, 2000. "Girls with Guns: Narrating the Experience of War of FRELIMOs Female Detachment", *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 4, pp- 180-194

Yuval-Davis, Nira, 2006. "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics", *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 193-209

ZWRCN and SARDC WIDSAA, Beyond Inequalities 2005: Women in Zimbabwe, ZWRCN/SARDC, Harare, 2005.