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Abstract

The thesis investigates how PAWO has engaged with and defined African cultural values and practices, while also examining the social and political challenges it has faced and its prospects as a social and political organization. The research explores the formation of PAWO during liberation movements in Africa, when women played pivotal roles in the creation of new nations. As the continent transitioned from liberation movements to government development, PAWO underwent significant transformations influenced by socioeconomic events and social developments. Key factors shaping PAWO's evolution include the emergence of "femocrats" as women gained formal political roles, a decline in local women's participation, and ongoing political discussions and conflicts related to gender roles and sexuality. The thesis aims to address two central research questions: the establishment of PAWO and its evolution over time. By charting the historical trajectory of PAWO from its origins as the All African Women's Conference to its current form, the study identifies significant epochs that have shaped the organization's development. The research conceptualizes PAWO as a Pan-African organization, drawing on the perspectives of scholars like Sylvia Tamale and Grace Bantebya Kyomuhendo. In summary, the thesis argues that PAWO emerged during Africa's liberation struggles, with women actively participating in nation-building efforts. As the continent transitioned to more established state systems, PAWO underwent substantial transformations. In addition to economic and political factors, broader societal changes, such as the rise of "femocrats," declining local women's participation, and discussions on gender and sexuality, played a significant role in driving shifts and restructuring within the organization.

**The Evolution of the Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO): A Case Study of
Women's Involvement in Pan-Africanism**

by

Shukri A. Mohamed
B.A., Le Moyne College, 2021

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Pan African Studies

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Introduction

In the historical sixth Pan African conference held in Dar Es Salaam in 1974, the women participants asserted, “If a man cannot be disagreed with for his manhood’s sake, and our womanhood’s, we develop paper tigers unable to engage in the realities of revolution. Everybody loses when [women] do not question, demand and have input into the ideology espoused as the correct line for our people to follow.¹” At the seventh Pan African Congress held in Kampala, Uganda in 1994, the eighth resolution stated that the movement would “accept the women's call for rooting the Pan-African movement in our African culture.²” Both statements from the Pan African Congresses show the presence and determination of women in the Pan African movement to women’s equitable participation and cultural relevancy. The statements also illustrate how women played active roles in shaping the principles of Pan-African initiatives and ensuring these principles were in harmony with African cultural beliefs.

Pan-Africanism is a political and social movement that, historically, has sought to promote unity, self-determination, social justice, economic empowerment, cultural reclamation, and political action for people of African descent worldwide, also called people of Global Africa.³ Organized initiatives originated in the late nineteenth century and gained momentum during the early twentieth century as a response to colonialism, racism, and the exploitation of African peoples and resources by European powers.⁴ The practice of organizing around

¹ African Association of Political Science “Resolutions of the Plenary of the 7th Pan African Congress, Kampala, 1994.” *African Journal of Political Science/ Revue Africaine de Science Politique* vol. 1, no. 1 Pan-Africanism in the 21st Century, June 1996, 113-133.

² African Association of Political Science. “Resolutions of the Plenary of the 7th Pan African Congress, Kampala, 1994.” *African Journal of Political Science/ Revue Africaine de Science Politique* vol. 1, no. 1, June 1996, 113-133.

³ Micere Mugo, “Re-Envisioning Pan-Africanism: What Is the Role of Gender, Youth and the Masses,” Essay. In *Pan-Africanism and Integration in Africa*, edited by Ibbo Mandaza and D. Wadada Nabudere, 239–62. Harare, Zimbabwe: SAPES Books, 2002, 241; Horace G Campbell, “The Pan-African Experience: From the Organization of African Unity to the African Union,” *The Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History*, (2018), 1034.

⁴ Campbell, “The Pan African Experience, 1034-35.

principles has sparked initiatives to chart the ideas and philosophy of Pan-Africanism. One well-known Pan-Africanist scholar, Micere Mugo, who specializes in gender and literature, characterizes Pan-Africanism as a belief in a shared heritage and the necessity of united action to secure the emancipation of Africans. Mugo acknowledges that the concept has undergone changes over time, both in theory and practice, when she states that, “a concept of a common heritage and the need for collective action to achieve the liberation of Africans.”⁵ A wide array of movements dedicated to the pursuit of freedom, even if they did not explicitly identify as Pan-Africanist, could fall under the broad banner of Pan-Africanism. Examples of such movements include seventeenth-century slave rebellions in the Americas, the Haitian Revolution, anti-colonial campaigns, civil rights and Black Power movements in the United States, and anti-Apartheid activism.

This thesis is based on the notion that Pan-Africanism is both a concept and a philosophy. Pan-Africanism as a concept is the idea that all African people are connected as one people no matter their place of residence, and Pan-Africanism as a philosophy state that African people share a common history and goal of total emancipation of the mind, body, and soul. As such, instead of viewing Pan-Africanist ideas as rigid and homogeneous principles, my research investigates the development of Pan-Africanism within a modern women's movement. I take inspiration from the insight of political science expert on Pan-Africanism, Horace Campbell, who notes that the historical Pan-African movement arose “engaged in concrete struggles.”⁶ I focus on the struggles of the Pan-African Women’s Organization to explore how and why a discrete Pan-African agenda defined by women came into existence; how it has engaged and defined African cultural values and practices; social and political challenges it has had to

⁵ Mugo, “Re-Envising Pan-Africanism,” 240.

⁶ Campbell, “The Pan African Experience, 1034-35.

negotiate; and its prospects for functioning as a viable social and political organization attempting to develop and apply Pan-African principles across diverse in African regions. The thesis research grounded the formation of PAWO in liberation movements across Africa when women were finding their footing in creating new nations. The organization evolved as the continent shifted from liberation movements to state structures. Along with the socioeconomic events that contributed to organizational changes, social developments led to more considerable shifts and reorganization, such as the emergence of “femocrats,” as women gained formal political roles and decreased participation from local women and ongoing political discussions and conflicts over gender roles and sex.

Two central research questions frame the present thesis: how the Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO) formed and how it evolved. The primary objective of this paper is to chart the historical trajectory of PAWO from its inception as the All African Women's Conference to its current incarnation as PAWO, identifying significant epochs that have shaped the organization's evolution. The study conceptualizes PAWO as a Pan-African organization, as understood by the organization and scholars such as Sylvia Tamale and Grace Bantebya Kyomuhendo, among others.

In summary, the thesis contends that the Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO) originated during the liberation struggles across Africa when women were actively engaged in nation-building efforts and subsequently underwent significant transformations as the continent transitioned towards more established state systems. In addition to the economic and political factors that shaped the organization's evolution, broader societal changes, such as the rise of "femocrats" in politics, declining local women's participation in the organization, and

increasing discussions of gender and sexuality, played a crucial role in driving a more significant shift and restructuring of the organization.

Precursors

The contributions of women in the Pan African Congresses of the 1970s and 1990s were not the first nor the last time African women participated in spaces that called for African unity and self-determination. African and African descended women played a significant role in the Pan-African movement, although their contributions are often overlooked in mainstream historical accounts.⁷ Women participated in various ways, including through political activism, cultural expression, and intellectual contributions.⁸ One of the earliest examples of African women's involvement in Pan-Africanism was the establishment of the African Association in 1897 by Joseph Ephraim Casely-Hayford and his wife Adelaide Smith Casely-Hayford.⁹ The organization aimed to promote the political and cultural advancement of African people and played an essential role in the development of Pan-Africanism.¹⁰ Also, in the late 1890s in London, there was a South Africa woman by the name of Alice Kinloch who was active in the African Association alongside Henry Sylvester Williams, one of the earliest organizers of the Pan African Congresses, when the first Pan African Congress was held in London in 1900, other female attendants including Anna J. Cooper, a prominent African American teacher and activist also attended.¹¹

⁷ Keisha N Blain, Asia Leeds, and Ula Y. Taylor, "Women, Gender, Politics, and Pan-Africanism," *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*. University of Illinois Press, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2016), 139.

⁸ Strobel, "African Women's History," 509–22.

⁹ Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora Since 1787*, (Routledge, 2003), 82-5.

¹⁰ Adi and Sherwood, *Pan-African History*, 82-5.

¹¹ Adi and Sherwood, *Pan-African History*, 82-5; 190-4; *Pan-African Association. Report of the Pan-African Conference, ca. 1900. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.*

Two other women attended the 1919 Pan African Congress, Ida Gibbs Hunt, who later became a speaker at the third Pan African Congress, and Addie Waites Hunton, co-founder of the International Council of Women of the Darker Races (ICWDR). Hunt delivered a speech titled “The Coloured Races and the League of Nations,” emphasizing on racial equality and racial representation at the League of Nations and other international organizations. Addie Waites Hunton also advocated for women of African descent internationally through her organization, the ICWDR, founded in 1922. The ICWDR, similar to the Pan African movement, held many Congresses and conferences to discuss a multitude of issues, such as education and health, as they related to women. They worked with African and Asian women in the US, the Caribbean, and South Africa to attack these issues. Organizations such as ICWDR gave rise to other intercontinental women’s organizations to tackle issues specific to women by centering women’s voices.¹²

During the early 20th century, African women remained active in political organization and mobilization, actively working towards the goals of the Pan-African movement. Notably, figures such as Adelaide Casely-Hayford from Sierra Leone and Audley Moore from the United States attended Pan-African conferences and contributed to the discussions around African self-determination and independence.¹³ Additionally, African women played an essential role in advancing Pan-Africanism through their scholarship and writing. For instance, civil rights activist and Feminist Amy Ashwood Garvey, a Jamaican by birth, was a vocal advocate for Pan-Africanism in the late 20th century and is known for co-founding the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) with Marcus Garvey in 1914. Although the UNIA intended to

¹²Abayomi Azikiwe, “Ida Gibbs Hunt and the Pan-African Movement,” *Workers World*, March 27, 2017.

¹³ Ashley D. Farmer. “Mothers of Pan-Africanism: Audley Moore and Dara Abubakari,” *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* 4, no. 2 (2016): 284.

provide a space for women to participate in the Pan-African movement, men mainly led it, with women primarily being assigned supportive roles in organizing events such as rallies. However, the UNIA later established women's divisions that focused on providing training for female entrepreneurs and employment opportunities for women in support staff roles.¹⁴

The Pan African Congresses were held throughout the twentieth century and enabled people of African descent to gather and share their ideas and grievances based on their experiences. The Congresses acted to promote unity across the globe while spreading ideas such, as about liberation, self-determination, and humanity for African people around the world.¹⁵ The meetings included people of all professions and backgrounds, including activists, intellectuals, and artists, to name a few. The Pan African Congress series started in 1919 under Dr. W. E. B. Dubois, who organized the first five; then in 1974, the sixth Congress took place in Dar es Salaam and the seventh Congress in Kampala twenty years later in 1994.¹⁶ According to records, each of the Congresses convened after major historical epochs such as the first Pan African Congress took place in Versailles at the end of the first World War. The second, third, and fourth were held in 1921, 1923, and 1927 respectively, and they occurred during the Harlem Renaissance, decolonization, and the rise of fascism leading up to the Second World War. The fifth Congress was held in 1945 following the Great Depression and the Second World War, and the sixth Congress was held in 1974 during the Post-Cold War era.¹⁷ The seventh Congress,

¹⁴ Adi, *Pan African History*, 69-75; 76-81.

¹⁵ Campbell, "The Pan African Experience," 1034.

¹⁶ Alexandre Mboukou. "The Pan African Movement, 1900-1945: A Study in Leadership Conflicts Among the Disciples of Pan-Africanism," *Journal of Black Studies*, 13, no. 3, (1983) 275-77.

¹⁷ *Pan-African Association. Report of the Pan-African Conference, ca. 1900. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries; Pan African Congress. The Fifth Pan African Congress, ca. April 24, 1929. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries; Campbell, Horace G. "The Pan-African Experience," 1031-88. Mugo, "Re-envisioning," 248.*

which took place in 1994, was marked by the end of the twentieth century and the third wave of women's movement in the US, also called the third wave of Feminism.¹⁸

African women on the continent were also involved in Pan-Africanism in various ways, including political activism, cultural expression, and intellectual contributions. For example, women played a prominent role in the anti-colonial struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, working to secure independence and self-determination for African nations. Women such as Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti from Nigeria, Queen Mother Yaa Asantewaa from Ghana, and Winnie Mandela from South Africa are just a few examples of the many African women who were involved in these struggles.¹⁹

In addition to political activism, African women contributed to the cultural expression of Pan-Africanism through music, dance, and literature. Women such as Miriam Makeba from South Africa, Angelique Kidjo from Benin, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie from Nigeria used their art to promote Pan-Africanism and celebrate African culture and heritage. They used music and the arts to promote Pan-Africanism and solidarity among African people. African women also made significant intellectual contributions to Pan-Africanism through their writing and scholarship. For example, women such as Nawal El Saadawi from Egypt, Ifi Amadiume from

¹⁸ R. Claire Snyder, "What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay," *Signs* 34, no. 1 (2008): 175–96.

¹⁹ Mugo, "Re-envisioning, 257. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was a Nigerian teacher from the 1960s and 70s who was well known for her activism around the rights of women in Nigeria as part of the national women's Union. She was also known internationally as the vice president of the Women's International Democratic Federation, founded during the Cold War. Queen Mother Yaa Asantewaa was active in the late 1800s as Ghana when she led Ashanti troops in the Gold Coast area against invasion from the British. She rallied men and women to fight back, and today is a symbol of resistance and strength in Ghana and around the world. Lastly, Winnie Mandela was an activist who also rallied her people in South Africa against apartheid in the late 1900s. She, alongside her husband, was the symbol of freedom against a discriminatory system that oppressed South Africans. All three women are symbols of Pan-Africanism in the anticolonial struggles as they represented and symbolized the unity of African peoples.

Nigeria, Sylvia Tamale from Uganda, and Patricia McFadden from the United States wrote extensively on issues related to African identity, Feminism, and social justice.²⁰

Although some experiences were unique to African women, all women involved in the Pan-African movement shared key political, ideological, and gendered struggles; these included struggles with traditional gender roles, gender inequality, intersectional discrimination, and lack of support and visibility for their contributions to the movement and the liberation of African countries.²¹ These four areas of gendered conflicts were challenged by several women within the movement and outside of the movement from activists and scholars to non-intelligentsia women in Global Africa. Overall, African women played a crucial role in shaping and advancing the Pan-African movement, although their contributions are often overlooked or marginalized in mainstream historical accounts. More specifically, African women in the Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO) played a significant and multifaceted role in shaping and advancing Pan-Africanism early on, and their contributions continue to inspire and inform the movement and African women today.²²

By tracing the timeline of the PAWO's establishment, this thesis seeks to bridge a gap in the historical record of Pan-Africanism. This narrative is crucial to comprehending the stories of African liberation movements and the formation of states, but it has mostly gone untold. As a result, while the list of male Pan-Africanist activists is becoming increasingly familiar, the names of the women who laid the groundwork for Pan-African ideals and worked to advance liberation and the establishment of stable, independent governments are not well-known. Even scholars

²⁰ Hakim Adi, "Pan-Africanism: An Ideology and a Movement," In *Global Africa: Into the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Dorothy L. Hodgson and Judith A. Byfield, 1st ed, University of California Press, 2017, 90–99.

²¹ Adi, Hakim. "Women and Pan-Africanism." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. 23 May 2019.; Zaline Makini Roy-Campbell, "Pan-African Women Organising for the Future: The Formation of the Pan African Women's Liberation Organisation and Beyond." *African Journal of Political Science / Revue Africaine de Science Politique* 1, no. 1 (1996).

²² Adi, "Women and Pan-Africanism."

committed to unearthing and celebrating the stories of women have not given enough attention to these women's experiences. Sylvia Tamale, an Uganda women's scholar, says, "[a] major blind spot within mainstream decolonial scholarship on Africa is gender; there is a notable masculinist bias in the field that totally ignores gender theorization."²³ Tamale says that masculinist bias affects the way that African women's stories have been told which stems from the patriarchal systems which are remnants of the colonial era. As a result, African women are left with two evils; a patriarchal system seeped into a colonial hierarchy and colonialism.

The thesis is divided into five main chapters. The first chapter examines the existing literature about PAWO. The second chapter lays the groundwork of the thesis by explaining the conceptual frameworks used to analyze the organization and the methods used. The third chapter covers the history context that shaped PAWO's formation and creates a chronology of its organization. It is based on autobiographies and oral histories of the women. The fourth chapter examines how the organization's shift from a participatory social framework has shaped its institutional identity. The fifth and last chapter analyzes the shift in PAWO as interpreted by scholars such as Micere Mugo, Amina Mama, Ifi Amadiume, and Sylvia Tamale by exploring the role of femnocracy in the organization. It examines the obstacles encountered by the organization in addressing discussions on sexuality and gender roles and identities in the societies it strives to promote.

²³ Ifi Amadiume, "*Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*," Ottawa, CN: Daraja Press, 2022, 3.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Dr. Grace Bantebya Kyomuhendo defines Pan-Africanism by highlighting ubuntu. She explains that ubuntu is a “network of relations of humanity” and ubuntu is the “basis of Pan-Africanism.” Bantebya also explained that inclusivity and power-sharing are elements of ubuntu which included African women in the movement. However, those inclusivity and power-sharing elements have eroded over time. In their foundation, women were leaders, but the expansion of the patriarchy from outside influences such as colonization and imperialism caused women’s roles to erode over time.²⁴ Kathleen Sheldon, in her article titled “Women in Africa and Pan-Africanism,” highlights the contributions of African women activists to the Pan African Movement, citing the Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO) as an example of an organization that embodied women-centered Pan-Africanism. To support her argument, Sheldon draws on autobiographical accounts of Jeanne Martine Cisse and Aoua Keita in the subsection titled “The Pan African Women's Organization and other mid-twentieth century activities” she emphasizes the need for greater recognition and historical representation of African women's stories and organizations stating that “there have been many women who were active internationally as individuals, who helped develop African and diasporic networks, who founded organizations with a multitude of connections, and who have left a record of those achievements.”²⁵ According to Sheldon, the historical contributions of African women, both on the continent and across the globe, have often been overlooked, despite their involvement in developing African and diasporic networks, founding organizations, and leaving behind a record

²⁴ Grace Bantebya Kyomuhendo, Pan-Africanism, Interview, June 2022; Margaret Strobel, “African Women’s History,” *The History Teacher* 15, no. 4 (1982): 509–22.

Strobel’s article highlights the need for a separation, or at the very least an emphasis, on teaching African women’s history because of the subjective and objective conditions of the continent’s history and socio-political situations which have created the conditions for present-day Africa. See Strobel’s article for more on the importance of learning and teaching African women’s history.

²⁵ Sheldon, “Women in Africa and Pan-Africanism,” 340.

of their achievements. Sheldon's conclusion highlights the importance of presenting the narratives and stories of Africa-born women alongside those of global African women, arguing that their legacies are significant for both Pan-Africanists and women in general, stating that "Their legacy is important for Pan-Africanists and for women."²⁶

Ashley Farmer's article "The Pan-African Women, 1972-1976" sheds light on the noteworthy contributions of Caribbean women to the Pan-African movement who are considered some of the earliest women in the movement. Farmer contends that these women played a pivotal role in both challenging and accommodating men within the movement, often fulfilling multiple roles as family members as well as organizers and secretaries within the movement. The seemingly contradictory and complex roles of Caribbean women within the movement, according to Farmer, resulted from the specific circumstances in which they found themselves. By adopting roles that allowed them to participate in the movement and its organizations without being marginalized or overlooked, these women were able to exist in a unique context. The women who were involved in PAWO were able to create an organization and a space that was by and for women; however, distinct from other Pan-African organizations, PAWO also existed in a non-Western context in addition to women-centered context.²⁷

PAWO is hailed as one of the oldest African women's organizations, and the narrative surrounding the organization remains untold in scholarly discourse, warranting further investigation and analysis. Before retelling the history and analyzing the shift, it is essential to understand some misconceptions PAWO has received due to misinformation. In 2012, UNESCO came out with a report to mark the 50th anniversary of PAWO that documented the story of its

²⁶ Sheldon, "Women in Africa and Pan-Africanism," 340.

²⁷ Ashley D. Farmer, "The Pan-African Woman, 1972-1976," *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era*, University of North Carolina Press, (2017) 133.

foundation; however, women who were part of the history, such as Fatoumata Touré, expressed that the report has some false narratives.²⁸ One of the more prominent misconceptions is that the women's group formed after Mwalimu Nyerere asked a group of women to have tea and discussed the formation of an intercontinental women's organization; that was not the case. The group, which was the All-African Women's Conference (which later became the Pan African Women's Organization), was formally founded in 1962, and the ideas for its creation stem back to the 1950s. Another misconception is Congo-Brazzaville heads the list. However, Congo-Brazzaville only joined in 1967, and according to Madame Cisse, given that they did not have a woman's section until 1965, they could not have joined yet. Also, Uganda joined as early as 1965, as can be seen in their attendance at the meeting in Dar es Salaam during the first All-African Women's Conference but was absent from the list created by the UN.

Furthermore, contrary to the AU's note of operationalization of PAWO, which says that the first continental African Women's conference was held in Tanzania in 1962 to note the origins of the organization, the All-African Women's group, which was later renamed PAWO originates back to the early failed women's organization created by Cisse, Keita, and Kamara in Guinea. It continued as one of the earliest continental groups in the form of the All-African Women's Organization. It then became the Pan African Women's Organization, and their activities have dwindled due to issues of the organization. In this section of the paper, it will review the formation and history of how the All-African Women's group became the Pan-African Women's Organization.²⁹

²⁸ Sylvia Serbin, *African women, Pan-Africanism and African renaissance*, UNESCO Digital Library. Paris: UNESCO, January 1, 2015. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235230>.

²⁹ Cisse, *La Fille Du Milo*; Serbin, *African women*, 108.

Keisha N. Blain, Asia Leeds, and Ula Y. Taylor talk about PAWO in their article “Women, Gender Politics, and Pan-Africanism,” present a Pan-Africanism that centers women and their experiences and how their experiences have contributed to the movement. They argue that “Despite, the proliferation of Feminist scholarship over the last several decades, scholarly narratives on Pan-Africanist thought and practice tend to emphasize the contributions of men or overlook the significant relationship between gender and Pan-Africanism.”³⁰ The purpose of the article then became a way to showcase the ways in which women participated in the movement in the larger context, in scholarship on Pan-Africanism. The authors argue that PAWO played important in challenging traditional gender roles, taking a community approach to their struggles, and being involved politically and economically. Despite their groundbreaking work, one of the more considerable challenges they faced was gaining recognition and support from Pan-African organizations and largely male-dominated movements.

³⁰ Blain et al. “Women, Gender Politics and Pan-Africanism,” 139

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and Methods

Conceptual Framework

It is important to frame that Pan African women and the Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO) have done it is important to frame it in a theory that centralizes the work of African women and their histories. Women have been critical actors in African histories for centuries alongside men as crucial family members, liberators, and decision-makers, to name a few roles African women have played. Global Feminist movements have helped to inspire challenges to the exclusion of women's stories. At their core, the Feminist movements have been concerned with addressing gender-based oppression and discrimination and challenging centuries of power structures created for and by men.³¹ However, Feminism is often met with resistance from twentieth-century African women. For example, World-renowned Ghanaian author and critic Ama Ata Aidoo once said, "Feminism. You know how we feel about that embarrassing Western philosophy? The destroyer of homes. Imported mainly from America to ruin nice African women."³² Feminism was often attributed to middle-class white women in the West that presented Feminism as a movement that disregarded men in the lives of women and led to a breakup of families. African women could not align with such a mindset because African peoples have lived as family units where men and women had roles that contributed to the survival of the family and the community. However, African women were not immune to issues that white Feminists have presented, such as the lack of acknowledgment of women's contributions, gender inequality, and discrimination ,among other such oppressive forces which stem from a patriarchal system that perpetuates men and women as opposing forces and regularly

³¹ Mary Modupe Kolawole. "Transcending Incongruities: Rethinking Feminisms and the Dynamics of Identity in Africa," *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, no. 54 (2002): 90.

³²Mary Modupe Kola wole, "Transcending Incongruities,"93.

places women at the bottom of a hierarchal structure which was constructed for and by men.³³

Western Feminism is also not intersectional meaning that it does not take into account African women's race, class, and sexuality and the discrimination that comes from each of those different identities. While Black Feminism addresses the intersectionality of African-descended women, it often centralizes the voices and histories of African descended women in the West.

As such, it is crucial to find a Feminist outlook that is intersectional and centralizes the histories of African women—in 1993, Clenora Hudson Weems published a book called *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*, aiming to highlight the distinct experiences and challenges faced by African and African-descended women. The book tries to answer an essential question which is, “What is the relationship between an Africana woman and her family, her community, and her career in today's society that emphasizes, in the midst of oppression, human suffering, and death, the empowerment of women and individualism over human dignity and rights?”³⁴ Here Weems presents the issues that African women have with Feminism and questions of the role and place of women, their children, and their careers. Weems argues that a Feminism that centers on African women cannot be without all three of those aspects of life being present and aligned.³⁵

As such, Weems defines Africana Womanism as

An ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women. It critically addresses the dynamics of the conflict between the mainstream Feminist, the Black Feminist, the African Feminist, and the Africana womanist.³⁶

³³ Kola wole, “Transcending Incongruities,” 94-7.

³⁴ Clenora Hudson Weems, *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*, United States: Bedford Publishers, Incorporated, 1993,17.

³⁵ Weems, *Africana Womanism*, 1-151.

³⁶ Weems, *Africana Womanism*, 24.

The main argument in Weems's article is the understanding that Africana womanism does not see men as the enemy but rather the enemy as oppressive forces which create oppressive systems, such as colonialism and gender-based oppression, that then informs the way African and African-descended women behave. On the contrary, in Africana Womanism, men and women are allies that work to dismantle the systems and prioritize the goal of humanizing challenges faced by women. Africana womanism also centralizes harmony and unity by creating the space for the voices of Africa-based African women and their histories to shine alongside African-descended women in Global Africa.

The main ideas of Africana Womanism, such as highlighting the voices of African-descended women and the importance of unity among men and women, more forcefully show through in the theory Afro-Feminism. In her book *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, Sylvia Tamale further develops the idea of a school of theory that centralizes the experiences and challenges of African women on the continent and across the globe with her discussion of Afro-Feminism. The book goes into depth about the challenges African women faced as individuals due to decolonization, including not being seen as viable for making decisions for their communities. Tamale explains that colonial stories of resistance, subversion, and transformation were not exclusive to men; however, women have been othered on two fronts that have caused their experiences and contributions to be overlooked: patriarchy and imperialism. Although Western Feminists have addressed the patriarchy, Tamale argues that African women are different because they occupy "a separate cultural, social, economic and geopolitical landscape from the West."³⁷

³⁷ Tamale, *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, 41.

Tamale defined Afro-Feminism as a theory that seeks to create its own theories and discourses linked to the diversity of African realities. It works to reclaim the rich histories of Black women in challenging all forms of domination as they relate to patriarchy, race, class, sexuality, and global imperialism.³⁸ Tamale centered her discussion of Afro-Feminism through a Pan-African lens where she identified decolonization as a system which needs to be dismantled physically, ecologically and mentally for all African people across Global Africa. Through Tamale's book, one can see four key areas where Afro-Feminism finds its footing within scholarly work on women's studies, and those are traditional gender roles, gender inequality, intersectional discrimination, and lack of support and visibility of women's stories.³⁹

Tamale says Pan-African women possess "shared values of communal life and group solidarity, embedded in the philosophical concept of ubuntu, for example, also differentiate African people from modern Euro-American societies."⁴⁰ Professor Bantebya's junction that ubuntu was built on power sharing and inclusive elements supports Tamale's claim of the importance of communality within Pan-Africanism when it comes to women. Scholars, including John Marah, inform Afro-Feminism by claiming,

"transformational Feminism reconstructs the traditional barriers between men and women, femininity and masculinity; it is eclectic and recognizes the integrality of humanity; it is also critically examining the grey areas between what is masculine and what is feminize, economically, socially, and even sexually"⁴¹

The quote highlights the essence of humanity as well as both femininity and masculinity inform Transformational Feminism, which is Afro-Feminism.

³⁸ Tamale, *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, xiii.

³⁹ Tamale, *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*.

⁴⁰ Tamale, *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, 11.

⁴¹ As quoted in Tamale, *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, 41.

In her book *When Hen Begin to Crow*, Sylvia Tamale says the goal of Afro-Feminism is to “find a balance between the dictates of their sex and the gendered context in which they [women] operate.⁴²” calling attention to the importance of the conversations surrounding sex and gender in Africa. The importance of both femininity and masculinity within Afro-Feminism also extends to the gender and sexuality of African women and is a topic often left out of conversations around African women. Contemporary African women scholars such as Sylvia Tamale and Ifi Amadiume have significantly contributed to gender and sexuality in Africa. Their scholarly works have addressed the issues of the change of gender and sex, and they speak on issues of gender and sexuality in Africa from a humanistic perspective. Amadiume argues that gender has historically been fluid in many African societies. Tamale argues that it is due to colonialism and the development of cultural conservatism, which has contributed to more hostile dialogues around gender and sexuality in Africa. Tamale argues that sexuality has become a form of discrimination and oppression and highlights the importance of intersectionality of race, class, and gender when it comes to African women.⁴³

Utilizing the conceptual framework of Afro-Feminism the theory highlights how African women navigated their roles as Africa transformed from liberation movements to states organization. By re-telling the story of PAWO through an Afro-Feminist perspective, one can see an example of how African women navigated their roles and how one organization approached the questions posed by Weems, Tamale, and other African women scholars. Through an Afro-Feminist perspective, one can see the four key areas where African women saw a need for an intercontinental women’s organization in Africa. The four areas, traditional gender roles,

⁴² Tamale, Sylvia. *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999, 86.

⁴³ Tamale, Sylvia. *When Hens Begin to Crow*, 86.

gender inequality, intersectional discrimination, and lack of support and visibility, were some of the areas that women have historically felt excluded from or silenced.

Women in Africa have arguably played pivotal roles in mobilizing, organizing, and maintaining mass movements, but despite it all, they have remained on the sidelines concerning their histories and stories. Sylvia Tamale rightly expresses the sentiment by explaining that, “Indeed, African women raised questions of multiple dominations within male-led liberation movements, challenging dominance within multiple systems of oppressions that they experienced simultaneously.”⁴⁴ One of the most prominent spaces in which women raised questions was in the question of domestic and public spheres. The domestic sphere is often described as the women’s place, where women are expected to cook, clean and care for their children without regard for women’s wants and needs. On the other hand, the public sphere is described as the man’s place and includes spaces like the economy and politics. However, when it comes to African women, there are no clear-cut spaces where men can be and where women can be because they merge in their roles. Women in the marketplace are examples of how women can be in both spaces, as are women who run for political office. The identified four areas of gendered conflicts based on Tamale’s work; traditional gender roles, gender inequality, intersectional discrimination, and lack of support and visibility were some of the areas African women questioned during liberation movements. Tamale explains

Alongside men, African women fought colonial, political, racial and economic oppression but their particular activism also sprang from their positioning as women who suffered structural sexism and exploitation within and outside the liberation movements.⁴⁵

My research method draws on Afro-Feminist theory and oral history, prioritizing shared authority between the researcher and the narrators. This approach empowers the narrators to

⁴⁴ Tamale, *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, 64

⁴⁵ Tamale, *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, 64

share their experiences in their own words. It aligns with Afro-Feminism by placing women's interpretations of their cultural and political identities and experiences at the forefront.

Methods

Although methods such as archival studies and autobiographies have been used to study Pan-African organizations such as PAWO, they do not encompass the entire identities and experiences contributing to the total production and workings of PAWO. Scholars such as Ula Taylor, Ashley Farmer, and Kathleen Sheldon relied on archival resources and autobiographies in their research. In contrast, I have opted to utilize oral histories as the primary source material for my study. This decision was based on the fact that archival resources may not be reliable due to the limited record-keeping practices of the Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO). Furthermore, while autobiographies offer valuable insights into the PAWO's history, they are limited because they are written in French and may not include all of the narratives, particularly those excluded due to limited access to education and publishing opportunities.

Linda Shopes, an oral historian, explains that "Oral history might be understood as a self-conscious, disciplined conversation between two people about some aspect of the past considered by them to be of historical significance and internationally recorded for the record."⁴⁶ Oral histories allow for historical significance to be Shopes expresses the importance of individual stories being encompassed sharing that "oral histories also eloquently make the case for the active agency of individuals whose lives have been lived within deeply constraining circumstances."⁴⁷ As Shopes expresses women are such individuals who have endured deeply

⁴⁶ Shopes, Linda. "Making Sense of Oral History." historymatters.gmu.edu, February 2002, 2-3.

⁴⁷ Shopes, "What is Oral History?" 3.

constraining circumstances as they have long dealt with multiple systems of power that have resulted in their marginalization. She also expresses that,

Oral history does complicate simplistic notions of hegemony, that is the power of dominant political or cultural forces to control thought and action, as individuals articulate how they have maneuvered, with greater or lesser degrees of autonomy or conformity, risk, calculation or fear, within the circumstances of their lives.⁴⁸

Oral histories allow women to share what they can and would like to be known to the world despite the power dynamics which have made their stories less known or, in some cases, trivial.

Oral histories have three primary purposes of importance as they relate: firstly, they give shared authority and create dialogue; secondly, their purpose serves to understand, not verify; finally, they privilege women's stories. As Shopes says, "Oral history opens new views of the past."⁴⁹ As it relates to this thesis, oral histories allowed me to create spaces where African women's stories in PAWO were not Westernized nor male-centric. Oral histories complement Afro-Feminism because women dictate the stories and narratives. As such, I used oral histories and autobiographies to capture the essence and stories of women involved in PAWO's history and evolution.

Another reason for using oral histories as a research method is the way that oral histories frame the stories of women and how I can talk about them in my thesis. In my thesis, my goal is to create a timeline for PAWO and analyze the organization; this is important to note because I do not wish to condemn, grade, or critic the organization but to analyze it. The thesis thus analyzes the diverse ways in which African women contributed to Pan-Africanism, including through political activism and intellectual scholarship. The paper highlights the critical role played by PAWO and some of its prominent members, such as Jeanne Martine Cisse, Awa Keita,

⁴⁸ Shopes, "What is Oral History?" 5.

⁴⁹ Shopes, "What is Oral History?" 4.

and Virginie Kamara, in the anti-colonial struggles and state formation of the mid-20th century.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the paper acknowledges the significant intellectual contributions made by African women writers, including Amina Mama, Ifi Amadiume, and Sylvia Tamale, who continued to promote Pan-Africanism through their writing after PAWO dwindled in their activism.

⁵⁰ Jeanne Cissé Martin, *La Fille Du Milo* (Paris, France: Présence Africaine, 2009).

Chapter 3: History of the Pan African Women’s Organization

During the 1950s and 60s, gender roles in Africa were hotly contested and challenged as African nations gained independence and began to focus on establishing governing bodies. Women involved in liberation movements were also instrumental in state organizing during this transition.⁵¹ They not only worked actively in their respective countries but also engaged in conversations with women from other African diaspora backgrounds at events such as the All-African Women Conferences and with women whose political ideologies aligned with theirs, such as the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF).⁵² The idea of an intercontinental women's organization specific to African women became possible due to the spark of ideas from African women at the WIDF Congress. This idea became achievable with the foundation of the All African Women's Conference (AAWC), which later changed its name to PAWO but continued its work. As the organization evolved, however, changes came that decentralized women’s work on the continent. To track the development of the organization, this chapter is divided into three parts to periodize the evolution: the first part covers the organization as the AAWC; the second part delves into the organization after it became PAWO; and the final part looks at the organization through its restructuring in 2008.

1. All-African Women’s Organization

Following the end of World War II, conversations of a continental African women’s organization started taking root. In 1945 during meetings and conferences of the Women’s

⁵¹ Kathleen Sheldon, “Women in Africa and Pan-Africanism,” in *Routledge Handbook of Pan-Africanism*, ed. Reiland Rabaka (London, UK: Routledge, 2022), 333.

⁵² Yulia Gradskova, “The WIDF’s Work for Women's Rights in the (Post)Colonial Countries and the ‘Soviet Agenda,’” *International Review of Social History* 67, no. S30 (2022): 155–78.

International Democratic Federation (WIDF), founded by the Eastern bloc of the Cold War.⁵³

The organization is often attributed with socialist ideology due to its close collaboration with women in Moscow. Although there are often debates that argue that the organization was controlled by the Soviets, which may have limited the organization, the women in WIDF seemed to have gained support from the Soviets, which pushed them to be involved in the organization despite the division caused by the Cold War.⁵⁴ Overall, WIDF and the women's meetings and Congresses promoted women's rights, anti-colonial struggles and even aided African women in postcolonial state formation.⁵⁵ WIDF serves as a means to discuss the formation of PAWO, given that the former provided a platform for African women to initiate dialogues about establishing an intercontinental women's organization that would be founded, owned, and driven by African women, with a particular focus on the experiences of African women.

The WIDF Vienna Congress of 1958 was primarily known for its central topic, anti-colonialism, and the topics that were subsequently planned were based on women's place in the anti-colonial struggle. For example, the workshops during the Congress covered topics such as "defense of life, the possibility for women to combine work with motherhood, and the rights of children and young people to an education."⁵⁶ The organization was active in supporting women in liberation movements even in what is now considered the global south.⁵⁷ More specifically in Africa, the organization inspired and was inspired by African women such as Ransome Kuti who was vice president of WIDF. She, among other African women, was rooting for a women's

⁵³ Pan-African Association. Report of the Pan-African Conference, ca. 1900. *W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries*. Rosa De Jorio, "Of Rumors and Transfers: The Short Life of Western-Educated Women's Associations in French Sudan (1955-1960)," *Kritisk Etnografi*, vol. 3, no. 1, Svenska Sällskapet för Antropologi och Geografi, 2020, pp. 63–82

⁵⁴ Gradskova, "The WIDF's Work," 155–78.

⁵⁵ Gradskova, "The WIDF's Work," 157; Sheldon, "Women in Africa and Pan-Africanism," 333.

⁵⁶ Gradskova, "The WIDF's Work," 158.

⁵⁷ De Jorio, "Of Rumors and Transfer," 72.

organization on the continent.⁵⁸ At this time, WIDF was a space for African women to meet and talk with other like-minded women from across the world and further push for a continental organization where they could talk among themselves. While it was good for women to speak globally, African women needed space in Africa to identify and find solutions to their issues and create sisterhoods among themselves.

However, forming a continental African women's organization was monumental due to the political and social differences surrounding African independence movements. For example, groupings such as the Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union, and later the Casablanca and Monrovia Groups division kept newly formed states separated due to their ideological differences.⁵⁹ The Casablanca and Monrovia groups formed during the independence period in Africa as newly independent states attempted to tackle the issue of African unity. The Casablanca group advocated for a unified Africa under one government regulated and coordinated by all countries involved. They were often referred to as the more radical group of the two and consisted of North and West African countries. On the other hand, the Monrovia group advocated for a more gradual integration of all the newly independent countries by maintaining state sovereignty and cooperation, beginning with a more regional approach. The Monrovia group was more conservative in that respect and included countries from Central, East, and Southern Africa. The Casablanca group wanted to achieve the most African unity as promptly as possible with a central government because a central government would grant newly independent African countries the space and support they would need to flourish without Western interference.

⁵⁸ Iris Berger, "African Women's Movements in the Twentieth Century: A Hidden History," *African Studies Review* 57, no. 3 (2014): 1–19. WIDF Congresses continued up until the early 1990s. Their headquarters changed from Paris to Berlin during the Cold War. It functions on a smaller scale in Brazil; Jordi, "Of Rumors and Transfers," 72.

⁵⁹ Cissé, *La Fille Du Milo*, 11-15.

However, the Monrovia group thought this to be too radical and would take away from the sovereignty of the African countries.⁶⁰

The division between these two groups drastically affected all levels of organizing in Africa due to its creation of several debates, such as debates around the regionalization of African unity, which later led to the creation of the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Union of African States (UAS). The division among the group also caused political schism based on regional and ideological interests meaning that a country would join a group based on the interests of that group rather than in the debate of how best to approach African unity. Overall, the division caused major debates surrounding African unity and approaches that would best guarantee a unified Africa; however, in the effort to find the best approach, the Monrovia and Casablanca groups caused more division rather than unity.⁶¹ The groupings caused divisions that would carry on well into the 21st century with the OAU, today called the African Union (AU). Though the OAU was created as a compromise for the Monrovia and Casablanca groupings, the OAU seemed to have moved toward a gradual approach that some would argue is aligned with the Monrovia group and a continual discussion of how best to approach a continental African unity.⁶²

Despite the divisions, the goal of forming a continental women's organization was still a possibility for women in Africa in the 1950s because of women and organizations such as Jeanne Martin Cisse and later PAWO, who wanted to see African nations liberated and women part of the formation of newly liberated nations. Jeanne Martin Cisse was a political active Guinean

⁶⁰ Rita Kiki, Edozie, and Keith Gottschalk. "Pan-Africanist Globalization and Cultural Politics: Promoting the African World View." In *The African Union's Africa: New Pan-African Initiatives in Global Governance*, Michigan State University Press, 2014.

⁶¹ Edozie and Gottschalk, "Pan Africanist Globalization," 69-75.

⁶² Edozie and Gottschalk, "Pan Africanist Globalization," 61,70.

teacher during Guinea's independence. Due to her politically activeness, Cisse was appointed the secretary general of the Union of Senegalese Women and was sent to a women's conference in Asnieres, France, in 1954. In her autobiography, Cisse details the events that led to the foundation of PAWO, a women's organization that would include women's voices across Africa. Having said that, the conference at Asnieres was the fourth women's gathering under WIDF.⁶³

Ouezzin Coulibaly, a woman from current-day Burkina Faso and based in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire, attended the WIDF meeting in Beijing and made sure more African women came to the next meeting at Asnieres in 1954 due to the important topics which were covered and included women; in an effort to include more African women in the conversations surrounding women, Cisse attended the meeting in 1954.⁶⁴ The meeting in Asnieres acted as a location for women around the world to convene and speak on topics that they deemed important but were not being spoken of in the general public. The meeting was a space for women to discuss the challenges they faced in their daily lives and the women they represented and find solutions to some of those challenges outside often male-dominated spaces. The 1954 meeting went successfully, with the women deciding to meet again in Vienna for a Congressional meeting equipped with workshops to tackle more issues brought which were brought up.

As such, WIDF met again in 1958 in Vienna, Austria, to continue the conversations surrounding women. It was at the conference in Austria that Cisse met the following women, Dembele Bassata Djire, a teacher from French Sudan; Marthe Ouandie and Gertrude from Union of the Peoples of Cameroon; and Margret Kenyatta, an activist from Kenya. The Vienna conference provided the space for these women to expand their horizons to how other countries were approaching the issue of women in social and political settings. To further see and explore

⁶³ Sheldon, "Women in Africa and Pan-Africanism," 333; Cisse, *La Fille*, 3.

⁶⁴ Cisse, *La Fille*, 3; Sheldon, "Women in Africa and Pan-Africanism," 333.

the way women lived in different countries, Cisse and Bassata were invited and visited cities in China where they participated in meetings with youth, workers and saw the way education was passed down from elders to youth through classes created for them and by them.⁶⁵

In 1958, upon her return from Austria and China, Cisse was motivated to become involved with the politics of francophone West Africa. Also, in 1958, France began to draft the New French Constitution proposing a referendum for their overseas colonies to become independent or continue to depend on France. Cisse's organization, the Senegalese Women's Union, worked with trade unions and youth organizations to ensure the referendum favor independence. Cisse said, "For the Senegalese women's Union, independence meant a wide opening towards freedom and justice as well as the fulfillment of the people's aspirations."⁶⁶ She and other women joined together at the Place Portent Square in Dakar to rally on voting no on the referendum in 1958.⁶⁷ In September 1958 Guinea led by Sekou Touré voted down on the referendum, and Guinea gained independence.⁶⁸ West African countries had Guinea, along with Ghana and other independent West African countries helped create conditions for most of West Africa to attain independence by 1960.

After returning from the meeting in Austria and China, Cisse and fellow West African women met in Bamako to set up a meeting for the Organization of West African Women (OWAW) to further continue the conversation which was had at the international level.⁶⁹ It was also an opportunity for Cisse and Bassata to share what they had learned and seen in China that may inform the conversations within OWAW. The summer of 1958 was also a historic moment

⁶⁵ Cisse, *La Fille*, 3; *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd Edition*. S.v. "Women's International Democratic Federation WIDF." Retrieved April 16, 2023, from <https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Women%27s+International+Democratic+Federation+WIDF>

⁶⁶ Cisse, *La Fille*, 5; De Jorio, "Of Rumors and Transfers," 63–82

⁶⁷ De Jorio, "Of Rumors and Transfers," 70; Adi and Sherwood, *Pan African History*, 181.

⁶⁸ Cissé, *La Fille Du Milo*, 5.

⁶⁹ Cisse, *La Fille*, 6; De Jorio, "Of Rumors and Transfers," 71.

for women because in July 1958, a meeting took place of the National Women's Committee of West African Women's (NWCWW) Organization in Bamako.⁷⁰ The meeting was chaired by Loffo Camara, a Guinean who was appointed Deputy Minister by the Minister of Social Affairs, Bangaly Camara.⁷¹ The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the living standard for women in rural and urban settings, early marriages and dowries. For three days, the women spoke of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), lack of education for girls, and polygamy, a widely practiced tradition across Africa. After these conversations, it was decided that a union would be created called Union Des Femmes de L'ouest Africain (Union of West African Women), and its headquarters would be in Cotonou, Dahomey, current day Benin.⁷² However, as ambitious as the organization was it saw its downfall soon after due to social and cultural challenges.

After she and her fellow delegates returned from Bamako, Cisse, and her colleagues were asked to report back to women leaders in party branches and local committee leaders by Sekou Toure, then president of Guinea. All was well until the delegates presented the conversation topics from Bamako, including FGM and polygamy, and the topics caused protests to break out among those present. The local women were against these ideas of anti-polygamy and FGM as they were essential and traditional practices. Similarly, women from the Bamako delegations faced similar lash back leading to the downfall of the first ideas of a transcontinental women's organization.⁷³

During this turmoil for the Bamako delegation, the Republic of Guinea began to organize as a country after becoming isolated from other French colonies due to the referendum. One of

⁷⁰ Cisse, *La Fille*, 7.

⁷¹ Cisse, *La Fille*, 7.

⁷² Archives of the National Women's Committee of the Union Soudanaise, Cisse, *La Fille*, 7; Sheldon "Women in Africa and Pan-Africanism," 334.

⁷³ Cisse, *La Fille*, 9.

the first projects the country embarked on was the organization of the youth in a committee called African Democratic Rally Youth.⁷⁴ The purpose of the committee was to use the youth to spread ideas that would help move Guinea forward. The committee consisted of boys and girls from Guinea who were elected as well as adult mentors, which included Narcoyra Diane, Nima Sow Bah, Seydouba Yattara, Tidiane Sano, Kemoko Toure, and Jeanne Martine Cisse, who had some background with the work she did with the Bamako delegation.⁷⁵ Diane, Bah and Cisse were primarily tasked with mentoring the girls and their main task was to convince the local people to adopt vocational training for girls; this meant that the young girls would be formally trained in a skill which they would later be paid for should they chose to work.⁷⁶ They learned that illiteracy was highest among the girls and began to tour Guinea to speak to parents in different regions. They found that the parents wanted to keep their daughter's home in the northern parts of Guinea. At the same time, in the forestry regions, they were open to the idea of vocational training for their girls.⁷⁷ In certain areas the group was met with stone-throwing and heated debates about equality between boys and girls.⁷⁸ In order to continue to spread these ideas, the committee held sporting events and cultural activities to engage in conversation with the local peoples. Following the tours around Guinea, the committee reconvened and organized training courses and seminars on topics such as literacy, civic education, and sewing, to name a few skills developed during the training.⁷⁹ The girls who took these courses later returned to their

⁷⁴ Hapgood, David. "Guinea's First Five Years," *Current History* 45, no. 268 (1963): 355–57; Cisse, *La Fille*, 9.

⁷⁵ Cisse, *La Fille*, 9.

⁷⁶ Cisse, *La Fille*, 9; Hapgood, "Guinea's First Five Years," 356.

⁷⁷ Cisse, *La Fille*, 9.

⁷⁸ There is a story of a mother of three daughters and two sons who was adamant that there were vast differences between boys and girls, explaining that the girls would fetch high bride prices and could, therefore, never be equal to the boys. The mother was adamant that schooling was unnecessary and that everything they needed to learn would be learned at home. Cisse recounts that she later visited the same place and found that the girls had been married off and had left their village, Cisse *La Fille*, 9-10.

⁷⁹ Cisse, *La Fille*, 10.

homes and became teachers to others and started a cycle of learning and passing on the knowledge, and in parts of Guinea the cycles created Women's Training Centers.⁸⁰

As Guinea emerged from its isolation, so did the country's work among its youth and women. Through an alliance formed by Ghana and Guinea and their single parties, mass movements were organized by youth, women, and workers to aid the countries in creating nation-states that benefited the people they served. In 1960, French Sudan, today Mali, joined the Guinea-Ghana alliance and created the Ghana-Guinea-Mali alliance, where the respective presidents revived the idea for a continental women's organization, referencing the failed West African Women's Organization (UFOA).⁸¹ In 1958, an All Africa People Conference chaired by Tom Mboya, a young man took place in Accra, Ghana.⁸² Trade Unions, youths and women, attended the All-Africa meeting where Cisse, Keita, and Pauline Clarke revived the idea of African Women's Organization with leadership from Abdoulaye Diallo. The women adopted the name and formed an All-African Women's Conference and met in Dar es Salaam.⁸³ The purpose of the All-African Women's Conference was to play "an important role in economic, social and cultural development as well as the total liberation of Africa."⁸⁴ The conference was well attended by women from Dahomey, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. Following the three-day conference, a group of appointed women met in Tunis, Tunisia, to draft statuses for the All-Africa Women's Conference; they were Virginie Kamara from Senegal, Farida Farouk from Tunisia, Somaiya Fahmy from Egypt,

⁸⁰ Cisse, *La Fille*, 10

⁸¹ Cisse, *La Fille*, 11.

⁸² "Resolutions of the All-African People's Conference," *Current History* 37, no. 215 (1959): 41–46.

⁸³ It is said that the word "conference" was used in place of organization, and there was even an All Africa Conference of Churches, for example.

⁸⁴ Cisse, *La Fille*, 12.

Pauline Clark of Ghana and Jeanne Martine Cisse from Guinea. They were well met by the women's organization in Tunisia as well as the president.⁸⁵

The All-Africa Women's Conference was a women's group that supported Pan-Africanism indirectly. The group did not outright say they were part of the movement, nor did they use Pan-Africanism to express their thoughts; however, based on the foundation of the All-African Women's group, they were promoting Pan-Africanism, especially with the goal of the organization to play a role in the liberation of all of Africa and its economic, social, and cultural development. The All-Africa Women's Conference attendants were determined to keep the conversations going from the conference and continue their goal of liberating Africa. As such, it was decided that another All-Africa Women's conference would be held in the coming decade.⁸⁶

As the women at the conference wanted to meet again in 1960, the women were invited to meet in Tanganyika, today Tanzania, which was a cause for celebration as the country was the headquarters or meeting space for organizations such as ANC and later MPLA organizations which contributed to the fall of Apartheid in South Africa.⁸⁷ The conference was promoted by TANU, the Tanganyika African Nation Union and Bibi Titi.⁸⁸ However, the women did not believe they were prepared yet to meet in Tanganyika. In September 1961, while Cisse attended the 16th United Nations General Assembly, Awa Keita and Virginie Kamara prepared for the meeting in Tanganyika. On the other hand, Cisse met Angie Brooks from Liberia and Judith Imru from Ethiopia during the UN meeting, and their delegation, which was the fourth delegation, included women from ten African countries. Their main topics included politics and

⁸⁵ Cisse, *La Fille*, 12.

⁸⁶ Cisse, *La Fille*, 12-3.

⁸⁷ Adi and Sherwood, *Pan African History*, 9-10. Tanganyika, or Tanzania, was one of the most progressive countries in Africa outside of Ghana and Egypt at the time.

⁸⁸ Bibi Titi was a Zanzibarian woman who played an essential role in the struggle for independence in Tanzania. She was well known for her advocacy for the rights of women in the country and across Africa.

economics, social and humanitarian affairs, finance, and legal matters, and each topic had a respective committee. Cisse was appointed to the third committee to talk about social affairs and the creation of a declaration of women's rights. The committee covered topics such as minimum age of marriage and mutual consent for married couples, to name a few.⁸⁹ Cisse, Brooks and Imru represented African women at large in the UN meetings.

At a UN debate about the declaration of women's rights, Cisse shared propositions Guinea had taken regarding defending women's rights. However, she faced backlash from a minister of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria attacking her character and rejecting the ideas of women's rights because he claimed mothers in Africa would be opposed to it. Cisse was supported by many delegates, men and women, and made her points clear to the minister. However, the minister complained about Cisse's behavior and asked for an apology to which Cisse was less than inclined to do but did so to keep the diplomatic relationship between Guinea and Nigeria.⁹⁰ That incident shows just one among many instances when women were faced with backlash not because of the topics which they spoke about but about the fragile ego of men.

Cisse returned to Conakry in 1962, working alongside Awa Keita and Virginie Camara to continue to prepare for the meeting in Tanganyika. It is necessary to note that the meeting in Tanganyika was important for the mobilization and later for forming of an intercontinental African women's organization. The meeting in Tanganyika would be one of the first continental meetings of African women, and it was decided that they would meet in Dar Es Salaam in July 1962. To prepare for the meeting, women from Egypt, Tunisia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal met a week before the official meeting, which Bibi Titi and Lucy Lameck coordinated.⁹¹

⁸⁹ UN Document on Declaration against Discrimination of women.

⁹⁰ Cisse, *La Fille*, 14

⁹¹ Cisse, *La Fille*, 13-14.

The meeting was headed by Mama Sophia Kawawa and Mama Betty Kaunda of Rhodesia and was well attended by individuals such as Julius Nyerere and his wife, the leader of Tanganyika.⁹²

The group identified the themes for the first assembly as follows,

- To mobilize women, youth, and workers to attain liberation
- To work towards the effective participation of African women
- To pursue the struggle for the recognition of women's rights and participation in decision making
- To monitor the progress and contribute to the improvement of women's status through the collection of data and statistics on women and children
- To support national and international action geared towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination and injustice against women
- To support liberation movements in their struggle and promote friendship, cooperation, and unity between African states
- To support international cooperation and participate in all activities regarding disarmament and peace building⁹³

The conference covered topics such as the status of women and children's illiteracy and skill development for women. In between sessions, there was singing and dancing to encourage friendly relations among the women present.⁹⁴ The conference included African women from across the world, such as women from the United States, Zambia, Algeria, Egypt, Congo, Mali, and Zaire, present-day Democratic Republic of Congo.⁹⁵ The All-Africa Women's Conference and later the Sixth Pan African Conference contributed to solidified relationships between women in Africa and women across the globe. The conference ended very well and closed out on July 31, 1962, and through a vote at the conference, it was decided that the headquarters would be in Bamako, Mali, where Modibo Keita was head of the government of Mali.⁹⁶ While in Mali, the All-Africa Women's group saw the establishment of agricultural cooperatives and adaption

⁹² The conference was also attended by women from 14 countries who later decided to be the founders. These countries were Cote d'Ivoire, Dahomey, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Tanganyika, Togo, and Tunisia.

⁹³ Cisse, *La Fille*, 16.

⁹⁴ Farmer, "The Pan-African Woman," 133.

⁹⁵ Farmer, "The Pan-African Woman," 13.

⁹⁶ Cisse, *La Fille*, 16.

of later marriages for young girls. They saw the mobilization of Malian women under Sister Awa, the first woman member of parliament in West Africa.

On July 27-31, 1964, the next All Africa Women's Conference was held in Monrovia, Liberia. In the following years, the women engaged with other organizations to bring African women's issues to the international stage and engage in dialogue with several groups, including OAU and WIDF. At this conference, it was established that seminars would be held between conferences, that the conferences would be held for two to four years, and that the secretariat would be established to help with the organization of the conferences. The secretariat included representation for North Africa and Central Africa with the addition of Congo-Brazzaville to the group. In May 1965, there was a Maternal and Child Health Seminar with the World Health Organization (WHO) and WIDF. To follow through with the decision for seminars between conferences in June 1967, a seminar was held on vocational training in Brazzaville. Also, in 1967 at the OAU summit in Kinshasa, the All-Africa Women group was asked to be observers and, moving forward, were asked to report back on their activities.⁹⁷ However, although the group was asked to join the Organization of Africa Union (OAU), they could not actively participate in the conversations yet.

In 1968 the third All-Africa Women's Conference was held in Algiers.⁹⁸ The most important topic covered at this conference was the relocation of the headquarters, which was still in Bamako. Political struggles were brewing in Bamako, Mali, which is why there was a need for the headquarters to be relocated. Modibo Keita came to power in 1960 when Mali gained independence, and Keita worked to create a working government for Mali.⁹⁹ Keita's approach to

⁹⁷ Cisse, *La Fille*, 22.

⁹⁸ Cisse, *La Fille*, 22-3.

⁹⁹ Valerie Plave Bennett, "Military Government in Mali," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1975): 249-66.

state organization was considered socialist. In 1968 a coup occurred led by Moussa Traore, the commander in chief of the Armed Forces, due to the political ideology causing instability and economic decline. The coup was described to be bloodless, and Keita was exiled to his house until 1977.¹⁰⁰ Although the story of the overthrow of Modibo Keita was more extensive, for brevity, it was due to this struggle in power in Mali that caused the headquarters to change.

However, conversations about relocation opened a debate that the headquarter should rotate so that there is the most significant participation of women all over the continent. It was decided that it would be moved to Algiers. Meanwhile, the organization was beginning to settle in Algiers. The Sudanese Women's Association invited the women to join them in an FGM seminar, Cisse says it was before the West hijacked it.¹⁰¹ The All-Africa women's group, along with the Sudanese women's group wanted to approach the topic of FGM in a conciliatory way, meaning they wanted to approach the topic with respect to the traditions of the people while teaching about the damaging effects of the procedures.¹⁰² However, the two women's groups invited groups such as UNICEF and World Health Organization (WHO) who wanted to approach the topic in a more confrontational manner. After many conversations, it was agreed that the topic would be approached more carefully. Due to this, the topic of FGM reached a global level, and much progress has been made in limiting the practices today.¹⁰³ As the women returned to their headquarters in Algiers, they prepared for African Women's Day, marked July 31st. The All-Africa women used this opportunity to display the work they had been doing, such as the vocational training centers they established and the women with whom they were working.

¹⁰⁰ Bennett, "Military Government in Mali," 254-65.

¹⁰¹ Cisse, *La Fille*, 3

¹⁰² Cisse, *La Fille*, 3.

¹⁰³ Cisse, *La Fille*, 3.

2. AAWC becomes Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO)

The mid-1970s brought about oil and debt crisis were the main focuses of many countries inside and outside of Africa, meaning it was the end of the nationalist era in Africa. In July 1972, the 10th OAU summit was held in Rabat, Morocco, where the All-Africa delegation asked for full participation in the OAU and UN sessions. Until this point, the group was only allowed to observe but was granted full participation rights at this summit. At this summit, Cisse was appointed Permanent Representative to the UN and ambassador to Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela. Cisse's position with the All-Africa group was succeeded by Tahara Kamara from Mali, who had been with the organization for some years.¹⁰⁴

In June 1974, the sixth Pan-African Congress was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It was a historical one for African women on the continent and in Global Africa.¹⁰⁵ At this conference, how women had been involved in Pan-Africanism became known to all who were part of the movement. Until this point, women in the movement were known for their efforts as secretaries and receptionists to keep editorials and other official documentation. However, the Congress in 1974 showed how women in the movement could do more than secretarial work. Although conversation to hold a Pan African Congress had been circulating in activist circles since the 1960s, it was former women members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Center for Black Education (CBE) who developed and managed to create the logistics for the Congress to take place.¹⁰⁶ Sylvia Hill, an American professor, became the secretary general and led the planning meetings for the sixth Pan African Congress.¹⁰⁷ Though the organization for the Congress was marred by debates of what caused global white

¹⁰⁴ Farmer, "The Pan-African Woman," 134.

¹⁰⁵ Cisse, *La Fille*, 3-4.

¹⁰⁶ Farmer, "The Pan African Woman," 139.

¹⁰⁷ Farmer, "The Pan African Woman," 140.

supremacy and intersectionality, it was the women's insistence on getting together which made the Congress possible. Throughout the Congress, women made their contributions well known and heard by all present; for instance, the women were the ones who pushed for a policy that centralized the liberation efforts occurring in Africa and a policy that liberated African women as instruments for the liberation against imperialism, exploitation, and neocolonialism.¹⁰⁸

The following month, July of 1974, the All-Africa Women held its fourth conference in Dakar, and it was at this conference that they adopted the name PAWO. At this conference, Cisse stepped down from the position of Secretary General and was succeeded by Fathia Bettahar of Algeria.¹⁰⁹ The 1974 conference established the relationship between Africa-based women and African women globally. At the conference, Audley Moore and Alberta Hill represented American women, and Moore was asked to give an address.¹¹⁰ In this address, she expressed how important it was for Africa-based women and women in global Africa to work together to tackle the challenges brought forth by colonialism and the patriarchy. Moore focused her address on expressing the importance of women in the liberation of Africa. She also expressed the need to liberate African people politically, economically, and mentally. Moore finished her address by saying, "We want you to know that when your great leaders and statesmen speak, they are speaking to and for us, also... For we are Africans, too, regardless of being born in the U.S."¹¹¹ Her statement left a mark on the women present because it solidified the sisterhood that transcended borders for African-descended women everywhere. Moore's

¹⁰⁸ Farmer, "The Pan African Woman," 142.

¹⁰⁹ Cisse, *La Fille*, 38; Sheldon, "Women in Africa and Pan-Africanism," 333.

¹¹⁰ Farmer, "The Pan-African Woman," 134.

¹¹¹ Farmer, "The Pan African Woman," 135.

address touched all who attended, and there was newfound energy in women heading a future for African unity and self-determination on the continent and in Global Africa.¹¹²

PAWO was active on a smaller scale but still active as they participated in a conference against Apartheid held in Havana, Cuba, in June 1976. The representative was Putuse Appolus Devantus, a South African woman who was in exile in Namibia, where she and others discussed how to “equality for all women in all spheres”¹¹³ as part of conversations concerning apartheid in South Africa; this is to say that PAWO was still active in conversations concerning African women on the global level. As women’s roles in African societies changed from traditional to more “modern” roles, African women and their organizations became more involved in the global dialogues of the role of women. African women saw ways to use these international spaces to promote their struggles in international spaces where solutions were more accessible to African women. Two of the most influential and essential conferences/dialogues surrounding the role of women took place at the United Nation’s Women’s Conferences in 1985 and 1995.¹¹⁴ These conferences showed how involved African women were becoming in the international world and especially in spaces that were created for and by women.

The first such conference was the United Nations conference in 1985 which took place in Nairobi, Kenya, and was referred to as the “African Regional Conference on Women.” There were 46 African countries represented, and they covered six main themes: women and development, education and training, women and health, women and the environment, women

¹¹² Farmer, “The Pan African Woman,” 138.

¹¹³ United Nations Centre against Apartheid, *International Seminar on the Eradication of Apartheid and in Support of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa: Final Documents, Messages and List of Participants*, Reports. United Nations (New York), 1976, 31.

¹¹⁴ United Nations, “Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995,” United Nations. United Nations, 1996; United Nations, “Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. 1985,” United Nations. United Nations, 1986. /.

and armed conflict, and the girl child.¹¹⁵ The conference resulted in the adoption of policies that dealt with challenges by women in Africa with the goal of the advancement of women. The conference allowed African women to share their experiences, opinions, and perspectives in an international spotlight. As one of the first international women's meetings on African soil, the African women present were determined to not only share their experiences and perspectives but also create the space for women such as Palestinian women to share their experiences and gain support for their anti-Zionist agenda from fellow women.¹¹⁶ The conference on Kenya ended successfully with the adoption of policies that seemed to have the best interest of women in mind. Due to conference's success in Nairobi, there were high hopes for the next UN women's conference, scheduled in 1995.

The UN Women's Conference in 1995 was decidedly held in Beijing to create a plan of action for promoting gender equality resulting in the writing of the Declaration of Women's Rights.¹¹⁷ The declaration acknowledges the challenges women faced in terms of equality, finds key area of concern, and identifies actions that governments and other stakeholders can take to address the areas of concerns.¹¹⁸ More-so, the document acted as a call of action for women to coordinate in order to achieve gender equality on every level from local to international.¹¹⁹ Although the conference established a vital document for women across the world, the conference has been criticized for the way that Western Feminists approached women's issues citing that they were not intersectional. Although women share some everyday struggles across the world, there is still a need to discuss the way that those struggles manifest when also face

¹¹⁵ United Nations, "Report of the World Conference."

¹¹⁶ Although the Palestinian women did not get outright support for their anti-Zionist campaign, they got the women present to condemn racism and discrimination on every level.

¹¹⁷ United Nations, "Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995."

¹¹⁸ United Nations, "Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995."

¹¹⁹ Campbell, "The Pan African Experience," 1046.

with racism, homophobia, class, and religious discrimination.¹²⁰ Although the conference was well intended and for the continuation for all that occurred in Nairobi, however, it became co-opted by Western Feminists, women such as Hillary Clinton who shifted the conversation about decolonization and the way oppressive systems of power went beyond sexism and included racism as well as discrimination based on a woman's class and sex.¹²¹

In addition to the cooptation of women's dialogues by Western Feminists, and the move toward a more global African women's involvement, PAWO began to struggle in its continual work and relevancy. The organization's struggles started in 1974 when there was a push for PAWO to create an affiliation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to maintain relevancy and remain in conversations concerning Africans. The affiliation acted as a way for the OAU to claim that they had women within their organization who contributed to the more excellent dialogues pertaining to women in Africa and on the global stage. However, "Despite this flurry of initiatives embarked upon by the OAU to improve the status of women, little has changed on the ground; not only do women remain grossly underrepresented within the AU primary policymaking structures (i.e., the Assembly of Heads of States and Government, the Executive Council and the Peace and Security Council), but patriarchy remains highly institutionalized in its practices and systems."¹²² There was not much change with the OAU. Neither was there much change for PAWO as it became affiliated with the OAU.

The overthrow of Keita, the affiliation with the Africa Union, and the co-opting of the UN women's conferences were essential to understanding the future of PAWO in the following years. The organization was never established regarding organization, budget, and activities. The

¹²⁰ Rebecca J Cook, "Effectiveness of the Beijing Conference Advancing International Law Regarding Women," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting (American Society of International Law)* 91 (1997): 310–17.

¹²¹ United Nations, "Fourth World Conference, Beijing 1995."

¹²² Tamale, *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, 361.

General secretary struggled with a tiny staff, scant resources, and a changing geopolitical climate.¹²³ However, the happenings of the seventh Congress, in addition to geopolitical struggles which began to emerge, led to downscaling the global operations of PAWO and even the secretariat. Also, as Farmer explained, part of why PAWO dwindled in activity as well as its low reach in the constituency, was due to the lack of support from other Pan-African Organizations.¹²⁴

Madame Cisse and other politically active women were also active in the liberation movements and ruling parties, having played a role in nationalistic politics. With that came the challenges of the post-independence era, and PAWO survived even if many of the founders disappeared from the limelight. However, others forged on in accordance with the historic-political evolution of their predecessors. According to Jaja Fatoumata Toure, after this move, the movement fell into a slump as the administration at the time struggled to keep the organizations moving forward.¹²⁵ Here, Jaja Toure pointed out that there had been a slump across the continent and the globe during this time due to global sociopolitical issues such as increases in economic inflation as seen with the gas prices and the Vietnam War to name a few. Jaja Toure also pointed out a hitch in record collecting within the organization as the headquarters moved from Algiers to Luanda, Angola. By their admission, record keeping was never their strong point. One needs to go to Angola and Algeria to fill in the gaps from the fourth Congress in Dakar to the 10th that took place in Namibia.¹²⁶ The long-serving Secretary General from Senegal was in office from 1986 to 2008 before she handed over to the South Africans, the headquarters having moved to

¹²³ Fatoumata Toure, *Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO)*, Other, June 2022.

¹²⁴ Farmer, "The Pan African Woman,"

¹²⁵ Toure, *Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO)*.

¹²⁶ Toure, *Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO)*.

Pretoria. She steered the organization for many years under challenging circumstances before handing it over to the ANC Women in South Africa.

PAWO remained in a slum for the 1980s and into the early 1990s. Then in 1994, the Pan African Women's Liberation Organization (PAWLO) was founded just before the 7th Pan African Congress.¹²⁷ At the Congress, there were divisions due to complications transpiring in Sudan and those present from SPLA from South Sudan. Despite such complications at the Congress, discussions of a secretariat emerged so that the years between the Congress members could continue the dialogues; this theme of unity outside the Congresses flowed even before the Congress convened as African and women of African descent began discussing, creating an entity and space where their issues could be discussed. The weekend before the Congress, there were advocates for the inclusion of women of African descent across the globe then, leading to the formation of the Pan African Women's Liberation Organization (PAWLO).¹²⁸ Although there are arguments that claim that it was PAWO's lack of activities that led to the creation of PAWLO, it is the inclusion of women across the globe that brought out the foundation of PAWLO. PAWO was said to organize and do work on the continent, while PAWLO would do similar work at the global level. To ensure cooperation between the organizations, Fatma Babiker Mahmoud was appointed president and member of the Internal Management Committee of the Global Pan-African Movement.

Zaline Makini-Campbell talking about PAWO wrote,

This organization is an arm of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and essentially embraces wives of heads of state, ministers and other women with high-ranking associations. The average women on the streets of African countries or in the rural areas have never heard of

¹²⁷ "Rebuilding The Pan African Movement, A Report on the 7th Pan African Congress," *African Journal of Political Science / Revue Africaine de Science Politique* 1, no. 1 (1996): 6; Gail Hershatter, Emily Honig, and Lisa Rofel. "Reflections on the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing and Huairou, 1995," *Social Justice* 23, no. 1/2 (63-64) (1996): 368-75.

¹²⁸ Makini Roy-Campbell, "Pan-African Women Organizing," 50.

PAWO despite its 30 or more years of existence. Additionally, membership in this organization is restricted to continental Africans.¹²⁹

However, PAWO did not become part of the OAU until 1967, meaning it had existed on its own before then. Additionally, PAWO as a name could not have been due partially to the name change in 1974, 20 years after its foundation. This was also the time that the organization fell into inactivity due to financial and organizational reasons.¹³⁰ I would argue that PAWO could have served as an extension of the Pan African Movement had it been adopted by the movement. However, PAWLO presented an issue that PAWO should have foreseen at its foundation: the involvement of women of African descent around the world in which PAWLO was founded. Had PAWO been adopted by the Pan-African movement, it could have furthered the goals of PAWO and PAWLO.

It is noteworthy to highlight that the history and narrative of PAWO include women and organizations who paved the way for PAWO's foundation and continual work on the continent. Along with PAWO and PAWLO, other Pan African women's organizations began to form, such as the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), formed in 1988. FEMNET is a women's organizations that works with organization, both international and domestic, in African countries, as well as governments, for the empowerment of African women and girls. Their primary goal is to advance gender equality and promote women in leadership positions across Africa. FEMNET is still active in countries across Africa, and they are based in Nairobi, Kenya.¹³¹ The organization has tremendously contributed to the struggle of African women in ways that have pushed them forward. They have worked with organizations and conferences such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations against

¹²⁹ Makini Roy-Campbell, "Pan-African Women Organizing," 50-1.

¹³⁰ Cisse, *La Fille*, 20.

¹³¹ African Women's Development and Communication Network. "Our HerStory." FEMNET, March 24, 2021.

Women and Girls (CEDAW)¹³² and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) to promote their agenda of amplifying African women's voices, their needs, their priorities and aspirations in dialogues surrounding policy and other such dialogues that impact African women's lives.¹³³ They have involved women, and men, from all walks of life in their pursuit of gender equality and commitment to women's rights through workshops, networking events and skill-based initiatives that help promote self-sufficiency among African women.¹³⁴ These different initiatives promote long term sufficiency much different from other global organization which gives short term solutions to communities in Africa. Although the organization is not directly connected to the Pan African Movement, it does share similar values with the movement, which makes it a PAWO, such as its commitment to African Unity, self-determination, and liberation from capitalist, patriarchal, and neoliberal oppression, discrimination and injustices.¹³⁵

3. PAWO Re-Organization

Similarly, though PAWO had not been directly connected to the Pan-African Movement since its formation in 1962, it had been promoting African unity and other such values of Pan-Africanism throughout its formation from All-Africa Conference to the current day PAWO. In 2008 the organization went through a re-organization where they changed the goals and how they would approach the challenges faced by current-day African women. The vision for PAWO states that it works to create "A continent that is ideologically and patriotically unified, secure, independent, economically self-reliant and sustaining itself in a Pan African concept."¹³⁶ The

¹³² In *The United Nations adopted the articles presented in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* In 2016

¹³³ African Women's Development and Communication Network, "Our HerStory."

¹³⁴ African Women's Development and Communication Network, "Our HerStory."

¹³⁵ African Women's Development and Communication Network, "Our HerStory."

¹³⁶ Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO), "Enhancing Patriotic Pan African Ideology."

organization describes itself as a non-profit organization. In contrast, the mission statement establishes the goal for PAWO as “[finding]African solutions to African problems ourselves.”¹³⁷ The organization has an executive committee that consists of a president who is currently Eunice Ipinge from Namibia, a secretary general, Grace Kabayo from Uganda, five vice presidents who represent different parts of Africa. Dlamini Bathabile from South Africa represents Southern Africa, Sakiliba Diallo from Mali represents West Africa, Susan Kolimba from Tanzania represents East Africa, Nouria Hafsi represents North Africa, and Madeline Tefak from Cameroon represents Central Africa. There are also two executive secretaries, an honorary president, and a control commissions officer. These individuals comprise the executive team that formed in the re-organization in 2008. Prior to the re-organization, there were positions such as secretary general, Jeanne Martine Cisse and Joyce Mpanga held.¹³⁸

Today PAWO focuses on seven priority areas listed below:¹³⁹

1. Peace and security
2. Agriculture and environment
3. Water sourcing, construction, and management
4. Education and Health
5. Women’s Empowerment and Gender Parity
6. Support the implementation of government programs
7. Maintaining and reviving regional cooperation and integration where the need is embedding patriotic Pan-African ideologies

These seven priority areas act as guidance for the organization in terms of what projects they must take on and identifying where the problem areas may be in their respective parts of the continent.¹⁴⁰ Comparing these seven priority areas to the seven themes identified by the All-

¹³⁷ Pan African Women’s Organization (PAWO), “Enhancing Patriotic Pan African Ideology.”

¹³⁸ Pan African Women’s Organization (PAWO), “Enhancing Patriotic Pan African Ideology.”

¹³⁹ Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO). “Enhancing Patriotic Pan African Ideology for True African Unity and Solidarity.” *Our Journey: PAWO Magazine*, 2022.

¹⁴⁰ Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO). “Enhancing Patriotic Pan African Ideology for True African Unity and Solidarity.” *Our journey: PAWO Magazine*, 2022.

Africa women in Tanganyika, the newly formed priority areas attempt to focus on an issue which faces Africa which includes natural and environmental issues highlighted in priority areas 2 and 3. However, similar to the original priority areas, the focus remains on women's empowerment, presented in priority area 4, and African unity, as presented in priority areas 6 and 7.

Exploring one arm of the organization based in Kampala, Uganda, the PAWO of Cisse's time and the PAWO of the current PAWO project manager, the two look dissimilar. PAWO currently has its headquarters in South Africa with offices in Tanzania to represent the Eastern Africa Region, in Niger for the West Africa region, in Algeria for the North Africa region, in Angola for the Southern Africa region, and Cameroon for the Central Africa region. There are also current talks about establishing an office in the USA to represent diasporic African women. There are also member countries like Uganda which also have offices in their capital cities.

More specifically, the work that PAWO in Uganda is doing surrounding migration due to instability in Eastern Africa showcases how a member country embodies the vision and mission. Keith Kanyike, the project manager at PAWO Uganda, explained that the current project addresses the agricultural area and immigration issues facing Eastern Africa. He explained that one of the projects looks to distribute the 500 acres donated to refugee families living at Bidibidi Refugee, the largest refugee camp in the world in Uganda. The 500 acres would be distributed to 300 families with the farming tools and skills they need to grow. The families would also be allocated animal husbandries such as goats, chickens, and a cow. The project is under the guidance of the Ministry of Disaster and Preparedness.¹⁴¹

Through a system of enrollment, families will have the opportunity to learn best practices in farming and animal husbandry. After they have completed the courses, the families receive

¹⁴¹ Kanyike, Keith. *Pan African Women's Organization Uganda*. Other, 2022.

their plots of land. Kanyike said the current project's long-term goal is to “Add value to the people’s livelihood.” The hope is that starting with 300 families, there will be a trickle-down effect where other families will be able to receive seeds from the initial 300 families, and it will continue to give refugees independence rather than depending on aid. That self-reliance will lead to sustainability. While the pilot program for the agricultural project will be in Uganda, there will also be a similar project in Namibia.¹⁴²

For the future, Kanyike shared that PAWO Uganda hopes to start working to provide clean water at the camp. Kanyike explained that he views the projects as a way for the government to improve living conditions through policies, forcing a dialogue to find solutions to governmental issues. He explained that PAWO is in a partnership with PAWO offices in Africa, such as PAWO South Africa and PAWO Tanzania. The different PAWO offices are undertaking projects that specialize in their part of the world. However, there are few synergies between all the offices. However, looking back at the foundation of PAWO in 1962 while under the name of All-Africa Women’s Conference, although organization’s goals look like that of the organization at its founding, how the current PAWO is moving to address those goals looks quite different. There seem to be key values and beliefs that were present at the foundation of PAWO which do not seem to be present in the current day organization, such as the centering on women’s challenges.¹⁴³

PAWO's focus on African women and their specific needs was groundbreaking, especially considering that most organizations and states were focused on state-building at the time. PAWO's organizers approached women's issues directly, particularly those affecting African women, and sought solutions for them; this set them apart from other organizations, such

¹⁴² Kanyike, *Pan African Women’s Organization Uganda*.

¹⁴³ Kanyike, *Pan African Women’s Organization Uganda*.

as the UNIA and WIDF, who were doing similar work. The participation of African women and women of African descent in the Pan-African movement disrupted years of male-centered mechanics perpetuated by colonialism. With their increasing involvement, their stories began to emerge, albeit still at the margins. African women also disrupted male-centered histories of liberation and state organization through organizations such as PAWO. The next chapter of this paper will analyze PAWO's evolution from an Afro-Feminist perspective and a Pan-African philosophy to assess how the organization evolved in women's involvement in African politics and the international stage.

Chapter 4: Participatory Social Framework and PAWO

African women have been described as being “visionaries and knowledge producers”¹⁴⁴ due to their historical roles within their communities. African women were early teachers for the young and later consultants for decisions made for their families and their communities; in this way, African women Sylvia Tamale concludes that for Feminism and the goals of the seventh Congress to be successful, it must go beyond workshops; must be grassroots; must be rooted in African humanity. Extending her idea of Feminism and Pan-Africanism, Tamale explains in her article “B****es at the Academy” that African humanity can best be thought of as embodying three characteristics; democratic, engendered, and participatory social framework.¹⁴⁵ The established work of African women extends further back than PAWO and other Pan African organization which promote African unity through humanizing the struggle which African people have been through. African peoples, specifically women, have been promoting unity and humanism in local communities, as can be seen by the way the women approached the issue of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and the approach was described as being “conciliatory.”¹⁴⁶ One can see the participatory social framework Tamale mentions in the conciliatory approach which PAWO implemented early on in its formation.

The approach Cisse and other women adopted towards women's issues, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), was one of conciliation. This approach is characterized by conflict resolution strategies that consider the perspectives of all parties involved to find a solution that is sensitive to the issues at hand. Dialogue and mutual respect are prioritized over other more

¹⁴⁴ Blain et al., “Women, Gender Politics, and Pan-Africanism,” 142.

¹⁴⁵ Sylvia Tamale, and J. Oloka-Onyango, “Bitches at the Academy: Gender and Academic Freedom at the African University,” *Africa Development / Afrique et Développement* 22, no. 1 (1997): 34.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24482781>.

¹⁴⁶ Cisse, *La Fille du Milo*, 7.

aggressive approaches that may involve ultimatums or one-sided demands. In the case of the women of PAWO, the conciliatory approach was employed during discussions of FGM, as they invited members who practiced the tradition to share their reasons for doing so. Rather than outright condemning the practice, the women presented reasons why it could harm those on whom it was performed. This approach aimed to raise awareness of the potential dangers of the surgery without attacking the communities that practiced it. The approach values finding common ground with those whom the women viewed as necessary in achieving goals such as educating the larger public about FGM. However, PAWO also used a participatory social framework to accomplish other goals, such as teaching skills such as reading and writing to young girls because such issues required the community's involvement to find solutions.

The participatory social framework is considered a method of communal participation where men and women work together to develop solutions to challenges that affect the community. The participatory social framework aims to promote community and equality by engaging men and women in the planning and implementation of programming. The Participatory Social Framework is a concept that refers to a type of participation in which a group of people or community actively engage in decision-making processes that affect their lives and can challenge and transform the power structures that perpetuate their oppression. The idea of emancipatory participation is rooted in the belief that people should have the right to participate in decisions that affect them and that this participation should be transformative, empowering, and inclusive.¹⁴⁷ The framework can take many different forms, including community organizing, political activism, and social movements. It requires the creation of

¹⁴⁷ Campbell, "The Pan African Experience," 1037.

democratic spaces where communities can come together, share their experiences and perspectives, and collectively work towards transforming power structures.¹⁴⁸

The framework is closely aligned with the idea of ubuntu as has been presented in Pan-Africanism which also promotes community, equality, and humanism.¹⁴⁹ In talking about ubuntu, it is a question of reconstruction, a call to return to the way so of life and thinking that allowed for African nations and peoples to live communally, as opposed to individualistic manner of many Western cultures. This Afro-centric system and other African knowledge systems, such as oral traditions, were suppressed and erased by Euro-centric knowledge systems, where they saw indigenous knowledge systems as pagan. As such, Tamale argues for the consciousness of Africans to recenter the continent and its peoples.¹⁵⁰

Including women's voices is to be aware of indigenous knowledge systems. In her book *Male Daughters and Female Husbands*, Ifi Amadiume shares field research findings on Nnobi women of Nigeria from 1980 to 1982.¹⁵¹ The Nnobi live in rural Nigeria without many states or federal government intervention. However, the people did participate in the local economy through trading. Traditionally men controlled attaining lands, and women controlled the subsistence economy. Amadiume's research shows one example of pre-colonial women participating in local politics and economy. This narrative that differs from stories of women in the colonial system who did not participate in politics and the economy.

Another researcher of African Women, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, also shared how different pre-colonial life was for women across Africa. Coquery-Vidrovitch's book *African*

¹⁴⁸ Shiraz Durrani, and Noosim Naimasiah, eds. "Preface: Prof. Issa Shivji: Towards a Resurgence of the Pan-African Thought," In *Essays on Pan-Africanism*, 6.

¹⁴⁹ Durrani and Naimasiah, "Preface," 6-7.

¹⁵⁰ Tamale, *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, 41.

¹⁵¹ Amadiume, *Male Daughters and Female Husbands*.

Women: A Modern History shows the stories of women from Kenya to Congo and their lives during Colonialism.¹⁵² Under Colonialism, women gained nothing and lost much from their agency to their essential role as producers. Before and during colonization, women used the marketplace for various activities; this is an impertinent part of the story of resistance and women as women used the marketplace to pass messages and organize or gain support for their movement. As urbanization grew, the market retained its place as a place of community and gathering. Colonization made it so that the “level of urbanization, the value traditionally attached to women’s rural work, and colonial history are, however, significant, as is the choice of a gender-segregated school.¹⁵³” This idea of devaluing women’s labor was brought to light in the Nigerian women’s demonstrations of 1929 where more than 2 million women stood against the exclusively male and anti-female colonial institutions.¹⁵⁴ During colonial times women’s work were undervalued. Their education just as well, and these general ideas of a women’s place “limited women’s ability to participate fully and effectively in their country’s public life and economic development.”¹⁵⁵ It was through what can be described as the participatory social framework, or the idea of working together in unity under humanistic values that the limitations could be lifted. The women in the Nigerian women’s demonstrations were examples of where the framework was used successfully.

PAWO used this same framework of unity under humanistic values, which considered everyday women’s experiences and challenges to inform their work. At the start of PAWO, it functioned on a participatory social framework where local women were part of the conversation

¹⁵² Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997, 144.

¹⁵³ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, 155.

¹⁵⁴ Amadiume, *Male Daughter and Female Husbands*, introduction.

¹⁵⁵ Grace Bantebya-Kyomuhendo and Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Women, Work & Domestic Virtue in Uganda, 1900-2003* (Oxford, UK: James Currey, 2006), 2.

that came up with the activities and discussions within the organization. Referencing an incident when Cisse and company reported back about the meeting in Asnieres, they were met with pushback from local women as they gun talking about polygamy, FGM, and girls' education.¹⁵⁶ The mother of two daughters was so adamant about not sending her daughters that she stormed out of the meeting. However, Cisse and the other women did not back down. They continued such conversation with a particular focus on presenting these ideas in a way acceptable to women of low education status. However, over time the organization became more involved with conferences and the organization of more extensive meetings with women around the world, and it lost its traction with local and ordinary women who were their main constituents.

A shift within PAWO can be seen with the decrease in the use of participatory social framework within PAWO, and this can be seen in the way that the organization worked less with local women to identify key issues which would later inform what work PAWO would do for said community. The decrease in the organization's use of the framework can again be tied back to the switch from centralized local African women's issues to working with international organizations such as the AU and the UN.

¹⁵⁶ Cisse, *La Fille*, 10.

Chapter 5: Challenges and Prospects of PAWO – Femnocracy and Sex and Gender

It has been said by scholars such as Clenora Hudson Weems that “the reclamation of Africana women via identifying our own collective struggle and acting upon it is a key step toward human harmony and survival.¹⁵⁷” According to the women who founded PAWO in 1962 as the All-Africa Women’s Conference, their goals were to improve the lives of women and to give them the skills they needed not only to survive in a post-colonial world but also to thrive in it as can be seen with the development of workshops that taught young girls skills such as literacy and sewing.¹⁵⁸ The organization dealt with women on more local levels at its foundation however the more developed countries became, the more they became entrenched in politics and policies surrounding women representation in government. Early PAWO women were embodying what Weems, Tamale, and many other Afro-Feminists tried to explain in their definition of Afro-Feminism. However, as the organization grew and drew the attention of the international world the more it became about conferences and convincing and teaching the international world about the issues that plagued African women, and later relating those struggles to working women in the Global South as can be seen with the UN Women’s Conferences.

As many African states shifted from liberation and independence to development, there was also a shift in PAWO. Also, with the shift in focus for the newly formed countries, so have the goals of PAWO and the means of accomplishing said goals. However, a shift in view should not take away from whom the organization has served nor how the stories of whom their service is told. The shift should encompass the lessons that those who came before instilled with the foundation of PAWO. The two systems, colonialism and patriarchy, together left African women

¹⁵⁷ Weems, *Africana Womanism*, 31.

¹⁵⁸ Cisse, *La Fille*, 10.

in a precarious space as the world moved to maneuver capitalism, which resulted from colonialism. Sylvia Tamale presents the resulting consequences of colonialism as the “intersecting global privileges and oppressions based on European hegemonic notions of race, gender, sexuality, class, spirituality, and so forth.”¹⁵⁹ Such consequences take away from the survival and thriving futures of not only African women but also their communities and families because the focus is highly patriarchal; this means that there is a lack of perspective and space for women’s contributions to development and progression. Overall, the consequence of colonialism and the development of capitalism is as democratic as it is oppressive.

In her article “Re-envisioning Pan-Africanism: What is the Role of Gender, Youth and the Masses,” Dr. Micere Mugo argues for the “engenderment and democratization of Pan-Africanism to include women, youth and the masses.”¹⁶⁰ She explains that the Pan-Africanism has had many ups and downs when it comes to the movement.

As a movement, Pan-Africanism has been characterized by fluctuation, registering bouts of life and dormant lulls. On the other hand, its lived aspects, actual substance, or essence, have always remained alive and persistent over historical time. Ordinary people, or the masses, including the majority of African women, have been the key keepers or carriers of this essence.¹⁶¹

However, women have always been doing the work whether they were included in the histories or the legal and formal foundation of groups. For PAWO, even when the organizers were not calling the organization Pan-African, their work embodied Pan-Africanism in their actions. Even further, although PAWO was not part of the movement, it still carried on the movement’s primary goal, which was the unity and liberation of African peoples, that was its essence.

¹⁵⁹ Decolonization and Afro-Feminism, 2.

¹⁶⁰ Mugo, “Re-envisioning,” 239.

¹⁶¹ Mugo, “Re-envisioning,” 239.

However, the essence of the organization seemed to have dwindled with its activities. As the organization grew, it became more about dialoguing about sustainable development for women rather than taking actionable steps to attain sustainable development. “African Feminism cannot be achieved through workshops and sustainable development goals are a threat to Pan-Africanism because it does not allow for grassroots to develop.”¹⁶² In 1974, the move for PAWO to join the OAU showcased the way that African states, or in this case, African organizations used women’s groups and organization to present themselves as forward-thinking regarding women’s issue. However, they may have contributed to becoming a block in gender equality and African unity. Although the goal of joining forces was to work together for the betterment of African women, the organization PAWO became a way for the OAU to show that they were working on gender-related issues for the international community. However, PAWO’s work on the continent dwindled and lost relevancy in the lives of the African women they wanted to serve. PAWO women attended the meetings of the OAU, which in 2002 became the Africa Union (AU), but without much activity as the organization was doing before they became affiliated with the OAU/AU. At this time, there was also a rise in African governments seemingly addressing gender issues, gender equality, and oppression at the state level. Governments were passing policies to include women in government, such as creating positions specifically for women and presenting women participating in sociopolitical events as ways of claiming their progress in gender equality; this marked the emergence of femnocrats in Africa.

Although the All-African Women’s conferences and the UN women’s conferences were well intended with their goals of equality of genders and the improvement of women’s lives, the conferences took space away from the struggles that women on more local levels faced in their

¹⁶² “Rebuilding The Pan African Movement,” 1996.

day to day lives. For PAWO, the shift of their focus moved away from local women's groups, such as in Guinea with women's unions, to women across Africa, decentralizing their work before joining the larger international community. The following two sections will show how PAWO dwindled in activity the more involved it became with the international community causing less concentrated work on the continent. This chapter will focus on the development of femnocrats and the emergence of state Feminism, which partly contributed to the shift of PAWO from concentrated work in Africa to a focus on how the international community perceived African countries and gender equality in Africa.

Femnocrats

The shift with PAWO arguably emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s with "femnocrats" such as Janet Museveni, First Lady of Uganda, and Chantal Biya, First Lady of Cameroon. "Femnocrats" is a word coined by Amina Mama, a Nigerian-British psychologist and Feminist, which combines "Feminism" and "bureaucrats."¹⁶³ Based on Mama's expression of femnocrats, one could interpret "femnocrats" as women who work in government or other bureaucratic institutions and are committed to advancing Feminist principles and promoting gender equality through their work. A shift resulted from first ladies and ladies tied to state Feminism, which increased women's participation in government and politics. However, their participation did not lead to long-term sustainable changes in ordinary women's lives.

Amina Mama explains that liberation movements across Africa needed women's active participation and support to be successful even without the commitment to women's liberation

¹⁶³ Amina Mama, "Feminism or Femocracy? State Feminism and Democratisation in Nigeria," CODESRIA, *Africa Development/Afrique et Developpement*, vol. 20 no. 1, 1995, 37-58.

post-colonial.¹⁶⁴ Mama explains that African governments exploited the question of women to receive more international aid. She claims that due to the patriarchy and colonialism, men's interests overshadowed women's interests resulting in women's limited role in politics. As a result, Mama created the concept of "femocracy," a democratic system that prioritizes women's representation and leadership.¹⁶⁵ Femocracy is an alternative to dominant democratic systems that are more patriarchal and often authoritarian. However, femocracy has become the opposite of its goal because it has been co-opted by "a small clique of women whose authority derives from their being married to powerful men, rather than from any actions or ideas of their own."¹⁶⁶ This small clique is often referred to as femnocrats and includes first ladies such as Maryam Babangida of Nigeria.¹⁶⁷

Furthermore, Ifi Amadiume, an African Feminist, also challenges femocracy, explaining that it perpetuates the idea that women are inherently democratic and not likely to be as oppressive or corrupt, which she explains is false.¹⁶⁸ According to Amadiume, femocracy is not as intersectional as it needs to be in Africa for it to be successful.¹⁶⁹ Additionally, Mama explains, "All this leads us to conclude that femocracy is not a viable political phenomenon, and that it does not lead to any sustainable change in women's political status, or to any enduring improvement in the lives of ordinary women."¹⁷⁰ As such, femocracy and femnocrats, although well-intentioned, do not create the democratic space that benefits women holistically and promoted gender equality that is sustainable over time. PAWO did not start out being associated with femnocrats and first wives but rather an educated group of women who wanted to bridge the

¹⁶⁴ Mama, "Feminism or Femocracy," 38.

¹⁶⁵ Mama, "Feminism or Femocracy," 41.

¹⁶⁶ Mama, "Feminism or Femocracy," 41.

¹⁶⁷ Mama, "Feminism or Femocracy," 47.

¹⁶⁸ Ifi Amadiume, *Re-Inventing Africa: Matriarchy Religion and Culture*, London: Zed Books, 1997.

¹⁶⁹ Amadiume, *Re-Inventing Africa*.

¹⁷⁰ Mama, "Feminism or Femocracy?," 57.

gap between the up-and-coming governments across Africa and local women by presenting the challenges that women faced. However, it is clear that PAWO began to become closely tied to the wives of prominent bureaucrats and women; this impacted how the organization was perceived because a close tie with a state may have censored the topics that the women wanted to cover.

Reading through the stories of the early PAWO members such as Cisse and Keita, an aspect of classism existed with their formation of the continental women's organization which created the space for femnocrats and bureaucrats to become involved in the organization. Cisse, Keita, and many of the women associated with the formation of PAWO came from an educated class as many were graduates from the Ecole Normale de Rufisque in Senegal, which was well known for its curriculum and its graduates.¹⁷¹ Though PAWO women focused on women's issues it would be unfair to not share their privilege backgrounds as educated elites in Africa during liberation and post-colonial because it has impacted which topics they approached and how they chose to do so.

For example, they used their experiences as mothers and educated women to inform their decisions, such as how to approach FGM, a long-held tradition in many African societies. At conferences they attended, they learned the harmful effects of the practice and wanted to share what they had learned with local women and their daughters. However, if Cisse and fellow PAWO women were not educated already, they would not have had the opportunity to attend such conferences to learn about the harmful effects of FGM in such formal and educational space.¹⁷² Additionally, as the organization expanded into the international scene the more it

¹⁷¹ Cisse, *La Fille*.

¹⁷² However, this is not to say that they would never have learned it. It is to point out the privileged the women had to be in such places in the first place.

become synonymous with the educated elite and later bureaucrats. To this end, early PAWO organizations came from educated backgrounds, which aided them producing and spreading necessary knowledge. However, later those privileges created space for femnocrats influence the organization in such a way that it took away the space for ordinary women to organize and further the organization's goals. In this way, I would argue that the shift becomes more focused on bureaucracy than Pan-Africanism and Feminism.

The shift to bureaucracy can be seen in how PAWO Uganda functioned today as instead of how the organization functions during Cisse's time. For starters, the women in the organization may have been involved in politics; however, they were still connected to their non-political counterparts, who were women in the villages and communities. They were connected to women such as those in the villages through programming that aimed to solve issues such as illiteracy and employment for women based on skills they already had, or they acquired such as the workshops created by Cisse and the young women in Guinea.

The emergence of women in bureaucracy and politics in the 1970s and 80s accomplished two goals; one, it established affirmative action in newly independent countries; and two, it connected women and women's organizations with those new states.¹⁷³ The result is state Feminism. State Feminism is the efforts of a state to promote gender equality through policies that create specialized political offices that address women's issues. However, state Feminism is often a method for the government to claim they are promoting gender equality but only in policies, not in actual practice.¹⁷⁴ Positions that are created for women can be limiting as women should be able to hold political offices that are not related to women only issues. In addition,

¹⁷³ Bantebya, *Pan-Africanism*, 2022.

¹⁷⁴ Johanna Kantola and Judith Squires, "From State Feminism to Market Feminism?" *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 33, no. 4 (2012): 382–400.

when women take on positions that are outside of the proposed positions, they are met with both institutional and structural barriers that make, so women are not able to move up or around in public spaces.¹⁷⁵ When it comes to affirmative action, as can be seen in the case of Ugandan women in politics, “Women voting for affirmative action female MPs – fear of being labeled ‘women’s representatives.’”¹⁷⁶ The approach that many lawmakers and men had to women participating in politics in Uganda was less than ideal. Tamale said, “It limited women’s ability to participate fully and effectively in their country’s public life and economic development, and it contributed to gender-based hostility and domestic violence.¹⁷⁷” Here we see how although women were involved in government, they still were met with challenges and limitations. A women’s movement or organization must stay a safe distance from the state to work for all women.

Because as Tamale says, “The greatest challenge currently facing women legislators and Ugandan Feminists is how to change gender equality from a constitutional mandate to a social and cultural reality.”¹⁷⁸ There is a need to move from gender equality that is based just in political policies and move toward gender equality that is based in social and cultural realities meaning that it should be based in the lives of ordinary people. Because “African women are still struggling to obtain education, clean water, medicines, and the right to own property”¹⁷⁹ the work needs to be done by PAWO and by women elected to occupy political offices. Women in these spaces can look to the early works of organizations such as PAWO, women such as Cisse and her cohort, and organizations doing similar work, such as FEMNET, to further gender

¹⁷⁵ Kantola and Squires, “From State Feminism,” 285.

¹⁷⁶ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow*, 85.

¹⁷⁷ Bantebya, *Women, Work and Domestic Violence*, 3.

¹⁷⁸ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow*, 195.

¹⁷⁹ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow*, 138.

equality and unity of women in Global Africa after all African women had long established the work required to create unity among Africans and African women.

Sex and Gender

As Tamale and other African women scholars have stated, for Pan-Africanism and organizations to be successful in their approaches to women's challenges, they must be intersectional. Although PAWO has not spoken much about the current issues of the intersecting ideas of sex and gender, it is essential to note that the lack of communication on these topics can also be viewed as a shift. The lack of conversation about sexuality related to PAWO and mainly with the Pan African movement is often attributed to the fact that the organizations have more significant issues to deal with at hand, and sometimes it is argued that the concepts of sexuality are new pushed by Western agendas. However, these ideas of sexuality and the spectrum of the way men and women behave are not new ideas and have long existed within many African societies. They have not been topics of conversation mainly because they were never supposed to be topics of conversation, as people were living their lives without thought of how someone was moving. Scholars such as Ifi Amadiume and Sylvia Tamale highlight how colonialism and historical circumstances may have influenced the way African sexualities are viewed in society social norms and political through laws.

Making a note of the formation of women's organizations such as PAWO indicates the challenge of African women who are othered on two fronts; as women by the patriarchy and as Africans by colonialism and racism.¹⁸⁰ The roles of African women changed with the introduction of colonialism and the predominantly patriarchal ways of controlling Africans.

¹⁸⁰ Sylvia Tamale, "Decolonization and Afro-Feminism," 343.

Before colonialism, in some instances, African women were viewed in an equal light to men in that they had specific roles, such as advising the men when it came to conflicts between different communities and oversee the domestic needs of their homes. At the same time, men were also called on to advise on conflicts and overseeing needs outside the home. The roles of both groups were set up so the community could survive and thrive.¹⁸¹ It should also be noted that their roles were not set in stone across the continent. Sometimes women carried out tasks that Western philosophers would identify as being more masculine.

One can see examples of this in Ifi Amadiume's book *Male Daughters Female Husbands*, which delves into the intricacies of sex, gender, and power in Nigeria, more specifically within Igbo society. African societies have long created democratic spaces where a person, despite their sex and gender, could participate in the advancement and flourishing of African peoples. Such spaces and examples can be seen with the Igbo people in Nigeria, where women and youth were asked for their input in important decisions. The main this was that the people understood that decisions would affect everyone in local communities. As such, their decisions would be essential to account for everyone's experiences and knowledge. During the time of her study, she found that women in Igbo society could choose to take on male responsibilities and even names, such as making decisions regarding the community, participating in economic activities such as trading, and taking on husband roles in marriage such as being the breadwinner in the home. In her book, we can see that Amadiume advocates for the agency and recognition of African women, which has long existed in many African societies but has since eroded due to colonialism, Western influences, and the patriarchy.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Berger, "African Women's Movements," 1-19.

¹⁸² Amadiume, *Male Daughters and Female Husbands*.

The recent criminalization of homosexuality in Uganda goes against not only the tenants of Pan-Africanism but, most notably, based on humanity and respect for the lives of human beings. The debate about homosexuality today is often from religious and non-religious perspectives but is often not seen from a more objective point of view. The criminalization of homosexuality puts human beings at risk of death by fellow Africans because of their choice over their bodies. This criminalization is another form of division and oppression within a group, specifically for African people. The criminalization also not goes against the African tradition, which is linked to ubuntu, human emancipation, and takes away from the inclusivity of African peoples everywhere. The lack of conversations about sex and gender act as a challenge for the organization because Pan-Africanism is intersectional and looks out for those groups of people who are most affected by colonialism and its by-products.

Conclusion

This paper aims to provide a concise historical recount of PAWO from its foundation as the All-Africa Women's Organization in 1962 to its current function as PAWO in 2022. The paper's central question was: how was PAWO formed, and how has it shifted or evolved over time? The primary sources of this paper were autobiographies and oral histories collected while in Uganda during the summer of 2022. These autobiographies and oral histories provided stories missing from the history of PAWO as told thus far. The stories then informed the organization's analysis which looked at how the organization has shifted. The paper found that the emergence of femnocrats and the decrease in the use of emancipatory participation attributed to the shift which was changing the group's focus from localized challenges and a focus on ordinary people to focusing on larger international conferences and challenges of all working-class women. The lack of discussion of sex and gender has also contributed to the organization's shift.

In this research, I found that decolonization stories encompass ways of resistance, subversion, and transformation and are often told from the perspective of men; however, it is essential to note the perspectives of the women, which were part of the resistance and transformation who continued to do the work well after states gained independence. Women such as Cisse, Keita, and Kamara saw the independence movement through to the end while also seeing the need for transformations needing to accord at the local and continental levels. Their formation of the All-African Women's Conference, which later became PAWO, shows how women continued to transform after decolonization. As Pan-Africanist Mwalimu Julius Nyerere said, "Without unity, there is no future for Africa¹⁸³" implying that the future of Africa depended

¹⁸³ Campbell, "The Pan African Experience," 1035.

on the unity of all African peoples, and unity cannot be achieved without women at the forefront as they had been during decolonization and liberation movements.

As Tamale said, “The fact is that alongside the familiar forefathers named in the history of Pan-Africanism, many foremothers contributed to the emergence and ideology of the pan-African Movement in significant ways.”¹⁸⁴ The ideas of Pan-Africanism that started well before the Congresses among enslaved Africans had built in democratic methods of comradery, living and thriving. Pan-Africanism had a sense of power-sharing among men and women that informed their living and thriving lives. What I found to be the most impressive and important sentiment that still exists throughout the continent at local levels is the idea of comradery among women which can be seen in the early days of PAWO under All African Women’s Conference. The women treated themselves as sisters and referred to the local women they served as mothers, sisters, and daughters. Returning to Professor Bantebya’s point to the importance of inclusivity and power-sharing, the erosion of power-sharing has been a leading cause of women’s political involvement. I believe this comradery is what an international intercontinental could benefit mothers, sisters, and daughters of African descent.

As a daughter of global Africa, it is clear to see where there is a need for PAWO at the international level. Having a PAWO that encompasses the experiences of women of African descendants in all parts of the world could bring together a sense of unity and inclusivity that is intersectional first and foremost and works to identify where we as Africans can improve and move forward without the shadows of colonialism and the patriarchy. As Tamale says, “For the colonized, decolonization of the mind is really about returning to the annals of history to find ourselves, to become fluent in our cultural knowledge systems, to cultivate critical consciousness

¹⁸⁴ Decolonization and Afro-Feminism, 343.

and to reclaim our humanity.¹⁸⁵” To Tamale’s point, in order to be fluent in our cultural knowledge systems and reclaim our humanity we must include women within that process.

¹⁸⁵ Tamale, *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, 2.

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EDUCATION

Masters of Arts, Pan African Studies, Syracuse University, Dec 2023, GPA: 3.7
Fellowship 2021-22
Teaching Assistantship 2022-23

Bachelor of Arts, History, and Peace and Global Studies, Le Moyne College, May 2021, GPA: 3.7
Integral Honors Program
James F. Smith, S.J., Collegiate Scholars Program

WORK EXPERIENCE

Black and Arab Rationalities Research Project, Community Liaison Jul 2023-Present

- Propose, lead, and assist with event planning and organizational meetings
- Assess and build on already existing initiatives and knowledge addressing the project's goals

Yeti Frozen Yogurt and Cafe, Cashier Nov 2022-Oct 2023

- Provided a positive customer experience with fair, friendly, and courteous service
- Worked collaboratively with the kitchen and service staff to streamline operations

Syracuse University Teaching Assistant Aug 2022-Present
Department of African American Studies

- Led small group discussion sessions and set up student projects
- Aided in grading coursework and course projects

Le Moyne College, Syracuse, NY

Science Technology Entry Program (STEP), tutor/mentor Jun 2017 - Aug 2021

- Organized and designed a project around the idea of GRIT (80 Degree Project)
- Tutored, mentored, planned, and facilitated workshops for the Saturday Scholastic Institute for High schoolers
- Organized professional and academic development seminars

Bond Schoeneck and King Law Firm, Departments Intern Oct 2019 - Mar 2020

- Managed and created systems of organization for company files
- Digitized physical documents and files

Onondaga Historical Society (OHA), Summer Intern Jul 2020 - Aug 2020

- Researched Projects through the archives
- Analyzed newspaper clippings and archival materials

City of Syracuse -Mayor's Office, Syracuse, NY

Office of Constituent Services Feb 2019-July 2019

- Researched, organized, and devise programs for constituents
- Wrote and sent official letters to constituents

Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Shared Services, Intern Jul 2018-Aug 2018

- Researched urban issues, including panhandling and stray dogs, and presented findings to key leadership
- Devised recommendations for the Mayor and other department heads

U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer Syracuse Regional Office, Intern Oct 2018-Dec 2018

- Composed county updates and press pitches on St. Lawrence County NY
- Answered and recorded constituent phone calls and newspaper clippings, taking detailed messages when necessary

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse Youth Council, *External Public Relations* 2018-Present

CuseYouthBLM, *co-leader* 2020-2021

Collegiate Science Technology Entry Program (CSTEP), *Student Leader* 2017-2021

Manresa Program, *Fellow* 2017 & 2020

Climate Assessment Survey at Le Moyne College, *Student Representative* 2019-2020

Muslim Students Association, *Public Relations Officer* 2018-2019

Student Government Association, *Diversity Affairs Chair* 2018-2019

AWARDS

Dean's List	Fall 2017, Spring 2018, Fall 2019, Spring 2020
The Bishop David F. Cunningham Medal in Liberal Junior Arts	Fall 2020
The John W. Bush Memorial Award for Best Paper in Historiography	Fall 2020