

The Day of March 8, An Advancement or A Difference for the Congolese Woman? Parity Dream, Slogan or Reality for the Congolese Woman?

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Abstract: *The struggle of women today for parity, equality or emancipation is nothing but a claim for its recognition in modern society; in other words, the recognition of what it was in ancient Egypt or even in the African tradition before it was stifled by the customs and laws imposed by men. Also, March 8 being International Women's Day, conferences, debates, reflections, decisions and other activities only run around her; for his blooming and especially to awaken his conscience. And for the Congolese woman to come to this understanding of her struggle, she must become aware of the assets and values she has in society, be able to esteem herself and also she must have confidence in oneself. It must put in mind that parity is a struggle for competence and not a gift of man. Without this awareness, March 8 will be and will remain the chorus or slogan of every March.*

Keywords: Woman Congolese, advancement, recoil, parity, dream, slogan, reality,

1. Introduction

History shows us that already in the most remote period, women played a very important role in society and there is even a black woman who was promised the rank of pharaoh¹.

The struggle of women today for parity, equality or emancipation is nothing but a claim for its recognition in modern society; in other words, the recognition of what it was in ancient Egypt and even in the African tradition before it was stifled by the customs and laws imposed by men.

Without any risk of being deceived or contradicted, I dare to believe that today, the Congolese woman is relieved on the same tuning fork of education and education that the man and he does not hesitate to recognize the contribution of women to them

Also, March 8 being International Women's Day, conferences, debates, reflections, decisions and other activities only run around her; for his blooming and especially to awaken his conscience.

But then, why does not she have the same chance or opportunity as the man? What does it mean that its rate of representation to institutions of national life is very low?

Does the day of March 8 really help the Congolese woman to advance in her struggle for recognition in the prestigious and of nobility decisions? Is the Congolese woman capable, ready to assume what she demands, what she is fighting for? What must she do to live up to the woman of the world in order to succeed in her struggle?

This is the problem exploded in our thinking that needs adequate answers.

It seems that in all institutions of national life in the DRC, the representation of women is still at a very low rate. The Congolese woman must not wait for the man to come and give her what she is looking for as a gift but rather, she must work to make it a merit. March 8th, being a good day for the world's woman The whole Congolese woman must make the most of her struggle, so that one day she will live up to the woman of the world.

2. Sematic Approaches

2.1 Emancipation

According to Larousse 2005 large format, Emancipation is the action of emancipating that means to make free, free from domination, a state of dependence.

2.2 Equality

According to Larousse 2005 Large format, the equality is the relationship between individual, citizens equal in rights and subject to the same obligations.

2.3 Parity

According to Larousse 2005 Large format, the parity in a general sense is the perfect equality, compliance. But in politics, parity means equal representation of men and women in elected assemblies.

3. History of the Day of Women

3.1 In the world

In the seventeenth century, rare and timid speeches are heard on equality between men and women: in 1622, for example,

¹ Kizobo ObwengO'Kwes, Egyptology Course, L2 Cultural History, Lubumbashi, 2015.

Ms. de Gournay wrote the Equality of men and women. The diffusion of these ideas is hardly done before the revolutionary times. Thus, the French Revolution allows a first questioning of secular inequality between the sexes: in 1791, Olympia Gouges claims the extension to women of the Declaration of the rights of man and citizen, while Condorcet comes from exclaim that "there is no difference between the two sexes which is not the work of education" (1787)². Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* ("Myths") [...] "The woman is lost. Where are the women? Women today are not women"; we saw what the meaning of these mysterious slogans was. In the eyes of men - and of the legion of women who see through these eyes - it is not enough to have a woman's body nor to assume as a lover, as a mother, the function of female to be a "true woman"; through sexuality and motherhood, the subject can claim his autonomy; the "true woman" is the one who accepts herself as Other. There is in the attitude of today's men a duplicity which creates in women a painful laceration; they accept to a great extent that the woman is a similar, an equal; and yet they continue to demand that it remain the inessential; for her, these two destinies are not reconcilable; she hesitates between one and the other without being exactly adapted to none and that is where her lack of balance comes from³.

The Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Citizen (1791) is one of the first expressions of feminist ideas developed in the Age of Enlightenment. On the model of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, from which the text of Olympia de Gouge is articulated, this publication (which was never finally voted on or adopted by the Assembly) calls for complete equality of the sexes in rights and duties.

And it is in the eighteenth century that we have the first women journalists: the French Marie Jeanne l'Héritier who publishes at the beginning of the eighteenth century, thanks to the birth of the *Journal des Dames* in 1759, a periodical written by and for women, which appears for nearly twenty years⁴.

In the concern always to insert themselves in the public life, the women take part, especially in the XIXe century, the works of assistance and charity (ladies patronesses), and education (infant English schools and rooms of asylums in France).

The nineteenth-century legislature now protects women as part of the family, but grants them no political rights. Revealing the ideas of the majority of European legislators, Article 213 of the French Civil Code (1804) proclaims that "the husband must protect his wife, the wife obey her husband". Another sign of phallogocracy in the nineteenth century in the French Penal Code, the adultery of women is generally punishable by prison, while that of the man is punished by a fine.

² Women's History. "Microsoft® Encarta® 2009 [DVD], Microsoft Corporation, 2008.

³ Beauvoir (Simone of), *Second Sex*, Paris, Gallimard, 1949.

⁴ GENGEMBER, Gerard, *To your citizens feathers!* Paris, Gallimard, 1988.

In the twentieth century, the First and Second World Wars play an important role in this promotion of women; because between 1914 and 1918, 8 million French (60%) and 13 million Germans are mobilized, which allows women to demonstrate their ability to effectively replace men: workers in factories, bus drivers, leaders but also simple heads of households. At the end of 1917, French women accounted for 40% of the industry and trade workforce.

Concerning the right to education, we find the same discrimination: access to education remains limited for women. In France, it is necessary to wait for the laws Falloux (1850) and Duruy (1867) so that any commune of more than 500 inhabitants is held to open a primary school of girls; the identity of the teachings of boys and girls was proclaimed only in 1925, and the schools and pensions created throughout the country were not yet mixed. It is always the goal of women's schools to instill in the young girl a code of conduct so that she can later participate in the reproduction of family and social models.

More emancipatory, the law of February 1938 gives her the right to make a contract, open a bank account and attend an exam without the permission of her husband⁵.

At the end of the twentieth century, with the sixties, the feminist demands are made much more powerful in Europe, thanks to the firmly established peace, the economic prosperity and the technological discoveries. In France, the Women's Liberation Movement (MLF) was created in 1970. Then the year 1975 was declared "year of the woman" and the date of March 8th «International Women's Day by the United Nations United Nations. Today, the struggle for the emancipation of women continues, always provoking in the public opinion and in the political class (still profoundly masculine) lively debates, such as the feminization of certain words or the law on parity, promulgated June 6, 2000 to correct the under-representation of women in⁶.

3.2 History of women's day in the DRC

In the DRC, everything begins timidly and at the rate of the turtle. Nothing of the Emancipation nor of the equality of the woman without speaking of the parity before 1960 because all the Schools of the girls which were opened before 1960, had for objective the formation of the girls who will be wives of the boys who finish in the Schools some fathers. That's why it was only home schools, also called normal schools that had as options: home training and sewing-cutting.

For example: We quote the letter of the 30/11/1923 written by the minister of the colonies speaking about the organization of education for the girls of the district Albert (Kamalondo), known at the time as common evolved He said: "The young blacks who leave the school of Salesians who are able to earn their living by the profession they have learned must marry young girls capable of keeping a household of the civilized; the government has decided in

⁵ Microsoft® Encarta® 2009.

⁶ "Women's history." Microsoft® Encarta® 2009 [DVD]. Microsoft Corporation, 2008.

principle to address this new work to the Sisters of Charity who already serve Elisabethville Hospital, where they run the school for young European girls. They give full satisfaction in various fields⁷. "Hence the creation of the current Sacred Heart Institute Wema High School in 1924. And in the 50s, they created schools of instructors who had the aim of training Christian instructors, perfectly up to the task that awaited them, that of educating and however, let us realize that it is only around the 50s that the first Congolese woman speaks at the microphone. Her name was Lucie Eyenga⁸. And fortunately with the 80 objective of Addis Ababa, comes the reform of 1961 which gave the same chance to all the children, including the girls. Which has increased the numbers of girls in schools⁹. Unfortunately, this lasted only a few years because, with the crisis of the 1980s, in the face of financial difficulties and to no longer bear the financial burden alone, the state demands the parents' contribution and establishes the parents' committee in the schools. A situation that has further reduced the number of girls in schools and has encouraged early marriages and the wandering of girls; since parents favored boys.

As a Lebanese quoted by Joseph Ki-Zerbo tells us: "Living in the present, we also borrow the fruits of others' presents, without realizing that the present of others is the result of a long working past and the beginning of the future. We borrow time slices. In an artificial setting that is not an extension of ourselves, we live the effort of others, leaving our intelligence fallow. But effort less comfort is nothing but ruin¹⁰

So note that all that the Congolese woman benefits as rights today, is the result of the efforts of other women that is to say, foreign women (French, English, German, etc ...). But what is the contribution of the Congolese woman in this process or global women's struggle? Hence our reflection on the day of March 8 in the Democratic Republic of Congo because for me, this day, if it is well exploited by Congolese women, can be very profitable. Since it is a unique day for the woman; but in my opinion, I find that the day of March 8 is a chance that the Congolese woman does not benefit. And the question remains whether it is by negligence or ignorance.

Note that if European women were able or able to replace the men who were recruited during the first or second world war, it was because these women were already at the height of men, they were already ready.

Some illustrations constituting our hypothesis:

⁷VINT L. & Alli, Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary 100 years in Congo, Brussels, 1992, p. 137.

⁸Isidore NDAYIWEL è Nziem, General History of the Congo of the Ancient Heritage to the Democratic Republic, CGRI, Paris, Brussels 1998, p. 576.

⁹DEPS, Compendium of Directives and Official Instructions, Kinshasa, 2nd edition, CEREDIP, 1986, pp. 215-217

¹⁰ Joseph Ki-Zerbo, "The African Civilization of Yesterday and Tomorrow," African Presence: After Ki-Zerbo, No. 173, 2006, p. 60.

- 1) In Europe in 1938, the more emancipatory law of February gives the woman the right to enter into a contract, open a bank account and write an exam without the permission of her husband. And it is only in 2016 that the Congolese woman has just had the freedom vis-à-vis the parental authority.
- 2) Let's just compare some representations of women in our institutions beginning with Likasi University: out of 24 deans and vice-deans, there are only 3 women; At the level of the executive institution in Likasi, among the four bourgmestres of four communes of the city of Likasi, there is only one woman. This imbalance is also found at the national level, in 26 provinces of the DRC, we find that a woman who is vice-governor; even more so since 2011, the DRC has 500 deputies in its national parliament and only 500 women in the 500 deputies; at Senate level, out of 102 senators, there are only 6 women. And at the level of the national ministry, out of 67 ministers, there are only 8 women.

We are really convinced that if the day of March 8 was used by the Congolese woman for a more universal good that is to say for reflections around the life or on the vital conditions of the woman in general and the woman Congolese in particular, there would be changes in the management of women in Congo and the fight for parity would be at another level and not at the level of posts, functions or its place in the home.

Unfortunately, until today, the visible results recorded for this day are limited only to different dances, to uniforms (loincloths in different designs), to the consumption of beverages of all kinds; at the end of the day, many women find themselves drunk. We have always compared Day of the 8th of March like the 1st of January or the day of the first communion of the children because it is a mandatory day for the parents to buy a new clothes for their child. This is similar with March 8 for the majority of Congolese women, it is the day to add a new suit in the suitcase or in the wardrobe.

This attitude of the woman is that she is always marginalized in the country since on March 8, she exposes herself by showing to the men of the whole world and more particularly to the Congolese man of which she is able: to drink, s dress and dance ... And let us know that Congolese men do not ask for anything better than to leave the woman in her primitive situation.

What is more fun is to see that this day of March 8, is a day off for women: no fields. The offices and services in which women work are closed; the few women who can still be found working are those who sell to the markets. So, it's a paradox, it seems to ask or desire something and its opposite. If not, how to explain this reality: women who claim to claim parity, equality between men and women are unable to show what they are capable of on their ideal day by taking leave and staying at home. This way of acting or doing simply means that the Congolese woman prefers or remains attached to her primitive situation where she was

Imagine that all women in the world applied the logic of taking leave on March 8? We can still go further, suppose that parity was already a reality in the Congo and that in an office, there are 6 services occupied by 12 people, among which, there are 6 women that means that on March 8, 3 services on They will not work normally because women will be on leave. One can imagine the mess for the whole country. How many services will be blocked or delayed for women's leave on March 8? Let's think about the delay or even the damage that we have created in our companies, in our brief offices in the country since we started with the day of March 8 as a day off for the Congolese woman.

Yet the opposite is to be desired or perhaps promoted, that is to say more leave on March 8, more uniforms, more parade and more celebration. May the 8th of March become a day when women have to work, think about how to obtain this parity and this equality between men and women that until now has remained a slogan or even a utopia in the eyes of other pessimistic women and even but for the struggle of the Congolese woman to become a reality, it requires the involvement of all women and especially a lot of effort to provide. We will not have the illusion that with only our will, everything will be able to go. It is necessary to undo the parity will never be a gift of men and especially do not allow it. If not, the Congolese woman can never get what she wants because a gift can be poisoned. Moreover, we must not consider obtaining parity as a war or a fight against men. No, it is first of all a struggle against the Congolese woman herself, against her nature, against the tradition and why not against any system.

Knowing that in most cases, it is the woman herself who is the main agent of the brake or blocking its development or even its fulfillment. See all the principles and laws that women impose on other women: incision, mourning, endowment etc. In doing this reflection on March 8, we are aware that there are efforts or some reflections that are made by Congolese women but all that these women do is a drop of water in an ocean because they are only a minority and in addition, what they realize remain only for a category of women who keep them either in their heads if it were ideas shared between friends, or in cupboards if it were ideas which were the subject of a meeting and which required a report at the end. What we mean, what there is not a succession of ideas, a continuity of reflections to this day; it lacks a wide dissemination of what is done and said during this month of March and in particular the day of March 8. There are certain layers of Congolese women who are not affected or who are not involved in reflections about their lives.

We must know that if the Congolese woman of the deepest Congo is not put in the caravan with the woman of the city, the struggle of the latter is zero because it will not happen alone to parity or equality that is, without his village colleague; the parity or emancipation that it demands will always remain as a slogan without success because these numerous efforts will always be contradicted by its rural colleague who does not understand the reason for being of this fight not being informed. This is why the rural woman remains a bomb, an enemy of the urban woman's struggle.

The African women who say they are today evolved or emancipated, must know that already in the ancient period, the African woman had played a great role in politics and assumed great responsibilities the case of the Queen of Egypt as we I we said at the introduction. And in particular the Congolese woman of the city, is really not right to neglect her colleague of the village because still today as formerly, in our traditions or customs, this woman of the village has an irrefutable force and plays an important role in the traditional society. Hence, the need to associate it in the fight and the reflections concerning women because it concerns women in general without exception.

For example: - in Bas-Congo, in the traditional society, women did not have the right to speak publicly, but they had several ways of expressing themselves. Among other things, she could use the proverb covers to express herself.

- a) In several tribes of the DRC, the woman was the bearer of the power of the chief and also the guarantor of the virtues that she had to transmit to the chief because it was she who gave life and that the chief came from her. This is the case expressed by the artists of the stools of power that is exhibited at the National Museum of Lubumbashi. This stool on which the chief put himself to be enthroned is worn by a woman who has long ears to say that the chief must be all ears; big eyes that mean he must be vigilant; big legs that signify the stability of the leader; she had a bun to say that the chief was the guardian and curator of the tradition¹¹.
- b) In Kwilu, among the Phendes, until today, the woman remains the guardian of the power of her husband, it is she who comes into contact with the spirits and who communicates to her husband. Only she who enters the cheffale box and the gapungu considered the prime minister of the chief. Even more curious, she is inducted with her husband from where, her submission to all the stages by which lechef passes before being enthroned.

It is necessary to know that the woman, that she is of the town or the village, is a double-edged knife that is to say she is able to do the good or the bad. We find some examples in the Bible and also in the Old Testament:

- a) In the seventh chapter of the second book of the Martyrs of Israel (Maccabees), the author presents the case of a woman facing a difficult situation of death, encourages her sons to hold on and to remain faithful to God, a because she thought it noble.

Here is what the story tells us: a mother had 7 children, all condemned to death because of their Christian belief that went against the royal decree which required all the people to adore only the king as the only god. And while each of the children was being decapitated, their mother was there to encourage them not to betray their faith to the God of Israel because of a happiness that will remain on this earth.

- a) Also in the gospel of St. Mark 6,14-28, the author tells us what the woman is able to do, its influence in the evil just to hurt.

¹¹ Watunia, Mampasi, The Contribution of Catholic Education to the promotion of the Congolese girl. Case of Wema High School from 1960 to 1974, TFC, Lubumbashi, 2013, pp.

This is the story of a woman named Herodias, the wife of Herod's brother Philip, who had become the wife of Herod. John the Baptist not being pleased with this act posed by Herod, they denounced and discouraged this bad in his teachings. Herodias, felt well in this union, was not happy with Jean's reproaches and was looking for ways and means to eliminate him because it was for her, an embarrassing element, a danger for their couple. Here is a favorable occasion, it is the birthday of Herod and the daughter of Herodias who animated this holiday to please all guests of the king and it promises him a gift of his choice. Not knowing what to ask, she went to ask her mother, who recommended Jean Baptist's head on a dish in the immediate future. This is how Herodias realizes his dream of suppressing John.

These two examples of the Old and New Testaments just complete, illuminate and deepen what we have already said above. Know that the woman is able to do good or bad, she is able to build or destroy.

However, let's find out what the rural woman is doing on the 8th of March, in other words, what is happening on March 8 in villages? Imagine that on March 8, while the woman of the city thinks about how to obtain parity between men and women, her colleague from the village who is not involved in this fight, who is at the margin, she is still held hostage blindness by custom and thinks how to put crazy guards for young girls and young moms looking to bring modernity to villages. Hence, the need to strengthen laws and taboos. Here with this reality, the efforts of the urban woman are null because they are fought not by men but by women who are not involved. In this case, the woman is the enemy of the woman and not the enemy man of the woman.

4. Conclusion

Of all definitions and terms used for the advancement of women: "Emancipation"; "Equality" and "Parity" emerge the idea that men and women must be equal, subject to the same obligations and also have the same numbers of representation in the social institutions of life. What we already say from the outset is impossible. Hence the need for the woman to understand that her struggle is not to become equal to the man or to overturn or invert the places that is to say that one day the man becomes or take the place of the woman and another day the woman becomes or take the place of the man as the Ivorian comedian tells us about the President and the prisoner, no. But the struggle of women is just to recognize their right and to live fully their freedom. It is against this injustice that the woman rebels and not against men.

Seeing how has evolved the education of the Congolese girl, we are far from reality, far from our fight. We must know that the fight is long and popular and it is not with words or beautiful sentences or even more with beautiful speeches that we will get there but rather by becoming aware and starting to work together that we let's do it. This is why our reflection is part of the awareness for the Congolese woman of tomorrow if she really wants parity. That she knows that parity is a state of mind and life, it must be obtained by a

struggle, by sacrifices, by a discipline that the women of tomorrow must impose themselves today.

Still, it is an awakening of the conscience for the Congolese woman of today and especially for that of tomorrow because she must know that she has all the assets to arrive there. Let her especially realize that on March 8, the Congolese man has a favorable opportunity to sign the laws against her, either to make decisions in her name because she is absent to celebrate at home. Hence, he distracted her with the loincloths and the drink to confuse the map. Unbouv Congolese woman, united by the effort for parity 50-50 for 2030, let's erect our foreheads long curved and veiled and for good take the most beautiful momentum in peace. Because our struggle is a passive struggle.

By the way, here is what an author tells us about women: "Hey! Women have energies that amaze men, they face difficulties, solve serious problems, yet they have happiness, love and joy. They smile when they want to shout, they sing when they want to cry, they cry when they are happy and they laugh when they are nervous. They fight for what they believe in. They rebel against injustice".

And for the Congolese woman to come to this understanding of her struggle, she must become aware of the assets and values she has in society, be able to esteem herself and also she must have confidence in oneself. It must put in mind that parity is a struggle for competence and not a gift of man. Without this awareness, March 8 will be and will remain the chorus or slogan of every March.

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