

The Danger of Current Rwandan Gender Politics

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Introduction

This critical analysis will investigate whether Rwanda's glorified representation of women in government positions truly serves the women in their society or rather the agenda of the men in power. Rwanda is frequently hailed as the prime example for African feminism due to their 2008 parliamentary elections. The 2013 Rwandan Parliamentary elections ushered in a record -breaking sixty-four percent of seats for women candidates, making Rwanda the top country for women in politics. In comparison, women make up a global average of 23.8 percent of parliament members as of June 2018 (W.E. Forum, 2017). Their representation of women in government is a smokescreen of false progress in order to continue perpetuating the culture of oppression over the women in Rwanda. Researching Rwanda and its culture surrounding the submission of women under the premise of feminist social theory will allow me to observe gender and its relation to power both at an individual level and within their social structure. I will also research the future social repercussions on African feminism for lauding faux feminist representation and progress. The issue with utilizing Rwanda, a country that uses massive female representation to mask the men holding and exercising the power behind the scenes, is that it creates a precedent for every other African country to follow. All of Rwanda's women's rights movements and progress were controlled and allowed by the current Rwandan president, Paul Kagame. After suffering the tragic and violent consequences of the Tutsi genocide in 1994, the economy was left in shreds. Following the 100 days of slaughter in 1994, Rwandan society was left in chaos. The death toll was between 800,000 and 1 million. Immediately following the genocide, Rwanda's population of 5.5 million to 6 million was 60 to 70 percent female (Warner, 2016). They simply could not rebuild Rwanda with male labor alone, causing President Kagame to begin to champion women's rights in order for faster recovery and growth. Though it was

women's labor that rebuilt the country, Rwanda is not considered inherently feminist. The only call for women's rights or equality that led to change in a few policies was led and controlled by President Kagame to further his economic agenda. The only true feminist progress made has been the shallow representation of the marginalized women in their culture in government positions. Due to this façade of women's rights, the culture surrounding the subordination of women has not changed. While any women in powerful positions can be seen as progress, one must question if it is truly progress if the women are used as pawns and have no autonomy in those positions. I look to challenge the definition of the "gender equity" that the international community lauds Rwanda for in favor of a more holistic definition. Utilizing these women as pawns is meant to placate the feminist movement within their respective countries—causing the movements to falsely assume they are making progress, while continuing to implement the agenda of the men in power. Rwanda can be seen as a case study of how African politics could change in the near future. As women's rights are becoming at the forefront of global interest and one of the U.N.'s missions (U.N., 2013), countries that align themselves with the advancement of women's rights will reap the aid and benefits from the Global North. Rwanda has found a way to seem as they are adhering to the advancement of women's rights while, in reality, they fully intend on keeping their archaic traditional values.

Positionality

As a citizen of the Global North, I recognize that Rwanda is in its current position as a result of colonialism. The Hutu-Tutsi conflict which was a catalyst to the Rwandan Genocide stemmed from the class system put into effect during the Belgian rule (Clay, 2020). I view this multi-faceted issue from my perspective as a middle-class black woman from the Global North attempting to be a student of the global intricacies and analyzing them simultaneously. I acknowledge my privilege of being able to openly criticize and analyze the current regime of Rwanda without fearing for my freedom or safety. I fully intend to utilize that privilege to deliver truths others have been prosecuted for sharing. While I can admire how President Kagame has rebuilt Rwanda and its women beside it, I cannot ignore the facts that conclude that his actions are not without ulterior motives. Nor can I ignore the faux feminist narrative being lauded internationally as a blueprint for other countries to follow. Not when the actual women's rights leaders and followers are being jailed and persecuted for speaking their truth and attempting to enact a positive change in Rwanda. It is my intention to utilize my positionality and privilege to bring more global awareness to this political and social conflict that is quietly being man-handled by the same government that claims to uplift them. My critical analysis does not come from a place of degradation. It comes from an attempt to uplift the countless hours of work done and lives given by Rwandan scholars hoping to make a positive change within their society. It is my genuine hope that Rwanda will finally have its own firmly grounded women's empowerment movement which runs on no other agenda than their own. I am hoping to add to that future in the only way which I know how. By consciously challenging the pattern of historical and cultural erasure of those who are in opposition of the ruling class.

Literature Review

“What’s past is prologue.” - William Shakespeare

Rwanda’s Origins. Rwanda’s history of violence and genocide has led them to their current political situation. Particularly their history surrounding the long-standing tensions between the Tutsi and Hutu which led to the Tutsi Genocide. In pre-colonial Rwanda, there were three peoples who inhabited Rwanda: the Twa, the Hutu, and the Tutsi. The Twa were pygmies and made up less than one percent of the total population. They lived in the forest to supplement their lifestyle of hunting and gathering. The Twa began to dwindle even further once the Hutu arrived in the region and moved deeper into the forests. The Hutu clans originated in Rwanda first as small-scale agriculturists. Their clan social structure dictated a King or Bahinza as a monarch who ruled over limited clan groups. Later in the 14th century, the Tutsi clans began a peaceful migration into the area. The Tutsi clans utilized their ownership of cattle and advanced combat skills to achieve economic, political, and social control over the Hutu peoples (Twagilimana, 2016). Eventually this led to the Hutu clans losing their land ownership and becoming the Kingdom of Rwanda in the 1700s under the Tutsi king, or Mwami, Ruganzu II Ndori (Britannica, 2017). Over time Hutu-Tutsi relations took the form of a social order called ubuhake. Ubuhaake was the social order from approximately the 15th century to 1958. This feudal system was based on cattle distribution from the Tutsi. The agreement stated that Hutu could use Tutsi cattle in exchange for personal or military service. Overtime ubuhake created a social system where the minority population of Tutsis had control over most of the land and cattle. The Hutu were forced to indenture themselves to Tutsi lords in order to gain access to land and cattle (Mayerson, 2010). Therefore, creating a greater dichotomy between the two ethnic groups.

The Kingdom of Rwanda was colonized after the reign of King Kigeli IV Rwabugiri in 1895. King Kigeli is regarded as Rwanda's greatest mwami to date. He was the first king in Rwanda's history to come into contact with Europeans. He established an army equipped with guns he obtained from Germans and prohibited most foreigners, especially Arabs, from entering his kingdom (Britannica, 2017). After King Kigeli's death, the Rwandan infrastructure was weakened, allowing outsiders to take advantage. Germany began their process of colonization in 1897 by establishing a presence and an alliance with the king. The colonists favored the Tutsi over the Hutu when assigning administrative roles, believing them to be racially superior to the Hutu, which caused a rift to grow between the Hutu and Tutsi populations. Germany declared a protectorate in East Africa in 1885 and established the colony of German East Africa in 1891. Rwanda became colonized and a part of German East Africa along with Burundi, a portion of Tanzania, and a small area of Mozambique. German East Africa was recognized by other European powers from 1885 to 1894. Following World War 1, Rwanda and the neighboring country, Burundi, were assigned to Belgium as part of the League of Nations mandate of Ruanda-Urundi in 1924 (Britannica, 2017). By 1926 the Belgians were directly ruling the Rwandan and Burundi territories through the monarchs of the respective countries. Under the Belgian rule, Tutsi supremacy reigned while the Hutu were disenfranchised. Although, originally, it was a clan distinction, the difference between Tutsi and Hutu became a socioeconomic class marker (Carney, 2016). When Belgians introduced identity cards in 1935 that stated whether a person was Tutsi, Hutu, Twa, or Naturalized, it prevented movement between the classes. This caused a rigidity in Rwandan society similar to the caste system. These identity cards would cause later harm during the Rwandan Genocide allowing for Tutsi members to be systematically and easily identified and killed.

In January of 1961, Rwanda declared itself a republic and forced its sitting monarch, King Kigeri into exile. These events were put in motion by what began as a peasant revolt in November of 1959 (Clay, 2020). This peasant revolt eventually took the form of a political movement called the Party for Hutu Emancipation (Parti du mouvement de l'Emancipation du Peuple Hutu) dedicated to replacing the Tutsi monarchy with a Hutu government. Once local elections were held in 1960, there was widespread transfer of power to Hutu politicians. Belgian authorities were aware of the rising political party and gave their approval of the political coup. A coup which ushered in an all-Hutu provisional government. Approximately 150,000 of Tutsi and monarch supporters began fleeing to neighboring countries in light of the political coup. When Rwanda declared its independence in 1962, their revolution had already occurred (Clay 2020). Though the Hutu majority gained its political power, the competition between the north and south Hutu politicians. The southern and central regions were comparatively privileged from the north region of Rwanda. This socio-economic difference threatened to fracture the entire Hutu party. These tensions reached its climax in July of 1973 when a group of army officers overthrew the sitting Kayibanda regime (Britannica, 2017). After the coup, they installed a norther, Major General Juvénal Habyarimana as head of state. It is under Habyarimana's regime in which the Tutsi-Hutu conflict come to a devastating apex.

The long-standing Tutsi-Hutu conflict was inflamed once again in 1990 after the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (Front Patriotique Rwandais; RPF) rebels invaded from Uganda. The United Nations sponsored an agreement and ceasefire between the Rwandan Patriotic Front and the Government of Rwanda in August of 1993 after multiple failed negotiations. The agreement stated that both parties were to demobilize their troops and the government was to be restructured to allow for more power sharing. By December of 1993, neither party was

demobilizing and multiple attempts to implement the broad-based transitional government had failed (Willard, 2014). The United Nations heard the expressed doubts of the feasibility of lasting peace from both parties and created an assistance mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). The U.N. was stationed in Rwanda as a peacekeeping force to help with the transition of governments, yet, the Rwandan Genocide began on April 6, 1994 when President Habyarimana's plane was shot down.

Though there is debate among historical scholars of when the alleged planning of the genocide began, the theory of the plot being planned before the Presidential assassination is widely accepted throughout academia. In 1990, scholars believe that Hutu powers began plotting following the initial Rwandan Patriotic Front invasion by moderate Tutsi members (Melvern, 2006). It is also believed that Hutu powers began plotting in 1992 when President Habyarimana began negotiating with the Rwandan Patriotic Front. It was a popular thought among Hutu that the President was compromising in favor of the Tutsi (Prunier, 2014). By March of 1993 the Hutu radicals had compiled a list of "traitors" they planned to kill. The idea of a "final solution" of killing all Tutsis to rid Rwanda of its political problems was circulating and gaining momentum among the Hutu as well. In October of 1993 the neighboring country of Burundi had its first elected Hutu President, Melchior Ndadaye, assassinated after only four months in office. The assailants were extremist Tutsi army officers. This further caused a rift between the Tutsi and Hutu. The extremist Hutu groups used the situation to their advantage and on April 6, 1994, the Rwandan President, Juvénal Habyarimana, was assassinated along with the Burundi President Ntaryamira. They were both Hutu men. His plane was shot down as it was preparing to land in Kigali, killing everyone on board (Bonner, 1994). The popular assumption blamed the assassination on both the RPF and the Hutu extremists in the Rwandan army. However, an

investigation led by the French judge Jean-Louis Bruguière ended with the conclusion that current Rwandan President and past leader of the RPF army, Paul Kagame, was to blame for organizing the assassinations (McGreal, 2006). Following the assassination of the Rwandan head of state, the country erupted in chaos the following day. By the morning of April 7, 1994, the radical Hutu had killed all moderate government officials left. Including Rwanda's first and only female Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, who was the head of state for fourteen hours before her own assassination. She grew up a Hutu from southern Rwanda with uneducated parents. Agathe Uwilingiyimana was among the first women to obtain a bachelor's degree from the National University of Rwanda in 1985. She continued with graduate studies in mathematics and chemistry, after which she became a schoolteacher in Butare in 1976 before entering politics (Newton, 2015). She dedicated her life to promoting women's equality, removing obstacles to girls' education, and speaking on behalf of the poor (Burnet, 2019). In 1992 she joined the Republican Democrat Movement (MDR), an opposition party, and was appointed Minister of Education by April (Newton, 2014). As one of Rwanda's first prominent women politicians, Uwilingiyimana faced intense misogyny, particularly from members of extremist Hutu political parties. At a government meeting in Kigali, President Habyarimana addressed her condescendingly as "You, woman!", to which she replied "Don't talk to me like that. I'm not your wife!" (Gjørsv, 2006). Uwilingiyimana was appointed Prime Minister of Rwanda on July 17, 1993 after a meeting with President Habyarimana and the five major parties. She was dismissed from her role as Prime Minister eighteen days after her appointment. She remained in the role of Prime Minister as a "caretaker" until her untimely death (Kayihura, 2014). After the assassination of President Habyarimana, a Crisis Committee meeting was convened. Among those gathered was United Nations commander Roméo Dallaire and senior leadership of the

Rwandan army Colonel Bagosora and Colonel Rwagafilita. The Rwandan military leaders proposed having the military take over the government, which Dallaire rejected. Dallaire reminded them that the government was now in the hands of Prime Minister Uwilingiyimana. It was only hours after this meeting that Colonel Bagosora ordered his troops to kill the Prime Minister along with her husband and the ten Belgian peacekeepers guarding her home (Dallaire, 2015). Once any hope of a moderate government was gone, government-backed militias, or Interahamwe, began eradicating entire cities and regions of Tutsis. Most of the killings were carried out by ordinary Hutu civilians, which was encouraged by Hutu extremists by passing out arms and machetes (Melvern, 2004). An estimated 800,000 Rwandans were murdered during the first six weeks. Anyone that was thought be Tutsi, married to a Tutsi, accused of hiding Tutsi people or being Tutsi sympathizers were killed and mutilated. Though the main goal was to kill all of the Tutsi men, they had no intention of sparing the women or children. Over the course of the 100 days, up to half a million women and children were raped, sexually mutilated, or murdered. The sexual violence was directed at the national and local levels by political and military leaders in the furtherance of their goal, the destruction of the Tutsi ethnic group. The mass rapes were carried out by the Interahamwe militia and members of the Hutu civilian population, both male and females, the Rwandan military, and the Rwandan Presidential Guard. Hutu extremists released hundreds of patients from hospitals, who were suffering from AIDS, and formed them into "rape squads". The intent was to infect and cause a "slow, inexorable death" (Drumbl, 2012). They were encouraged to use rape as a weapon of genocide. Tutsi women were also targeted with the intent of destroying their reproductive capabilities. Sexual mutilation sometimes occurred after the rape and included mutilation of the vagina with machetes, knives, sharpened sticks, boiling water, and acid (Nowrojee, 1996). The genocidaires

also held women as sex slaves for weeks. When asked about the sexual violence he had witnessed, Major Brent Beardsley, assistant to Dallaire, gave testimony at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and concluded by saying "Massacres kill the body. Rape kills the soul. And there was a lot of rape. It seemed that everywhere we went, from the period of 19th of April until the time we left, there was rape everywhere near these killing sites " (Nowrojee, 2007). It is estimated by the National Population Office of Rwanda that between 2,000 and 5,000 children were born as a result of forced impregnation. However, victims' groups believe this is underestimated and the number exceeds 10,000. These children are themselves stigmatized and referred to as *les enfants mauvais souvenir* (children of bad memories) or *enfants indésirés* ("unwanted children") (Carpenter, 2007).

Rwanda's Incongruence. The slaughter ended once the Rwanda Patriotic Front, led by the current President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, took control of the capital, Kigali, and the country on July 18, 1994 (Prunier, 1999). The damage was done, and the infrastructure and Rwandan economy suffered greatly. At the time of the end of the genocide, women made up approximately seventy percent of the population, necessitating that women step outside of their traditional gender roles. When Paul Kagame was elected the Rwandan president in 2000, he realized in order to rebuild, they would need the help of women more than ever. He has since passed a series of policies allowing more and more freedoms for the Rwandan woman. Education for girls became necessary, women were able to own their own property, and in 2003 constitution it set aside a quota of thirty percent of women in all decision-making institutions. This includes twenty-four of the eighty seats at least in the Lower House of Parliament. Since the Genocide the Rwandan economy has recovered strongly, and they are much above the minimum

quota for representation of women (Rwanda, 2018). Critical Mass Theory in the context of gender politics is defined as the critical number of personnel needed to take effect policy as one influential body. According to the Critical Mass Theory, an influential mass only needs to integrate into up to thirty percent of the population to enact change. This can be seen on the surface level in Rwandan policy to outsiders. Rwanda has been internationally lauded for consistently ranked within the top five of all countries in gender equality in politics since their post-genocide 2008 elections (W.E. Forum, 2017). The 2013 Rwandan Parliamentary elections ushered in a record-breaking 64 percent of seats for women candidates, making Rwanda the top country for women in politics. They have passed gender equality policies such as maternity leave and have surpassed quotas for women. However, there is still little true cultural progress. A gender equality comparison between the public sphere and private sphere tell two entirely different stories.

This disconnect is due to the lack of substantial representation for women. The only way for women in Rwanda to have any political power is to fill the role of symbolic representation that is amiable to Kagame's regime. Symbolic representatives "stand for" the people they represent as long as those people believe in or accept them as their representative. Substantial representation is defined by "acting for" the interests of the people they represent. (Pitkin, 2013). The weakness in symbolic representation is the lack of "acting for" the population that they claim to "stand for." With just symbolic representation, the lack of action stunts the cause that they support. When a population has an unbalanced amount of symbolic representation, the movement only has the appearance of shallow progress. This is the case of the massive representation of women in the Rwandan Parliament. The political congruence theory states that the greater the congruence is between the values of public, social, and political institutions

correlates with greater stability overall (Sheafer, 2013). Due to the political spheres having contrasting values than the oppressed public, the instability in Rwanda continues to rise.

Political Oppression. The Rwandan government has a long pattern of silencing the efforts of their women's rights leaders. The earliest example can be seen in the brutal murder of their first and only female Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana. Prime Minister Uwilingiyimana dedicated her life to uplifting women and girls through education, just as she was uplifted through education. Once in politics, as a moderate in the Rwandan Democratic Movement, she focused on breaking the barriers between women and education with legislature and only followed an agenda of her own. She was an intelligent, focused woman with a plan to give equity to the women of Rwanda. She quickly gained support and was nominated to powerful political positions. Her strong-willed nature to do what she believed made her a common target for attacks. On multiple occasions she was physically assaulted and constantly received death threats (Chandler, 2016). When the Rwandan Presidential Guard surrounded Uwilingiyimana's home the day after the Presidential assassination, she and her husband surrendered so her five children could escape to safety with UNAMIR military observer, Captain Mbaye Diagne. Her body was later found shot point-blank in the head and naked (Off, 2001). The senseless and brutal assassination of Prime Minister Uwilingiyimana is just one example of how Rwanda has a pattern of making an example out of women who dare to utilize their power to speak up. In the recent election years, Kagame's dangerous winning streak is not because he is unchallenged. But because of his political maneuvering to eliminate those who run opposed to him, especially if they are women. Kagame's regime has a pattern of violently squashing any outspoken and intelligent woman he sees as a threat to his rule.

In 2010, Victoire Ingabire, leader of the FDU opposition party returned from the Netherlands, where she was living in exile, to protest the presidential election. After being outspoken about her opinion that the Hutu victims of the genocide have been ignored and denied justice, she was promptly arrested. She was arrested under the charges of collaborating with a terrorist organization, “divisionism,” “minimizing the genocide,” and “genocide ideology.” Those charges, at first, totaled to eight years in prison. Her sentence was later extended to fifteen years once the prosecution appealed. After Ingabire’s imprisonment, Paul Kagame won the 2010 Presidential election with 93 percent of the vote. Ingabire stated, “I was jailed because I wanted to participate in the presidential election.” The Amnesty International and a 2017 African Court on Human and Peoples’ ruling support her statement. She and others opposed to Kagame’s regime believe the government uses “Law relating to the punishment and Crime of Genocide Ideology” to constrict free speech (Fox, 2018). Another woman prosecuted for sharing this sentiment is Diane Rwigara.

When businesswoman and politician Diane Rwigara wanted to challenge Kagame in the 2017 presidential election the electoral commission did not accept her candidacy. Rwigara is known for being an activist for women in Rwanda as well as being a critic of the country’s oppression under the leadership of Paul Kagame (Runsewe, 2017). She stated, “Everybody is scared to express themselves because they are too scared of the ruling party.” Diane Rwigara and her family have seen firsthand the oppression of the Kagame Regime. She was born into a family of *Intore*, or RPF militant activist or cadres that supported Paul Kagame. However, she distanced herself from the party after the politically motivated death of her father in 2015. Rwigara’s father, Assinapo Rwigara, was driving when a truck fatally rammed into him. Rwigara’s father’s death occurred after he began publicly disagreeing with the RPF. His family believe his murder

was staged-managed to cover up his assassination by the RPF. The Rwigara family claim that it was impossible for him to die from deep cuts and injuries in his head, when the accident reports his Mercedes only being slightly hit from the passenger side (Lepapa, 2017). Diane Rwigara credits her father's mysterious murder as one of the reasons she turned to politics. She runs on a platform unafraid to question the Kagame regime and its abuses of human rights and mysterious disappearances and arrests of its opponents (Lepapa, 2017). Since her announcement of candidacy, she has been accused of forging the required signatures for her candidacy, tax evasion and calling for an overthrow of the government. Additionally, alleged nude photos of Rwigara were leaked 72 hours after she announced her intention to run in the presidential election. In September 2017, Rwigara and her mother were arrested and only acquitted of the charges nearly two years later (Deutsche, 2019). While Rwigara was wrongfully imprisoned, President Kagame won his third term with more than 98 percent of the vote.

Origins of Faux Feminism. Rwanda's history of extreme genocidal rape and sexual violence has allowed for the pattern of men's dominance to continue in their present society. The hegemonic masculinity, or masculinity in a superior position that marginalizes other genders in a social system, that has formed within the premise of this practice has allowed for a history of government oppression over the free speech of women to go unchallenged. Therefore, leveraging the power of the government to further the patriarchal dividend. The patriarchal dividend has been perpetuated through the traditional dimensions of dominance, or institutionalized bureaucracies (Collins, n.d.). This includes institutions such as government, education, and religion which have always been led by men. Further perpetuation of the gender dichotomy can be seen in how men in higher positions utilize their power against women in Rwanda. If any

woman were to oppose any man in power or bring change to a political agenda, no matter her status, she is promptly shunned and dethroned from her status. Although men in power are the reason for the surge of growth of the feminist movements in Rwanda, they still are in control. Even as the influence of women grows, the men in power make it clear women still have to act within the limits of the authoritarian system created to continue the power over women. In order to create true social change, the critical mass has to include women who are in powerful positions, and actually utilize that power to create better social and political congruence. Rwanda shows how policies can change—or fail to change—social norms.

While Rwanda's female dominated parliament has passed critical legislation pushing for gender equality, it has yet to change the detrimental social norms that plague Rwandan woman every day. The 2010 Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey (RDHS) found that out of 5,008 women surveyed between the ages of 15 and 49, 22 percent had experienced sexual violence and 41 percent had experienced physical violence at some point in their lives. Out of the 3,042 women that were married, 56 percent had been physically abused by their partner and 18 percent had been sexually assaulted by their partner (U.N., 2013). These attacks occur due to the violent history of women being oppressed being embedded into their history. Therefore, creating a culture around the violent degradation of Rwandan women that is accepted as "normal." Although Rwandan Parliamentarians have passed legislature against the prevention of Gender-Based Violence, very little Rwandan women make use of its protections. This is due to the culture surrounding the degradation of women remaining unchanged and incongruent with the legislature. This destroys any motivation for these victims to come forward. Because if they do come forward, it will be against their culture and seen as wrong. A common Rwandan phrase "niko zubakwa" means "that's how marriages are built" (BCT, 2018). The phrase implies that an

unequal balance of power is the accepted norm in marriages. Further perpetuating the gender dichotomy as well as the degradation of Rwandan women.

Methods

By using literature reviews and textual analysis I was able to view the connections between Rwanda's political history and their current gender dichotomy; as well as how their past has created their current culture surrounding their gender norms. I have challenged the perceived knowledge of the state of current Rwandan policies and gender equality. By using Rwanda's unique juxtaposition of their political representation and their traditional gender dichotomy as a case study I have studied the intersection of both ideals and see the effects. In order to gain insight into this multi-disciplinary issue, I have utilized many different lenses. One has been the lens of Women and Gender Studies. By utilizing the Women and Gender studies discipline, it has allowed me to delve into and analyze the perpetuated oppression over women by applying the feminist social theory when analyzing the social structures within society. After anchoring in the Women and Gender Studies perspective, I have added the Political Science lens. By adding the Political Science lens, I have gained perspective into the role politics play on the gender dichotomy and norms surrounding their culture. By having both perspectives, I was able to properly apply the critical mass theory, or the critical number of personnel needed to affect policy as one influential body, to my findings. According to gender politics, the critical mass of thirty percent of women in power would be needed to affect positively affect policy and the well-being of women in society. Though Rwanda's massive representation is well over thirty percent, the critical mass theory is rendered false by the social reality of women in Rwanda. I argue that this is due to social and political incongruence and symbolic representation. The thirty percent

needed to enact true change is absent in Rwanda since the women in power have no true political autonomy. The lack of a firmly grounded women's rights movement has created discrepancies of how women are viewed on paper versus how they are valued within their society. Rwanda's false feminist narrative is the blueprint for other African countries wanting to placate larger powers while keeping their archaic, traditionally patriarchal societies.

Discussion & Conclusion

In this research project, I am not only limited by time, but by distance as well. Two quarters worth of research is not long enough to get a truly deep and representative analysis of the current culture in Rwanda. This is my reasoning for choosing to do a theoretical analysis for this part of the project. Though I am constricted by the inability to connect to key Rwandan leaders, I have been able to reach out to other scholars with published research on Rwanda. I was able to contact scholar Hannah Reinl for an interview about her article "'Feminist Utopia' in Post-Genocide Rwanda? - Dismantling the Narrative Around Women's Political Representation." The interview helped shape my research add a deeper analysis due to adding more context around the surrounding issue. Hannah Reinl also gave me insight to the social patterns of women she experienced in Rwanda during the six-months she studied there (Reinl, 2020). By using Rwanda's unique juxtaposition of their political representation in the public sphere and their gender relations within their private sphere as a case study, I was able to get a more complex analysis of their current social culture. I would've liked to do a feminist media study as well. Looking at how their popular media further perpetuates the gender dichotomy would've added a better insight into their culture. Especially when reviewing how impactful the use of the radio was during the Genocide. However, I do not have access to their popular media

or culture. During the search for content for my literary review, I realized there is a reason that I was only able to find a handful of material. Rwanda has a lack of a cohesive, feminist social movement. Their female empowerment is rooted in servicing their country. President Paul Kagame only pushed for women's empowerment in order to utilize the women to rebuild the country to his liking. This pro-country argument undermines the women's intrinsic value as individuals. It assumes and perpetuates the narrative that Rwandan women are only of value if they are servicing their country. This narrative has created the ideal 'good woman' in Rwanda. Being a 'good' Rwandan woman is woven through their traditions. By President Kagame redefining what it means to be a 'good' woman in Rwanda, anyone challenging his ideal is considered an outcast and a disappointment to all of society. This leverage discourages any woman to challenge the status quo. Kagame's regime has mastered leveraging their political power against women to silence their opposing ideals. In doing this, he has stolen the voice and direction of their movement, rendering it stagnant while allowing the appearance of progress. With other countries in Africa seeing the beginnings of their own women's rights movements, Rwanda sets a dangerous precedent of silencing them. By intimidating and prosecuting outspoken opposition leaders into silence, the government is creating greater unrest which will eventually erupt. If other African countries follow this example, it could lead to widespread civil unrest across the continent over the oppression and degradation of women.

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