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Women in Kenyan Political Culture in Light of the Ubuntu Spirit

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This study explores the intersection of women's roles in Kenyan political culture within the framework of the Ubuntu spirit, a philosophy emphasizing community, interconnectedness, and shared humanity. Historically, women in Kenya have been integral to social and political movements, yet their contributions have often been marginalized or underrepresented. This research examines how the Ubuntu spirit, with its core values of collective responsibility and mutual care, has influenced and can further enhance women's participation in politics. The research traces the evolution of women's political involvement from pre-independence activism, where women played key roles in the fight for freedom, to their current participation in governance and decision-making processes. This study uses literary desktop synthesis. It highlights the traditional communal structures in Kenyan society where women's voices were vital in leadership, suggesting that the contemporary political system, often dominated by patriarchal norms, can benefit from reintegrating these Ubuntu-driven values. By fostering a political culture that embodies the principles of Ubuntu, there is potential for a more inclusive, equitable, and participatory political environment for women. Moreover, the study examines the barriers that women face in the political arena, including gender biases, cultural stereotypes, and limited access to resources. It also explores how these challenges can be addressed through the lens of Ubuntu, proposing strategies such as community-driven advocacy, gender-sensitive policy formulation, and the promotion of women-led initiatives. The research underscores the importance of creating spaces where women's voices can be amplified and respected, not just as a matter of gender equality but as a crucial component of a harmonious and just society.

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INTRODUCTION

Kenya's political landscape has historically been male-dominated, reflecting deep-rooted patriarchal norms that marginalize women's participation in governance. In traditional political culture, women had no authority to rule and were only consulted during political affairs through their husbands. This was the only way women could participate in policy-making and political matters. Women were given responsibilities such as taking care of the children, doing domestic work at home, and subsistence farming. At the same time, men participated in community policy-making and political engagement. As the world of politics in Kenya changes, women engage increasingly in Kenyan politics. However, despite constitutional reforms aimed at increasing women's representation, such as the 2010 Constitution's gender quota, significant challenges remain. In efforts to enhance gender equality, women's participation in political activities largely consists of women voters and not candidates in elective or appointive offices (Kenyatta, G.N. (2023)). This literature synthesis review explores the role of women in Kenyan political culture through the lens of the Ubuntu spirit, a philosophical concept rooted in African communalism and humaneness.

The Ubuntu spirit, derived from the broader concept of Ubuntu, emphasizes humanness, mutual respect, compassion, and interconnectedness among individuals within a community, Mbiti (1969, p39) states "I am because we are and because we are I am". In the context of political culture, Ubuntu advocates for inclusive governance that values all members of society, including women (Khomba and Bakuwa (2013)). This philosophical framework offers a unique perspective on understanding and

addressing the barriers to women's political participation in Kenya. Despite legal frameworks supporting gender equality, Kenyan women continue to face significant barriers to political participation and leadership. Cultural norms, socio-economic factors, and institutional biases contribute to their underrepresentation (study by UN Women 2023). The persistence of these barriers raises critical questions about the effectiveness of existing policies and the need for culturally resonant approaches to promote women's political empowerment (UN Women 2023).

The Ubuntu spirit provides a culturally embedded framework that can potentially transform political culture by fostering values of inclusivity and mutual respect. Many existing documents and literature have explored the roles and women's participation in Kenyan politics before and after the independence. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding how Ubuntu can be operationalized to enhance women's roles in politics. Additionally, the rhythm has changed over time and new forms of politics in Kenya evolved before and after the independence. To tackle the historic marginalization of women in Kenya, the 2010 Constitution introduced reforms to the gender principle, the quota system, and decentralization to promote gender equality. (Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023). Decentralization formed a localized political system that unlocked leadership positions to previously underprivileged sets of people like women in all the forty-seven devolved units. Worthy of note is that the elections of 2013 and 2017 had the highest number of women in Kenyan history both in the legislature and the executive branch (IEBC 2020); however, most government institutions did not attain the one-third gender rule, hence violating the Constitution.

Achievement of gender equality in Kenya has been difficult despite efforts of the government to promote women's participation in politics through various policy and legal frameworks due to the prevailing standards of societal norms, financial capability, political parties' structures, and gendered violence that have not essentially been changed by these reforms (Nyambura Kenyatta, 2023).

Ubuntu is an old African term for "humanness" – for caring and sharing. It is a way of life and stresses the importance of community, solidarity, sharing, and caring. It promotes cooperation between individuals, cultures, and nations (Nzimakwe, 2014). In essence, Ubuntu is African philosophy in the sense that it is the art of being a human being. An Ubuntu style of government means a "humane" style of government based on collective solidarity and communality rather than individualism and particularity. The principles of Ubuntu as a leadership philosophy emphasize collectivism and relationships over material things, including ownership of opportunities, responsibilities, and challenges (Nzimakwe, 2014). This synthesis literature review seeks to address this gap by examining the intersection of Ubuntu principles and women's political participation in Kenya with the hope that women will contribute actively to Kenyan politics and bring their silent voices into the decision-making arena.

WHERE ARE WOMEN IN KENYAN POLITICAL CULTURE IN LIGHT OF THE UBUNTU SPIRIT?

"Women" is a strong term. It is delightful because it reflects love, care, nourishment, obligations, responsibilities, strength, maternity, and eternity. A woman is the mirror of society in every society. When it is marginalized, the society is oppressed; when it is brought up, the society is brought up; when it is strengthened, the society is empowered. A woman is like a society atom, without which nothing would be there. She maintains culture and

customs and brings them out (Moushumi Mojumder 2020).

Women's political participation in Kenya, especially among young women, has been one of the key areas of interest for women's rights organizations (Technical Report Submitted to IDRC 2013). Politics dramas a vibrant role in influencing the policy-making process, and the absence of significant numbers of women in positions of influence negates their chance to influence decisions and impact policy-making. Although the population of women and men at all levels is almost equally matched, political representation is heavily skewed in favour of men.

Women aspirants and male participants during the Carter Center 2018 research reported that men think that because women have seats set aside for them (the women representative seat and nominated seats), they should not be supported for other positions. Some male opponents perpetuate this misunderstanding. However, women understand fully the needs of family and the community and desire to affect positive change in the community by informing policy and running for office. Therefore, if women are empowered, the whole house is empowered, as it is the entire community. Women are required to play a major role in politics and their leadership should be better placed to understand and address the needs of women and children in the society.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF WOMEN IN KENYAN POLITICAL CULTURE DURING PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA

There are many historical examples of the importance of the position of women in African politics. From the tomb of one of the most prominent Kings of Egypt; the tomb of Tutankhamun belonging to the 18th dynasty of the New Kingdom of Egypt, there is clear evidence that women played a very important role in the organization of the Egyptian Kingdom, Cleopatra, and Nefertiti, who were considered to have been

female Pharaohs in Egypt. From Nigeria, there is evidence in Benin, the capital city of the Edo-speaking people, of the role of women as queen mothers. A collection of 16th-century art contains a significant bronze head of a queen mother; Queen Ana Nzinga of Ndongo and Matamba kingdoms (present-day Angola). From Ghana, historical evidence indicates that the office of Okyeame the chief's spokesman originated through a woman (E. Kofi Agorsah 1991). In Liberia, Liberian women have been integral to their nation's political culture, especially during times of conflict and peacekeeping. Women in Liberia organized large-scale demonstrations and grassroots movements during the country's civil wars. One such movement was the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, which helped bring an end to the country's second civil war in 2003 (Gbowee, 2011). Women's advocacy helped to elect Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first female president, in 2005 (Dunn-Marcos et al., 2005). Women's participation in peace processes has been crucial. Despite these successes, ingrained gender norms and restricted access to resources continue to pose serious obstacles for Liberian women seeking full political representation and influence (Fuest, 2008). These initiatives highlight the influential role that women have played and will continue to play in determining the political climate in Liberia. In Kenya, the Kenyan political landscape has meaningfully been shaped by women since colonial periods. This is despite the country being predominantly patriarchal, and the deep-rooted resistance towards women's inclusion in politics, for example, Mekatilili wa Menza of the Giriama in Kenya, (Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023).

Before Kenya gained independence in 1963, women played crucial but often overlooked roles in the struggle for freedom. During the colonial period, women were deeply involved in grassroots political activities, particularly within their communities. They organized protests, strikes, and boycotts, often centred on issues such as land rights, taxes, and social justice. Women like Muthoni Nyanjiru led

mass protests against colonial policies, while others engaged in civil disobedience and provided support to male activists. These grassroots movements were vital in challenging colonial rule and laying the groundwork for broader nationalist movements. Throughout the colonial era, for instance, as the country struggled for independence, women steered peaceful protests that risked their lives, for example, Mekatilili wa Menza led her people in resisting British colonial rule. She mobilized the Giriama community to oppose the British-imposed hut tax and labour conscription, Muthoni Nyanjiru, who played a significant role in the struggle against British colonial rule. She is known for leading a protest in Nairobi in 1922, demanding the release of Harry Thuku, a prominent nationalist leader, Mary Nyanjiru who stood up against colonial oppression (Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023). She is known for her involvement in the 1922 protest alongside Muthoni Nyanjiru and Wambui Otieno who participated in the Mau Mau uprising, which was a key movement in the fight for Kenya's independence. She later became a prominent figure in post-independence politics, while others like Priscilla Ingasiani Abwao took part in the talks that led to the country's independence (Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023). Mama Phoebe Asiyo is also one of the most respected and influential women leaders in Kenya. She was the first African chairperson of *Maendeleo Ya Wanawake* Organization (the largest grassroots women's organization in Kenya) from 1958. She is a former Member of Parliament for Karachuonyo Constituency, Ambassador to UNIFEM and the current *Maendeleo Ya Wanawake* Organization (MYWO) Patron. Colonial and post-colonial governments recognized the power women held and utilized them for their political gains (Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023).

Although many women did not engage in direct combat, they played essential roles as couriers, spies, and providers of food and medical supplies to Mau Mau fighters. Women like Field Marshal Muthoni led troops in battle, and others worked in

the background to ensure the fighters could continue their resistance. Their contributions were critical in sustaining the Mau Mau movement, which significantly pressured the British to reconsider their colonial hold on Kenya.

Despite their active participation, women's roles in politics before independence were often marginalized. The colonial government, and even some male nationalists, tended to downplay or ignore the contributions of women. As a result, women were generally excluded from formal political processes and decision-making positions. However, their efforts laid the foundation for the post-independence era, where women would gradually push for greater political representation and rights, leading to more significant involvement in Kenya's political landscape in the years that followed independence.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF WOMEN IN KENYAN POLITICS DURING THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA.

After the independence, the number of women participating in Kenyan politics significantly increased. This became more effective after the 2010 Kenyan constitution. In 1991 when multi-partyism commenced, the 1992 National Women's Convention was held, which became a landmark in the promotion of women's participation in politics. Afterwards, gaining independence in 1963, Kenya embarked on a journey of nation-building, with the spirit of Ubuntu—often interpreted as "I am because we are" playing a crucial role in shaping the country's political and social landscape as well as "*Harambee*" spirit (pulling together). The concept of Ubuntu emphasizes community, interconnectedness, and mutual support, which resonated deeply in Kenya's post-independence era. Women, traditionally seen as custodians of community values, naturally aligned with the Ubuntu philosophy, stepping into the political arena to advocate for the well-being of their communities and the nation at large.

Despite the entrenched patriarchal structures, women in Kenya began to make significant strides in politics soon after independence. Their participation was largely driven by the need to address issues that affected their communities, such as education, health, and poverty alleviation; areas closely aligned with the Ubuntu spirit. In the 1960s and 1970s, women like Grace Onyango and Julia Ojiambo emerged as pioneers in the political landscape. Grace Onyango made history as the first woman mayor of Kisumu and later became the first woman to be elected to Kenya's Parliament in 1969. Julia Ojiambo was one of the first women to hold a senior position in government, serving as an Assistant Minister in various capacities.

These women, among others, were instrumental in breaking the barriers that had long excluded women from political leadership. Their contributions were not just limited to advocating for women's rights but extended to championing issues that affected the broader society. For instance, Grace Onyango was known for her efforts to improve the educational and health standards in her constituency, reflecting the Ubuntu spirit of caring for others. Similarly, Julia Ojiambo was actively involved in initiatives aimed at reducing infant mortality and improving maternal health, further embodying the communal values of Ubuntu.

The 1990s saw a resurgence of women's political activism in Kenya, influenced by the global women's rights movement and the push for democratic reforms within the country. Women like Wangari Maathai, who later won the Nobel Peace Prize, emerged as vocal advocates for environmental conservation and social justice. Maathai's Green Belt Movement, which focused on tree planting and environmental education, was rooted in the Ubuntu philosophy of environmental stewardship and communal responsibility. Her activism also highlighted the intersection of environmental issues with women's rights, as she emphasized that the degradation of natural

resources disproportionately affected women and children.

In Maathai, (2006). *Unbowed: A Memoir*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, women were able to organize themselves and fight for the expansion of democratic space in politics (Kabira & Kimani, 2012). Several women legislators made efforts to contribute towards the gender principle. For example, Hon. Phoebe Asiyo, in 1997 sponsored the first affirmative action motion that recommended parties' proposals of women who would compete for elective seats at the two levels of government and set a goal for women's seats in parliament to a minimum of 18 (Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023). Similarly, Hon. Beth Mugo in 2000 sponsored a motion that promoted women's involvement during the constitutional process on the gender principle. Unfortunately, both proposals failed. This pointed to the fact that the absence of political commitment by the state leaders is a major hindrance to gender parity (Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023).

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya radically changed the political culture of Kenya through the devolved system. Women's rights advocates fought hard for the inclusion of the provisions providing supportive action for women in the 2010 Constitution. The adoption of this Constitution was a defining point for Kenya, as it expanded the presence of women within the government. It built a bounded and extremely aggressive political contest within the counties and a basis for women to claim representation in government through the one-third gender principle. The Constitution demands greater political representation, especially expounding the democratic scope of women's participation in politics as per Article 27(8) and 81 (b), and also providing for the state to put in place measures for the implementation of the gender principle which ensures at least a third of each gender in all government posts (Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023). Today, women in Kenyan politics play crucial roles as leaders, policymakers, and advocates for gender equality. They hold significant

positions in government, including as members of parliament, senators, governors, and cabinet secretaries. These roles allow them to influence legislation, advocate for policies that promote women's rights, and address issues such as healthcare, education, and economic empowerment. Women leaders in Kenya also work to challenge and dismantle the patriarchal structures that have historically marginalized them in political spaces, striving for greater representation and participation of women in all levels of governance.

Beyond formal political roles, Kenyan women are actively involved in grassroots movements, civil society organizations, and advocacy groups that push for social change and political reforms. They are at the forefront of campaigns against gender-based violence, corruption, and human rights abuses, often mobilizing communities and raising awareness on critical issues. By engaging in political activism and civic education, women in Kenya continue to shape the country's political landscape, ensuring that the voices and concerns of women and marginalized groups are heard and addressed in the national discourse.

The constitution's gender representation principle differs from the traditional gender quotas as it establishes a ceiling for legally acceptable representation. The constitution ensures that one gender does not control government positions by giving a constitutional gender threshold of a third by either gender to occupy governmental seats (Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023). This has created a platform for women to participate in Kenyan political culture. For example, in the 2022 elections, Jessica Nduku Member of Parliament representing Kibwezi East, Beatrice Alachi representing Dagoreti North, and Amina M Laura representing Malindi Constituency among others. Cabinet secretary nominees; gender culture arts and Heritage, Dr. Debra Barasa- ministry of Health, Soipa Tuya- Ministry of Defense, Alice Wahome- ministry of Land and Public Work among others. Governors; Cecily Mbarire-Embu, Kawira

Mwangaza-Meru, Wavinya Ndeti-Machakos, Gladys Wanga- Homa-Bay among others. Women like Charity Ngilu and Martha Karua have participated in the political arena of Kenya.

In conclusion, the participation of women in post-independence Kenyan politics was deeply intertwined with the Ubuntu spirit, which provided a philosophical foundation for their involvement in

public life. Pioneers like Grace Onyango, Julia Ojiambo, and Wangari Maathai demonstrated that women's leadership could contribute to the broader goals of nation-building, social justice, and environmental sustainability. Their legacies continue to inspire new generations of women leaders in Kenya, who carry forward the Ubuntu values in their pursuit of political and social change.

Table 1: Women Representatives in National Assembly Before 2010 Kenyan Constitution (1963-2007).

Election Year	Elected Women	Appointed Women	Women in Parliament (%)
1963	0	0	0
1969	1	1	1.2
1974	4	2	3.5
1979	5	1	2.9
1983	2	1	1.7
1988	2	0	1.1
1992	6	1	3
1997	4	5	1.4
2002	10	8	7.1
2007	16	6	8.9

(Source: Tripp et al. (2014) and Kenyatta, G.N. (2023)).

Table 2: Women and Men Legislators at the National Assembly After the 2010 Kenyan Constitution (2013 and 2017)

The National Assembly						
	2013			2017		
	Elected	Appointed	Reserved	Elected	Appointed	Reserved
Men	274	7	0	267	7	0
Women	16	5	47	23	5	47
% of Women	5.5 %	41.7 %	100 %	7.9 %	41.7 %	100 %

(IEBC 2020) and Kenyatta, G.N. (2023)).

Table 3: Women and Men Legislators at the Senate after the 2010 Kenyan Constitution (2013 and 2017).

The Senate			
	2013		2017
	Elected	Appointed	Appointed
Men	47	2	2
Women	0	16	18
% of Women	0 %	89 %	90 %

(IEBC (2020) and Kenyatta, G.N. (2023)).

Table 4: General Election Results at the Counties by Gender (2017)

The County Assemblies	Elected		Appointed		% of Women (Nom + Elected)
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
County Assembly Members	1334	96	97	650	34 %
Governors	44	3	-	-	6 %
Deputy Governors	40	7	-	-	15 %

(IEBC (2020) and Kenyatta, G.N. (2023))

Women in Kenyan political cultures are still limping. The representation of women in major government institutions remains below the one-third threshold, especially the legislature at the national level and the Supreme Court. Further, it is visible that there is non-compliance within appointed positions (cabinet) at the national level. Among the cabinet secretaries that were appointed in early 2018, the number of women appointees did not change from 2013 despite the addition of four more cabinet positions. Six women were appointed out of the 22 cabinet secretary positions, less than one-third of the constitutional threshold. At the county level, the compliance for appointed positions met the bare minimum. (Kamuru, 2016 and Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023).

The county legislatures comply with the one-third gender rule, and the success can be attributed to the nomination of women candidates since the elected women account for only 9% at both national and county levels (Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023). Therefore, as the new constitution dispensation devolved political and economic powers, it created new opportunities for the disadvantaged groups in the country including women. It also fulfilled the quest for the expansion of the democratic space for women's participation in politics, which depends not only on affirmative action but also on a multitude of other structural and functional factors that unfold and shape the course of their political journey (Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023).

General Challenges to Women in Kenyan Political Culture in Light of the Ubuntu Spirit Before Independence, After Independence, and to Date.

Women in Kenyan political culture in light of the Ubuntu spirit have significantly contributed to the positive impacts on issues affecting the citizens particularly Kenyan leadership and governance before and after the independence. However, some challenges in the process of their participation in Kenyan political culture remain, some of which have been documented. This study explores the major challenges faced by women in Kenyan political culture in light of the Ubuntu Spirit. Below are some of the major challenges.

Violence Against Women in Kenyan Political Culture

"People are saying 'We want women in politics, we want more women to get these political seats'. But how are they going to get them if they are humiliated?" said 39-year-old Njue, who had her hair pulled and her clothes torn in the attack (Ruth Nankabirwa 2017). Njue is one of the dozens of female candidates who have been physically assaulted while campaigning for the August 9 2022 elections, according to the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association, KEWOPA. Women exposed to public scrutiny are often targeted for abuse by strangers. But many suspect political opponents are behind the abuse.

Mary Maguire, a former sex worker, received threatening phone calls and text messages while running for a county assembly in 2022. In

November, two men on a motorbike attacked her on the street. "It was just to intimidate me, to make me step down," said Maguire, who continued campaigning but lost the nomination (Reuters 2022).

Abuse on Social Media.

Besides physical attacks, abusers also prefer to use social media. For example, when Kenyan politician Esther Passaris, who represents Nairobi County, posted a tribute to her late father, trolls heaped abuse on her. KEWOPA program coordinator Mercy Mwangi said women lawmakers had reported more online abuse ahead of the vote, including sexism, misogyny, and humiliating imagery. "It's mainly a lot of sexualizing, insulting them for doing things like dancing at a political rally, zooming in on a picture of their breasts or legs, or body shaming them," Mwangi said. A growing number of Kenyan men are joining the chorus of voices warning of dire consequences. "If no efforts are put in place to better protect women politicians online, we will see more women being put off politics," said Robert Wanjala, program officer at Article 19, which promotes freedom of expression. "Ultimately, we will fail to be a truly democratic country as the voices of women will be missing," he said (Daily Nation, "Women Politicians Face Rising Threats Online", July 18, 2024).

Impact of Culture and Societal Norms.

Male candidates running against women have suggested that their female opponents will leave their families once elected according to research done by the Carter Center in August 2018. Some propaganda and slander are so embarrassing and inflammatory that, according to female aspirants, many women step down because of the fear of family shame, the possible impact on their children, or to save their marriages. Those with family support persevere, but it causes trauma to some female candidates. These experiences were also described by non-aspirants and male community members during the Carter Center Research 2018.

Women's ability to enter politics is also shaped by societal norms and gender expectations. Agreeing with Wanjiku Kabira (2016) and Elizabeth Corrigal (2007), customary tasks and the distribution of work are still gendered in most African societies. Therefore, the management of families is done by men. Cultural influences in many societies are associated with prejudiced beliefs about women's abilities, thus cultural factors are perceived to reverse the critical role of women in leadership and politics.

Political Parties' Structures.

Political parties are the key vehicles that are used by those vying for political seats. Therefore, they are key players in advancing women for election or appointment. As major gatekeepers in political participation, they select and support women for inclusion in politics and representation (*Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 25, Issue 2 [2023], Art. 5). Kenyan political parties are organized based on regional and ethnic distinctiveness rather than strong ideological basis, and this makes their organizational structures opaque. Research shows that insiders of political parties had an upper hand in the 2013 elections compared to outsiders since they were considered as the sponsorship support system before the onset of decentralization. This points to the influence political parties continue to wield within the party and their position as "kingmakers." (Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta 2023).

Financial Challenges

Traditionally women have no ownership of property like land. To enter into political campaigns, one is required to have a substantial amount of money to enter into a political party, money to run political campaigns, supporters, and transport to move from one part of the country or county to the other. Most women aspirants cannot take any loans from the banks to use for their campaigns because of a lack of collateral to support any bank loan.

Way Forward and Recommendations.***To the Executive Branch.***

Support swift replacement of leadership in commissions and regulatory bodies when officials resign to foster continued and uninterrupted work.

Adopt a Public Participation Policy through a broadly participatory process that establishes standards for public participation explicitly advances women's participation and creates benchmarks against which progress can be measured (The Carter Center August 2018).

To parliament.

Allocate sufficient resources to fully support staff and strengthen the capacity of institutions to protect and further women's participation, including the following:

- Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) to implement its mandate to monitor, regulate, and enforce compliance with the Political Parties Act provisions related to women's political participation.
- Political Parties Liaison Committee to support and advise on women's participation within political parties.
- Commissions charged with monitoring and ensuring compliance with the constitutionally mandated women affirmative-action provisions, including, but not limited to, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, the National Gender and Equality Commission, and the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights.

Allocate resources for sustained capacity-building programs for women who serve as elected and nominated officials in parliament, including mentorship, coaching, and leadership programs (The Carter Center August 2018).

To County Government.

The 2012 County Government Act provides for the principles of civic education and requires county governments to implement civic education programs and establish civic education units. It also provides for the principles of citizen participation, outlining modalities for participation and the requirement to put into place mechanisms to facilitate the public's access to information. As such, county governments should:

- Periodically review county assembly laws and regulations that guide participation in development planning to ensure they address women-specific barriers to participation.
- Ensure that standards for participation support the equal participation of women.

Implement continuous civic education programs that employ youth-friendly tactics and reach the ward and village levels, including in rural and remote locations. Topics should include the roles and responsibilities of elected and nominated officials, with a focus on the different government positions. Opportunities for public participation and civic engagement, including how to provide input into the development of the county integrated development plan.

- Constitutional provisions related to increased women's participation.

Strengthen outreach to women to increase public participation in these special-interest groups by:

- Providing more information on how to provide input into public policy.
- Creating mechanisms to provide feedback to community members on issues discussed during public forums.

Advertise public forums promptly and through multiple means, including through social media and vernacular radio stations.

Foster an enabling environment for women's participation in public forums by:

- Holding women-only sessions in some locales. Designating specific times in agendas for women participants to voice their opinions or concerns.
- Having women facilitators and conveners in the forums.

Actively and aggressively recruit and hire women for County Development Committee positions; fast-track women personnel in these committees for promotions (The Carter Center August 2018).

To the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

Replicate and enhance successful public outreach strategies utilized in the 2017 election throughout the five-year electoral cycle, especially those relating to Women (SMS, billboards, road shows).

Security forces and political parties create an environment where women feel safe throughout the entire electoral cycle, especially during political party primaries and campaigns.

Coordinate closely with the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties to enhance effective oversight and enforcement of party compliance with constitutional provisions related to women's political participation (The Carter Center August 2018).

To the Political Parties.

Reform the culture and practices that perpetuate male-dominated political party structures to better attract and mobilize more women as active members, volunteers, and party aspirants, including by increasing women's representation and active participation in the leadership and decision-making bodies within the party. Cultivate an environment for women party members, aspirants, and elected and nominated officials to lodge complaints of misconduct in which they do not fear retribution and

trust that complaints will be handled appropriately and expeditiously.

Cultivating and supporting strong women leaders through the nomination process – nominating women with demonstrated and broad support from party and local community members (The Carter Center August 2018).

CONCLUSION.

To conclude, the study of women in Kenyan political culture, viewed through the lens of the Ubuntu spirit, reveals a complex and evolving landscape. Historically, during the pre-independence era, women in Kenya played significant roles in the struggle for freedom, participating in uprisings and protests, and providing logistical support to male freedom fighters. Their efforts, often overshadowed by their male counterparts, were crucial in laying the groundwork for an independent Kenya. Women like Mekatilili wa Menza and Field Marshal Muthoni wa Kirima stand out as symbols of bravery and leadership during this period, embodying the communal and supportive essence of Ubuntu.

In the post-independence era, women's political participation saw gradual growth, albeit with persistent challenges. The political environment remained largely patriarchal, limiting women's access to leadership roles. Despite these obstacles, women leaders like Wangari Maathai and Charity Ngilu emerged, advocating for environmental conservation and social justice, and paving the way for greater female involvement in politics. The introduction of affirmative action measures, such as the two-thirds gender rule in the 2010 Constitution, marked a significant step towards gender equality in Kenyan politics, reflecting the Ubuntu values of inclusivity and communal well-being.

The emergence of Generation Z women in the 5th presidential era in Kenya signifies a dynamic shift in the political landscape. This generation is characterized by increased political awareness, digital activism, and a strong desire for systemic

change. Young women are leveraging social media and other digital platforms to mobilize support, advocate for their rights, and hold leaders accountable. The rise of young female politicians and activists demonstrates a breaking of traditional barriers, fostering a more inclusive and participatory political culture in line with Ubuntu's principles of mutual respect and unity.

Despite these advancements, women in Kenyan politics continue to face significant challenges, including gender-based violence, socio-cultural barriers, and limited access to financial resources. To address these issues, a multifaceted approach is necessary. This includes the enforcement of gender equality laws, the promotion of gender-sensitive education, and the provision of support systems for women candidates. By fostering a political culture rooted in Ubuntu—emphasizing solidarity, empathy, and collective progress Kenya can create an environment where women can thrive and contribute meaningfully to the nation's development.

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