



International Journal of African Studies

Publisher's Home Page: <https://www.svedbergopen.com/>



Research Paper

Open Access

Globalization and Gender Resistance: Perspective From “Women of NDER” in Senegal (West Africa)

Mohamed Thiam¹*

¹Alumni Graduated with a Master of Arts in Pan African Studies, College of Arts and Sciences, African American Student Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, United States. E-mail: mthiam@syr.edu

Article Info

Volume 2, Issue 1, June 2022

Received : 03 December 2021

Accepted : 06 March 2022

Published : 05 June 2022

doi: [10.51483/IJAFRS.2.1.2022.10-16](https://doi.org/10.51483/IJAFRS.2.1.2022.10-16)

Abstract

Globalization is characterized by the rise of neoliberal orthodoxy with its emphasis on market rules and their infallibility. It connotes the integration of the world into the global factory that entails tremendous competition of labor demand in order to accumulate capital. Therefore, the thinking of labor demand refers to the massive exploitation of women as they are perceived to play a pivotal role in the new industrial zone and manufactories. This paper aims to dive first into the understanding of globalization. Second, it highlights the history of those valiant women of Nder in Senegal and their implications in the fight against the western patriarchal culture and system of dominance. Finally, it articulates the radical feminists' articulations of globalization and their challenges.

Keywords: *Globalization, women of Nder, radical feminists' articulations of globalization*

© 2022 Mohamed Thiam. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.

1. Introduction

Globalization has become a worldwide phenomenon with different articulations. It can be seen as a new system to promote capitalism, which is a mode of production. The perception of gender in this patriarchal culture of capitalism is therefore thinking about inequality, oppression, marginalization, and vulnerability. Women are the most who undergo the effects of capitalism and particularly this new world of neoliberal capitalism. In order to break the rules and this system of dominance, which uses women just as commodities for purposes of capital accumulation, a wave of resistance has emerged. In this perspective, I refer to those brave and valiant female characters called “Women of Nder” who have marked the history of Senegal with their implication in the fight against the western patriarchal culture and capitalist system of dominance. Studying the story of the “Women of Nder” is deemed relevant to the apprehension of radical feminists' ideologies and articulations against this new tendency of globalization as an economic apparatus based on market rationality and capital accumulation that tends to devastate women. To get a better understanding of this issue, this research prospectus will deal with the following questions:

1. What is the understanding of globalization and how it has affected gender particularly women?
2. What is the history of “women of Nder” in Senegal and what are their implications in the fight for the patriarchal culture of capitalism?
3. What are the radical feminists' articulations of globalization and their challenges?

*Corresponding author: Mohamed Thiam, Alumni Graduated with a Master of Arts in Pan African Studies, College of Arts and Sciences, African American Student Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, United States. E-mail: mthiam@syr.edu

1A. The understanding of globalization and the way in which it has affected gender particularly women

Globalization can be defined as a new basic form of neoliberal capitalism based on capital accumulation, privatization, and marketization, which creates extensive deregulation of industries and labor division enabling financial capital to play a much more dominant role within the global economy based on labor mobility and production. It is a new mode of global organization, a series of structural changes in the global political economy. These changes entail not only an intensification of previous patterns from cross-national lending to the hypermobility of finance capital but also a quantum transformation of a system lacking the staying power of effective means of regulation. According to Cox (edited book of [Mittelman, 1997, p. 189](#)) “He sees two main aspects of globalization: global organization of product and global finance. The first entails the rise of complex transnational networks of production, which secures profitability through the most advantageous labor procurement, combining dimensions of political security and predictability. Global finance, according to him is a very largely unregulated system of transactions in money, credit, and equities”.

Globalization also may be regarded as a phase in the history of capital, whose lineage has brought together in many different societies into one system. Long-distance trade and the emergence of nation-states are important conditions for the development of this single configuration. It is a new set of movements of capital that involves a deepening of commodified forms of political and social integration. With this new set of movements of capital, there is a concentration of capital that benefits the wealthiest minority and impoverishes the masses. In this perspective, it is merely an expansion of social inequality, a particular constellation of economic concentrations, and the denationalization of economic activities at the expense of the masses.

In addition, Globalization can be seen as an ideology to promote neoliberalism. In fact, in this neoliberal view of globalization, there is a return to basic form of capitalism. Economic forces are represented as having potentially planetary reach and are akin to forces of nature; they are represented as beyond or above politics and forms of basic structures of an interdependent world. This perception of globalization as a neoliberal discourse suggests a set of ideas that justify and legitimate forms of class domination (of capital); it is abstract as far as it reifies complex social processes and institutions such as the market. With the latter, there is a restructure based on capital accumulation. In this optic, Cahill and Konings ([2017, p. 19](#)) argued that, “A variety of factors were central to this restructuring: a much greater engagement of corporations in the delivery of social services through policies of privatization and marketization; the extensive deregulation of industries, the most far-reaching of which was financial deregulation in all its forms, which enabled financial capital to play a much more dominant role within the global economy, and, indeed, people’s everyday lives”.

With this new trend of globalization that can be seen as an ideology of neoliberal capitalism or a new set of capitalism based on labor production and mobility for a boost of financial capital or economic revitalization, the perception of gender is therefore thinking about inequality, oppression, marginalization, and vulnerability. Therefore, women are the most affected.

To accumulate wealth and uplift their economies, and to respond the international market conditions, most industrialized countries participate in massive recruitments of laborers who are mostly women. Those women are incorporated in the global economy because they play a pivotal role in the new industrial zone and manufactories. In this perspective, Sassen ([1998, p. 41](#)) asserted that, “In export manufacturing, the catalyst for the disruption of traditional work structures is the massive recruitment of young women into jobs in the new industrial zones. Most of the manufacturing in these zones is of the sort that employs a high proportion of female workers in industrialized countries as well: electronics assembly and the manufacture of textile, apparel, and toys”. Western countries’ feminization of labor for the implementation of their leading components of capital and for their coordination of global economic processes are accompanied by massive exploitations of these females, who undergo intensive working conditions without a decent wage. As Sassen ([1998, p. 41](#)) argued: “In the day-to work of the leading services complex dominated by finance, a large share of the jobs involved are low pay and manual, many held by women. Although these types of workers and jobs are never represented as part of the global economy, they are, in fact, part of the infrastructure of jobs involved in running and implementing the global economic system including such an advanced form of it as international finance”.

Women’s labor depicts the nature of globalization, which is a patriarchal tendency. The perception of women is that they are just a simple commodity and thus vulnerable, weak, and exploitable. This can be seen with the privatization, deregulation, and structural adjustment policies, which widen the “gender gap”, create social inequalities and increase the exploitation of women’s paid or unpaid labor. Low labor and poverty characterize women: “Feminization of poverty”. In this perspective, Moghadam ([2005, p. 41](#)) stated: “Keeping the cost of labor low encouraged the growth of demand for female labor, while declining household budgets led to an increase in the supply of job-seeking women”. This vulnerability

of women leads Irma (Alexander *et al.*, 1997, p.3) to assert, “We dream that when we work hard, we will be able to clothe our children decently, and still have a little time and money left for ourselves. And we dream that when we do as good as other people, we get treated the same and that nobody put us down because we are not like them”.

With the trend of economic globalization, which favors competition in the market, the world economy generates capital through the exploitation of women. They are perceived as “proletarianized females”. It means the formation of women working class, those who have been incorporated in the global economy without a minimum share of the profits. They constitute the working class without which nothing could be produced and are associated with cheap labor, exploitable, and vulnerable.

That being said, the trend of globalization and its patriarchal tendency impacted tremendously women due to the massive recruitments in terms of labor. Women play a pivotal role in the new industrial zones and exports manufacturing, households, and many other fields where they tend to be vulnerable and undergo massive exploitations. According to Maria (1986, p. 116), “women, not men, are the optimal labor force for the capitalist (and the socialist) accumulation process on a world scale. Though this has always been the case in this phase of development of the world economy, this fact is openly incorporated into the economic strategies of national and international planners”. Thus, they constitute the center of attention of many western countries where free trade, free market, and free capital are crucial.

However, in order to break the rules and this system of dominance, which uses women just as a commodity for purposes of capital accumulation, a wave of resistance has emerged. In this perspective, I refer to those brave and valiant women called “Women of Nder”, who have marked the history of Senegal, and who are relevant in the apprehension of the ideologies and articulations of radical feminism in this new tendency of globalization as an economic apparatus that tends to devastate women.

2A. The story of “women of Nder” in Senegal and their implications in the fight for patriarchy culture of capitalism

To understand the story of women of Nder, I will go first through the historical context of colonialism in Africa by mapping the world theoretical system analysis of dependency between the core (developed industrialized part of the world) and the periphery (underdeveloped). Second, I will establish the relations between France and Senegal and how women’s recruitments efforts for the Europeans’ labor markets and their production needs were facilitated with the relations between these two countries. Finally, I will show the women’s implications in the fight in order to break the rules of this system of western patriarchal culture and capitalist system of dominance, which used them just as “objects” to generate wealth.

The world system theoretical analysis of dependency

The world system theory is a set of mechanisms, which redistributes the surplus value from the periphery to the core. In his terminology, the core is the developed, industrialized part of the world, and the periphery is the “underdeveloped”, typically raw materials-exporting, poor part of the world; the market being the means by which the core exploits the periphery. According to Goldstein’s observation (Mhango, 2017, p. 117): “Africa is endowed with attractive extractive industries such as oil, mining, and timber that are very capital-intensive”. Because of such richness in terms of natural resources, many European countries due to their hegemony and colonial relation they built, have participated in massive exploitations of African countries by raw materials exporting, the international division of labor, free market, and free trade in order to accumulate wealth. Therefore, the concept of metropole and dependency automatically came into existence when parts of Africa were caught in the web of international commerce. On the one hand, there were the European countries who decided on the role to be played by the African economies; and the other hand, Africa formed an extension to the European capitalist markets. As far as foreign trade was concerned, Africa was dependent on what Europeans were prepared to buy and sell (Rodney, 1972, p. 76).

The relations between France and Senegal and how women's recruitments efforts for the European labor markets and their needs for production were facilitated by the relations between these two countries.

The relations between France and Senegal have been established since colonialism. This can be seen with the creation of four European townships during the colonial period in Senegal such as: Dakar, Rufisque, Goree, St Louis serving as European’s residence in order to spread European hegemony and to have total control over the Senegalese territory and resources for their own sake. This has been made possible with the close ties that the French administration has developed with the bribed Senegalese local elites. Furthermore, with the help of the latter, the French army and administration during colonial times encouraged massive recruitment efforts by taking individuals from their land and transforming them into slaves. Senegalese female slaves were used as laborers in the fields of plantations, households, and manufacturing where they were brutally raped, and where they underwent and endured subhuman status, while

Senegalese male slaves were transformed as defenders of French colonies. They were given the name of “*Tirailleurs*” in order to cope with the policing needs generated by the colonization phase and to fight next to the European side during the World War periods. I take into consideration the statue of “*Demba and Dupont*” in Senegal, representing an African soldier and a French one as a symbol of colonial paternalism and fraternity.

In this perspective, European colonialism, because of the close ties it built with most of its former African colonies, resorted massively to Senegal in those periods of European labor markets restructuring and international mobility, during which France was facing a demographic challenge. This demographic challenge was mostly due to the declining birth rates and aging of its population, in addition to the setting of its site on industrial recovery which would require a significant labor power. Furthermore, the economic logic of immigration legislation between 1945 and 1973 enabled France to remedy its domestic labor shortage by extracting labor from its former colonies. As a fact, France established official recruitments centers in eight foreign countries, one of which was Senegal. This conjunction of labor demands and the availability of personal networks created a boosting effect on the recruitment of the Senegalese people. Most of those Senegalese recruited at that time, were mainly women because they were perceived as cheap labor who played a pivotal role in the global economy. They were incorporated into different industrial fields where they tended to be vulnerable and underwent severe exploitations.

During this period, there was in Senegal particularly in the Northwest called “*Walo*”, business traffics of women created and organized by the bribed local elites and the Arabic groups called the “*Moors*”, who came from the desert of Mauritania (Northwest Senegal). They both were dealing and collaborating with the European administration. For these bribed local elites and “*Moors*”, women were perceived as merchandize ready to be sold to the European’s needs of labor. In the eyes of the Europeans and their capitalist system, women objected to being seen, enjoyed, and purchased. They were just seen as simple commodities for purposes of capital accumulation. At that time, *Walo*, which was a kingdom of Senegal, centered on the delta of the river, mostly populated by women. It was a prosperous province where women formed one community called “*Nder*” under the rule of the queen *Ndate Yalla* (a brave and warrior woman). They were peaceful farmers, living and performing trade activities with the caravaneers of the trans-Saharan trade and with the people of Saint-Louis, the first French colonial capital in Senegal, where they sold their agricultural productions. The river separated *Walo* from Mauritania, where the ethnic groups of *Tranzas* were established. From them, one never knew in advance whether they would land as customers to exchange goods or enemies to refuel in captivity. Since the installation of the French troops in Saint-Louis, the *Moors* kept increasing their pressure against *Walo*, which they wanted to pass under their control, in order to facilitate their business with the colonial administration that was present in Saint-Louis.

Women’s Implications in the Fight

The women of *Nder* under the rule of the queen *Ndate Yalla* organized themselves to face the *Moors* who wanted to take control over them in order to effectuate their business with the French colonial administration. They engaged themselves, animated by their only courage in the terrible confrontation with their enemies. In their songs of celebration in memory of these exceptional women, the griots, illustrators of the pages of African stories narrated according to *Sylvia (2008)* that, “During that day, the women of *Nder* killed more than 300 *Moors*. Ripples of boiling blood were spreading in a reddish mud on the ground of *walo*, where lay pell-mell here and their corpses and wounded dying”. Faced with the fierce determination of the survivors who, though disarmed, were superior in numbers to the enemy lines. Defeated, the leader of the *Moors* *Amar O Mokhtar* launched the order of dispersion of his troops. The equestrians of the desert ranged their slender sabers, took their wounded on their hips, and crossed the lake again. However, even if the Moorish leader was vexed at having been defeated by simple women, he knew that they could not resist long despite their bravery. Not wanting to take the risk to damage what he considered as his own “property”, he planned to return a little later, so that they could take them for a better price on the slave markets.

With the defeat of the *Moors*, the French colonial administration under the rule of *Faidherb*, who was at that time the appointed French governor, was installed in Saint Louis which served as the European resident. *Faidherb* invaded the *Walo* with thousands of soldiers. Aware of the fact that they would not be able to resist, or win this battle with *Faidherb*’s troops, the women of *Nder* all huddled together in one hut and sacrificed themselves in a fire that they initiated. They chose to sacrifice themselves rather than falling into the Europeans’ hands, which used them in the labor market just as sub-humans and simple commodities to revitalize their economy and accumulate wealth.

Therefore, from this story of women of *Nder*, we can apprehend the radical feminists’ ideologies and articulations against this new tendency of globalization as an economic apparatus based on market rationality and capital accumulation aimed to devastate women.

3A. The radical feminists' articulations of globalization

The main argument about the radical feminists' articulations of globalization is about an overall critic of this new patriarchal tendency of globalization, which maintains women's exploitation and oppression, and which tends to dehumanize, marginalize women, and then make them invisible in the prestigious spaces and noble activities. For them, there is a new hegemonic masculinity and new spaces associated with globalization such as the global finance and high-tech sectors, which tend to be primarily embodied by men. In other words, these spaces or flows are predominantly masculine spaces and women appear to be less visible. According to Frances Beale (Beverly, 1995, p. 149), "They represent a surplus labor supply, the control of which is necessary to the profitable function of capitalism".

For many feminists' views, processes of globalization have also affected the social, in other words, gender relations including the gender contract. For instance, there has been a re-articulation of the public-private divide, not just in terms of a shift from the public sector to the market, but also the household or domestic sphere. This is most clearly manifested in the increased burden on women in terms of caring for family members or additional community-related activities due to structural adjustment programs and the economic restructuring creating an internationalization of labor forces-based gender-class.

From the radical black feminist's perspective, with this trend of globalization that can be seen as the contemporary mode of existence of capitalism or a return to a basic form of capitalism, rethinking the social structure of inequality is about to consider the intersectionality of class, gender, and race that impact all people. Therefore, intersectionality affects women particularly black women with the issue of race question and the economic system of capitalism. The latter, find its expedient to reduce women particularly black women to a state of enslavement. Black women oftentimes serve as a scapegoat for the evils of this system. They are paid less for the same work that men do, and jobs that are specifically relegated to women are low-paying and without a possibility of advancement. Furthermore, women's labor is a critical factor in many of the mechanisms that make globalization work including, export manufacturing, trade liberalization, and the promotion of sectors such as tourism and financial services but, the impact of these mechanisms often has been to undermine or weaken women's social and economic rights.

2. Radical Feminist's Articulations of Globalization

Radical feminism is a perspective within feminism. In Mama's words (Mama, 2011, p. 2), the latter challenges women at very many levels; and as an intellectual politics, it also faces many challenges. It is a call to freedom, in an era where there is generally 'less freedom in the air' than there seemed to be 20 years ago. Feminism put simply, refers to the ongoing struggle to free women from centuries of oppression, exploitation, and marginalization in all the vast majority of known human societies. It is a call to end patriarchy and to expose, deconstruct and eradicate all the myriad personal, social, economic, political practices; habits and assumptions that sustain gender inequality and injustice around the world. Feminism seeks nothing less than the transformation of our institutions, including our knowledge institutions.

Therefore, with all the burdens women are undergoing with globalization and its patriarchal structure and system of accumulation on the world scale, there is a rise of feminist voice with the birth of many grass-root women's movements, organizations, unions, and transnational feminist networks sharing common interest and purpose to challenge globalization and to establish freedom, equal rights and fundamentally autonomy. This notion of autonomy can be understood as freedom from coercion regarding women's bodies and their lives, emerged as a struggle concept in the context of body politics, the sphere where women's oppression and exploitation were most intimately and concretely experienced. From this perspective, it expresses the positive goal towards which feminists' movements strive for.

For the radical black feminist Movement to fulfil this goal, change has to be structured through the understanding of value as a share and individual's revolution value for black people: what needs to be shared to transcend that. Challenging the ideological differences by engaging those issues, which underlie the tensions among them such as class differences, which reflect very clearly in the structures they have built. So, through the way of change, there is a need to make the personal political as McFadden (1997) asserted that, "It means bringing new energies into the Movement; changing the politics of the Movement and moving to a new place, restructuring our relationships with the men and women whom we live whether these are sexual, working or parenting relationships". Through the way of change, there is a need for self-determination. In this perspective, the Movement has to begin to rethink the goals and the means of their struggle to consciously organize among themselves and find the power to affirm and control their legitimate political rights and their full dignity. It must begin raising the questions about the kind of society they wish to see to be established. In this point of view, this will mean changing the traditional routines that they have established because of living in a corrupting society. There is a need for the Movement a high political consciousness and "conceptualizing the

politics of resistance” (Marchand, 2003, p. 146) in order to understand how this system enslaves them all and what actions they must take to bring about its total destruction. All the sources that the black community can muster up must be channeled into the struggle. Black women must take an active part in bringing about the kind of society where their children, their loved ones, and each citizen can grow up and live as decent human beings, free from the pressures of racism and capital exploitation.

Through the way of change, there is a challenge to assert the ideology and status of being black women. It entails a total acknowledgment of the two innate and inseparable traits of being both black and female. Throughout this, the assertion of self-determination is essential. Black women are empowered with the right to interpret their reality and define their objectives. While drawing on a rich tradition of struggle as blacks and as women, they continually establish and reestablish their own priorities. There is a need to decide for themselves the relative salience of all identities and oppressions and how the extent to which those features inform their politics. Asserting black feminist ideology is fundamentally challenging the interstructure of the oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism both in the dominant society and within the liberation movements. It is in confrontation with multiple jeopardies that black women define and sustain multiple consciousnesses essential for their liberation of which feminist consciousness is an integral part. Asserting black feminist ideology also presumes an image of black women as powerful, independent subjects by concentrating on their multiple oppressions because ideological and political choices can not be assumed to be determined solely by the historical dynamics of racism, sexism, and classism in this capitalist world and society. Although the complexities and ambiguities that merge a consciousness of race, class, and gender oppressions make the emergence and praxis of a multivalent ideology problematic, they also make such a task more necessary if they are to work toward their liberation as blacks, as the economically exploited, and as women. It’s what Deborah Karyn King (Beverly, 1995, p. 294) calls “multiple consciousnesses”.

In addition, their challenges are also to tackle intersectionality, which affects women particularly black women with the issue of race and the economic system of capitalism. There is a need for the movement to fight against the social structure of inequality, to address all women’s labor and their rights, and to address all issues that relegate women to backward situations. There is a need for them to create their own autonomous institutions. From this perspective, it is crucial for them to make their visions real in a permanent form so that they can be even more effective and reach more people.

3. Conclusion

Globalization has become a worldwide phenomenon with different articulations. It can be defined as a new basic form of neoliberal capitalism based on capital accumulation, privatization, and marketization, which creates extensive deregulation of industries and labor division enabling financial capital to play a much more dominant role within the global economy based on labor mobility and production. It is a new system to promote capitalism, which is a mode of production. The perception of gender in this patriarchal culture of capitalism is therefore thinking about inequality, oppression, marginalization, and vulnerability. Women are the most who undergo the effects of globalization and its patriarchal tendency.

The example of women workers depicts the nature of globalization with the massive recruitments of women in terms of labor need. In the context of Senegal, women’s recruitment efforts for the Europeans’ labor market and production needs have been facilitated with the colonial relations between these two countries. Perceived as cheap labor who played a pivotal role in the global economy, these Senegalese women were recruited and incorporated into different industrial fields where they tended to be vulnerable and underwent severe exploitation. However, with all these burdens women were undergoing at the global scale within the capitalist system and patriarchal culture, a wave of resistance emerged. In Senegal, this resistance was seen through those female characters called “Women of Nder” who valiantly fought against the bribed local elites, and “Moor” and against the Europeans and their patriarchal culture.

Their fight against this patriarchal culture of capitalism, which considered them just as objects and simple commodities for purpose of capital accumulation, lead us to the apprehension of the radical feminists’ ideologies and articulations of radical feminists of this tendency of globalization as new liberal capitalism and their challenges.

Bibliography

Alexander, M. Jacqui, Mohanty and Talpade, C. (1997). *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, New York. Routledge.

- Beverly Guy-Sheftall. (1995). *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*, New York, New York Press.
- Cahill, D. and Martijn, Konings. (2017). *Neoliberalism*, Cambridge. Polity Press.
- James H. Mittelman (1997). *Globalization: Critical reflections*, Boulder. Lynne Rienner Publisher.
- Mama, Amina. (2011). The Challenges of Feminism: Gender, Ethics and Responsible Academic Freedom in African Universities. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 9(1&2), 1-23.
- McFadden, Patricia. (1997). A New Place. A New Self: The Challenges and Prospects for the African Women's Movement in the 21st Century. *ProQuest*, 1(Mar 31), 12.
- Marchand, Mariane, H. (2003). Challenging Globalization: Toward a Feminism Understanding of Resistance. *Review of International Studies*, 29, 145-160.
- Mhango, Nkwazi, N. (2017). *Africa's Dependency Syndrome*, Bamenda. Langaa Research and Publishing CIG.
- Moghadam, Valentin, M. (2005). *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks*, Baltimore and London. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Maria, Mies. (1986). *Patriarchy & Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor*, New York. St Martin's Press.
- Sassen, S. (1998). *Globalization and Its Discontents*. New York. New York Press.
- Sylvia, Serbin. (2008). *Reines d'Afrique et Heroine de la diaspora noire*, Editions Sepia.
- Rodney, Walter. (1972). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Washington. Howard University Press.

Cite this article as: Mohamed Thiam (2022). Globalization and Gender Resistance: Perspective From "Women of Nder" in Senegal (West Africa). *International Journal of African Studies*. 2(1), 10-16. doi: 10.51483/IJAFRS.2.1.2022.10-16.