

Gender Parity in Politics and Women's Movements in Senegal

Fatou Sow

Women Living Under Muslim Laws

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- This presentation is about Gender Parity in Politics and Women's Movements in Senegal. I will look at the Women's movement progress and the significance of gender parity in local politics.
- Although gender parity in politics is not fully achieved, it is a milestone in the political history of the country.



Parity : a concept

What do we mean by Parity ?

- Few definitions from Réjane Sénac-Slawinsky in her book ***Parity***, PUF, Paris, 2008.
- Parity comes from the Latin *par, paritas*, and means the similitude or equivalence between two things.
- In mathematics, the concept defines a value as even or odd.
- In obstetrics, it means the total number of alive children borne to a woman.

- In economy, it indicates the valuable equivalence between two currencies
- Then the concept becomes more political, when for instance in labor law, diverse categories of persons having different interests, in particular the employers and the employees, have an equal number of representatives within the same committee.

Parity : a political concept

- Then the concept became fully political when used to struggle against race and gender discriminations (for instance, Black civil rights and women's movements in the US in the sixties).
- But the concept became crucial at the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995. It was the 2nd on a list of 12 issues NGOs discussed at their Forum for the Beijing platform for Action.

Full and equal participation of women in political...life

- The World Conference on Human Rights recognized that the human rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights.
- The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.

Gender Parity Laws

- Laws on gender parity were passed in order to favor the equal access of women and men in appointed electoral and elective offices.
- The Council of Europe played a crucial role in promoting gender equality in its member states. It defined common principles and standards to promote the full participation of women and men in society.
- France was the first European Country to revise its constitution. Art 3. promotes *equal access of women and men in appointed electoral and elective offices.*

- Senegal passed the same law in May 2010.
- Not very many countries passed the law, although gender parity was achieved as in Rwanda or some Scandinavian countries.
- The number of women in parliament increased in recent years , as shown in the following table:

Women in Parliament: Regional Averages (Oct 2012)

- **PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN SINGLE HOUSE OR LOWER HOUSE**

- **Nordic countries :** **42.0%**
- **Americas :** **23.8%**
- **Europe - OSCE member countries**
including Nordic countries: **23.6%**
- **Europe - OSCE member countries**
excluding Nordic countries: **21.9%**
- **Sub-Saharan Africa:** **20.8%**
- **Asia:** **18.5%**
- **Arab States:** **14.9%**
- **Pacific :** **12.7%**
- *<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>*

African Women in Parliament in 1993 (UN), before the Beijing Women's Conference

- Seychelles (24%), Mozambique (16%), Guinée-Bissau (14,7%), Angola (14,5%), Cap-Vert (14,5%), Cameroun (14,2%), Gabon (13,4%), Rwanda (12,9%), Sao Tomé et Príncipe (11,8%), and Sénégal (11,7%).
- In about 15 African countries, less than 4% seats in Parliament or none: Egypt (3,9%), du Mali (3,7%), Guinée Équatoriale (3,3%), Zambie (2,9%), du Kenya (1,7%), Madagascar (1,5%) ou du Soudan (0,7%). Comoros, Djibouti and Maroc there was no seat.

The Women's movement in Senegal

- Now, let us take the case of the Republic of Senegal and see how women's movements put gender parity in politics in their agenda and moved it.
- It is important to talk about women's movement, because of their role in the process

Senegal : facts and figures

- Independant since 1960
- Presidential regime : 4 presidents from 1960 to 2012
- One party until 1974; three party system up to 1981. Then multi-party system, although dominant party still exist.
- Executive, judiciary and parliamentary systems.
- Laïcité is inscribed in the constitution since 1960. No state religion
- No discrimination, according to gender, religion, race , ethnicity, ... No political party based on gender, religion, race , ethnicity, either.

- Located in West Africa
- Capital City: Dakar
- Population : 12.900.000 (women 52%)
- Predominantly Muslim (94%), Christian (4%); others (2%)
- Gender ratio: 51% women
- Birth: 4,38 children by ♀

- What is a women's movement? What is the difference with women's association ?
- Women's association: a group of women
- Women's movement : group of several associations with certain claims to rights: education, employment, health and sexual rights, ...

- It important to recognise women's associations in rural and urban areas in Africa, from; precolonial era to today. If we don't, then we dismiss women's roles throughout history.
- Women's associations based on several criterias : age, ethnicity, location, activities, class, race, religion .
- Social support system; economic activities, ...

- They played a very important role during liberation struggles. Women in Thiaroye (1947)
- They supported socially, politically, and economically. Rich market women gave funds to the *Fathers of independance* (Sekou Toure, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, etc.)
- Frances Ransome Kuti (mother of Fela) was the founder of a strong women's association which played an important role for independance. Later on she opposed the independant governments and was thrown out of a window of a police station.

- The facts are the same in Senegal
- Women of the political elite in power (*Lingeer*) in some kingdoms
- Strong women's organisations (*mbotaay*)
- Women supported union and political parties' leaders
- Important political roles: **what about their positions at independence ?**

- More organisations emerged with more criterias, besides the usual ones : education, profession, activities, faith, ideology, etc.
- FAFS, AAWORD, Yeewu Yewwi, Femmes et société, Siggil Jiggeen , Association des Femmes juristes brought various issues: family laws, education, activity, violences against women, health and sexual rights, FGM, political participation,
- Many issues remain untouched, mainly about sexuality and religion
- Feminism was a issue : how to be feminist and an authentic African woman

Figures will be drawn from a research I directed in 2000 and published as ***Les Sénégalaises en chiffres***

At independence, no women were nor in government, neither in Parliament.

There were few were in high position as civil servants were educated Senegal were.

The private sector had very few men. The government had to set a policy of Africanisation of employment.

Women in the Sénégal Parliament 1957-2012

• 1°- 1957-1963	80	80	0% of women
• 2°- 1963-1968	80	79	1,2% of women
• 3°- 1968-1973	80	79	1,2 % of women
• 4°- 1973-1978	100	76	4,0 % of women
• 5°- 1978-1983	100	92	8,0 % of women
• 6°- 1983-1988	120	107	10,8 % of women
• 7°- 1988-1993	120	102	15,0 % of women
• 8°- 1993-1998	120	106	11,6 % of women
• 9°- 1998-2003	140	122	13,5 % of women
• 10°- 2003-2008			18% of women
• 11°-2008-2012			22% of women
• 12°-2012-2017			43 % of women

- Women's movement grew because of two major elements:
- Some process of political democratisation with multipartism : Union des femmes du parti (parti unique) was challenged by the Union des femmes of other parties
- Progressively the Union des femmes of all parties were challenged by women's associations being 1) modernised; 2) more politicised and 3) part of an emerging civil society

- The UN Women's Decades Conferences from Mexico, to Copenhagen, Nairobi (1975-1985), and then Beijing (1995) were:
 - An eye-opener for many African and Senegalese women, and the African public opinion
 - Women were confronted to various opinions including Western feminisms (conflictual and collaborative relations)

- They were able to learn from themselves in Africa and around the globe, especially from the South (Asia, Middle-East, Latin America and Caribbean).
- They confronted, build and /or their own conscienceness and discourses (to add the girl child to the Beijing Platform for action was a demand of African NGOs because of forced and early marriage and pregnancy, child labor)
- The 1990s were also the period of structural adjustment policies for the payment of the debt.

- The States received less funding from the international community (lesser state) and were unable to cover social costs (education, health).
- Foreign NGOs, then local NGOs were empowered to carry several tasks the State could not bear.
- The policies of income generating activities for women; women's empowerment programmes; gender training on all sorts of rights had to be delivered , not by the State, but by or with support of international and local NGOs.
- Can you name other fields of NGOs activism ?

- A growing politisation of women's organisations, the sensitisation of women's unions in political parties led women to set up a collective organisation Conseil sénégalais des femmes gathering women of all parties and NGOs, to get after the Democratic alternance in 2000, a more important participation in the structures of decision making and politics (Beijing 1995)

- In 1977, after the Woman International Year, Senegalese women requested a quota in electoral politics (25%). They never gained it, until the 2012 elections. They gained 43% of the seats in Parliament because of the law on parity passed in May 2010

- **Then what's next:**

- Fill the seats up to 50% at least
- Meanwhile discuss qbout what we are here for ?
Descriptive or substantive representation?
- Deal with questions that nobody raise: How to cope with cultural and religious threats from the society, the mosque, and the church. Their discourses might be different, but they have the same goal: the control of women