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Gender and Decolonisation in Zambia: Re-Examining Women's Contributions to the Anti-Colonial Struggle

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Zambia obtained its independence from British colonial rule in 1964. While significant portions of historiography focus on how the struggle was predominantly fought by men, some more recent literature examines the various ways in which women contributed to the movement. This paper re-examines women's participation in the anti-colonial movement of the 1950s and early 1960s by taking a cue from the development studies theories of women in development, women and development, and gender and development (WID, WAD and GAD respectively). The paper uses primary interviews and archival sources to focus on specific woman-led protests and their participants to investigate how women contributed to the struggle. It assesses the ways historians have portrayed women's participation in decolonisation through specific lenses, critiquing the historiographical framing of women's roles in the movement. I assert that the existing literature compartmentalises women's contributions into political and non-political endeavours, and this limits how we can understand their work. This paper addresses the question of how we can better understand women's contributions to the Zambian independence movement by realising that historiography has framed female labour in terms of reflecting the WID and WAD paradigms and by reframing the narratives through a lens reflective of the GAD paradigm. I argue that we can see how women's labour has been characterised in ways that prevent us from seeing the larger picture: that both men's and women's work were essential to dismantling colonialism. I argue that a gendered lens, which views male and female contributions together, is necessary to a comprehensive understanding of the movement.

Keywords: Zambia; gender; decolonisation; anti-colonial; WID/WAD/GAD

Introduction

On the morning of 27 March 1960, members of the Women's Brigade went to the offices of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) in Lusaka in Northern Rhodesia to launch an anti-colonial protest.[1] The Women's Brigade was the branch of UNIP that supported women's interests, staging non-violent protests and making recommendations to the party on behalf of women. Led by Julia Mulenga Nsofwa, who was fondly referred to as Mama

1 In this paper, I use the name Northern Rhodesia to discuss the colonial entity from the late 19th century until 1964 and I use 'Zambia' to refer to the postcolonial nation-state as it exists after independence was obtained from Britain in October 1964.

Chikamoneka, the Women's Brigade was composed of women who were concerned with matters of decolonisation and wanted to contribute what they could to the movement.[2] On this particular Sunday morning, UNIP women gathered under Mama Chikamoneka's leadership to protest against the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland by confronting the arrival from England of the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Iain Macleod (see Figure 1). d. They intended to meet Macleod at the international airport in Lusaka and to bare their chests in defiance of his policies and British colonialism in general. Mama Chikamoneka explained, 'I gathered all the women to tell them Macleod was coming. I stripped and tied a rope around myself. My friend did the same to be ready to face him'.[3] She continued: 'I told [Macleod], "[y]ou must deal seriously here. You must speak straight, what we want is our country". He just nodded, saying "very fair, very fair". He spoke very good words. "Just be patient", he said, "[y]ou will have your country"'.[4] The struggle persisted for another four years.

Mama Chikamoneka and the Women's Brigade continued to protest against colonialism, launching protests against the presence of colonial officers throughout the early 1960s. Mrs Yolanta Chimbamu Mainza Chona was one of the women who participated in Zambia's anti-colonial struggle by co-operating with the Women's Brigade. Yolanta's husband, Mainza Chona, was a prominent member of UNIP and had thus far been instrumental in leading the struggle against British colonialism in Northern Rhodesia; in her own way, Yolanta played her part too.

Mrs Chona recalls an event that she planned to attend in 1962 which was similar to the famous airport protest:

> I remember there was one meeting [when] we went to demonstrate to one of the [white] officers …. We went there, but by that time I had two children – Kaoli and Yuka. So, when they wanted to go to the airport, when we went there to the [UNIP] office and when [Mama Chikamoneka] saw me, she told me, '[n]o, you cannot go to the airport because you have got two children. The children are going to suffer'.[6]

Yolanta had arrived with the others at UNIP headquarters, ready to depart for the airport and participate in the protest, carrying her infant twins in her arms. When Mama Chikamoneka saw that Yolanta had brought her children, she sent her home. Mama Chikamoneka understood that Mrs Chona was responsible for caring for and protecting her children, which was just as important as demonstrating at the airport. In her wisdom, she told Mrs Chona that her hands were full with her own family's needs; the Women's Brigade could protest without her that day.

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2 'Chikamoneka' is a name Julia Mulenga Nsofwa took on for purposes of anonymity and safety; in the Bemba language it means 'it will be seen', which refers to the hope of obtaining independence from colonialism. She was also referred to as Julia Chikamoneka and Mama UNIP because of her leadership role within the party.

3 'Horses and Riders', Zambia Information Services (ZIS, now Zambia News and Information Services [ZANIS]) broadcast on 16 March 1965, Zambia Broadcasting Services Televised Documentary, retrieved from ZANIS archives on 21 October 2019.

4 *Ibid*.

5 Available at https://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalarchives/5404315147/in/photostream, retrieved 27 April 2021.

6 Author's interview with Yolanta Chimbamu Mainza Chona (hereafter Yolanta Chona), 10 June 2013, Lusaka, Zambia. While Mrs Chona's memory of these events mirrors the 1960 protest, it seems to have been a separate event because she also recalled carrying her twin daughters, Yuka Agatha and Kaoli Rosemary, who were born in December 1961. (Yolanta had three older children as well.) Macleod was removed from the role of Secretary of State for the Colonies in October 1961. The archival documentation of the famous airport protest shows that it occurred on 27 March 1960. However, in Mwizenga S. Tembo's (ed.) *Satisfying Zambian Hunger for Culture* (Bloomington, Xlibris Corporation, 2012), the famous airport protest is attributed to 1963, so it is possible that the events are one and the same; the archival records lack clarity on the matter.

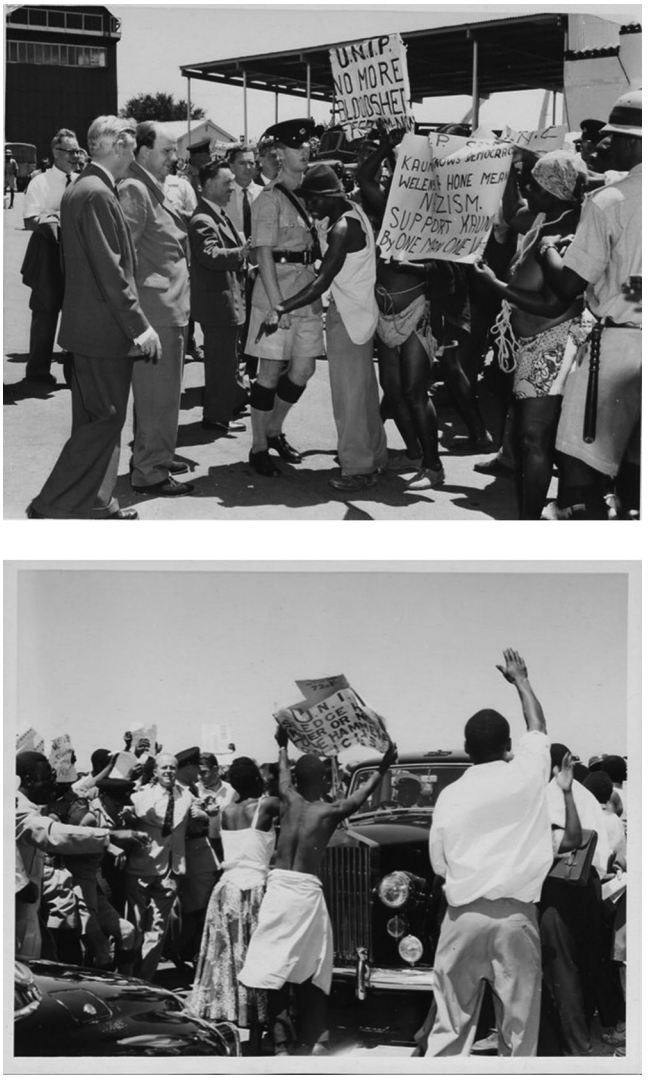

Figure 1. The protest by the UNIP Women's Brigade against the arrival of the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Iain Macleod, at Lusaka International Airport in 1960. (Source of images: The National Archives, UK, ref. CO 1069 125-8.[5]).

These anti-colonial protests have become legendary occasions of women's contributions to Zambia's national independence. Much of Mama Chikamoneka's political work was considered effective. According to Yolanta, 'Julia Chikamoneka was a dynamic old lady. She was really, really dynamic. She did quite a lot for the country'.[7] Zambian women worked for the anti-colonial cause in a variety of ways, including – but not limited to – such protests. Yolanta Chona, specifically, contributed to her nation's anti-colonial movement in additional ways. As part of the Women's Brigade, she provided food and shelter for the agitators who were organising the anti-colonial movement. Vernon J. Mwaanga, renowned freedom fighter and politician, recalled, '[w]e used to go and stay in her house, she'd cook for

7 Author's interview with Yolanta Chona, 10 June 2013.

us and encourage us'.[8] Mrs Chona hosted the party meetings alongside her husband, providing refreshments and domestic support; further, she took care of her family and others while her husband and his colleagues were making progress in the struggle for independence. Reflecting on this period of her life, she stated, 'I was fully a housewife. And feeding those people who were staying with me, and also at night there were some cadres … the youth, they were coming just to guard us. So, otherwise, completely, I was a housewife'.[9] She saw her role as providing domestic support to the people who were fighting in the struggle.

On 24 October 2012, President Michael Sata honoured female freedom fighters in a ceremony at State House to commemorate 48 years of independence.[10] Yolanta Chona was awarded the Companion Order of Freedom for her efforts in the struggle (see Figure 2). Reflecting on the ceremony, she explained:

> [i]t was really good. I appreciated it. Of course, there are so many who are already honoured, but I was very happy for the president to think about me after all people, many people who fought. To be selected. It is very important for someone to think about you something great.[11]

Alongside her, Mrs Grey Zulu, Mrs Kamanga and Mrs Mulemba were honoured at the same ceremony.[12]

Speaking again specifically about the value of Yolanta Chona's role in the struggle, Mwaanga said, '[s]he's a great woman, and that's why I was very upset that it took so long for her to be honoured. And then I became very outspoken in talking about her role, until she was actually finally honoured'.[13] In a government publication celebrating 50 years of independence in 2014, her award was announced again with the following encomium: '[s]he was honoured for playing her role by hiding and feeding fugitive freedom fighters, passing messages, hiding printed materials and correspondence throughout the turbulent and dangerous times of the freedom struggle. She held clandestine meetings in her home at the risk of her own life and freedom'.[14] Yolanta Chona was recognised for having contributed more than her mere intentions of attending a Women's Brigade protest; Zambia formally recognised the importance of female labour in its anti-colonial movement.

In this paper, I use primary interviews and archival sources to investigate the meaningful ways in which women contributed to Northern Rhodesia's anti-colonial struggle. Women's work in the process of decolonisation in Northern Rhodesia has been written about in a myriad of ways: some works focus on overtly political acts, such as protests and demonstrations; some works highlight domestic labour and the importance of 'women's work'. I assess the ways historians have portrayed women's participation in decolonisation in these ways, critiquing the historiographical framing of women's roles in the movement. I assert that the existing literature separates women's contributions from men's and compartmentalises women's contributions into public and private – and therefore political and non-political – endeavours, and this limits how we can understand their work. This paper addresses the question of how we can better understand women's contributions to the Zambian

8 Author's interview with Vernon J. Mwaanga, 20 November 2018, Lusaka, Zambia.
9 Author's interview with Yolanta Chona, 10 June 2013.
10 K. Namusa, 'Zambia: Sata Honours Wives of Freedom Fighters', *Times of Zambia*, 25 October 2012.
11 Author's interview with Yolanta Chona, 10 June 2013.
12 *Ibid*.
13 Author's interview with Vernon Mwaanga, 20 November 2018.
14 Office of the Vice President, Republic of Zambia, *50th Independence Anniversary Celebrations: National Honours and Awards 1964–2014* (Lusaka, Government Printer, 2014), p. 197. August 2014. Vernon J. Mwaanga was also acknowledged in this publication as having received the Order of the Eagle of Zambia, 2nd Division, in 2005: '[h]e was honoured for his contribution to the freedom struggle. He was the youngest person to join the liberation struggle on a full-time basis which led to him being disowned by his family members who belonged to the African National Congress (ANC)' (*Ibid.*, p. 162).

Figure 2. Insignia of the Companion Order of Freedom awarded to Yolanta Chimbamu Mainza Chona. (Photograph by the author, 12 August 2013.).

independence movement by realising that historiography has framed female labour in these segmented terms and by reframing the narratives through a more cohesive lens. I argue that we can see how women's labour has been characterised in ways that prevent us from seeing the larger picture: that both men's and women's work was essential to dismantling the colonial regime. I argue that a gendered lens, which critically and holistically views the male and female contributions to independence together, is necessary for a clearer understanding of the movement.

A Gendered Analysis

In keeping with the observation that women's contributions to independence are divided into the dichotomous categories of 'political' and 'domestic' work, I draw a parallel to the way women's work is understood and written about within development theory and literature: the paradigm of WID, WAD and GAD is a useful analogy. This paradigm unpacks the ways in which women participate(d) *in* development (WID); the 'relationship between women *and* development' (WAD); and a more holistic approach to understanding gender and development (GAD).[15] Eva

15 E.M. Rathgeber, 'WID, WAD, GAD: Trends in Research and Practice', *Journal of Developing Areas*, 24, 4 (1990), p. 492, emphasis added. Additional helpful texts on WID, WAD and GAD include: G. Zwart, 'From Women in Development to Gender and Development, More than a Change in Terminology?', *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, 8, 14 (1992), pp. 16–21, with a focus on Zimbabwe; M.H. Marchand and J.L. Parpart (eds), *Feminism/Postmodernism/Development* (London and New York, Routledge, 1995), particularly G. Chowdhry's contribution, 'Engendering Development? Women in Development (WID) in International Development Regimes', pp. 26–41; and B.L. Turner and M. Fischer-Kowalski, 'Ester Boserup: An Interdisciplinary Visionary Relevant for Sustainability', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 107, 51 (2010), pp. 21,963–21,965.

M. Rathgeber's analysis of the three frameworks offers a helpful way to examine women *in* decolonisation, women *and* decolonisation, and gender and decolonisation, especially if we can consider decolonisation a form of development. By changing 'development' to 'decolonisation' in the analysis, we can begin to understand how late-20th-century and early-21st-century historiography has divided women's contributions to the Zambian independence movement into an unhelpful dichotomy. We can also see how a perspective that integrates all anti-colonial work, whether men's or women's, into an inclusive endeavour can be a more appropriate and informative approach. Using this gendered lens, we can better understand the value of the male and female contributions together as equally necessary and useful in the struggle. The application of the WID, WAD and GAD paradigm that I transpose from development theory onto this decolonisation example does not strive to insert women into the process, since I recognise that women were already there. It is merely a lens used to understand both the significance of women's participation in the process and the ways historians have theorised and categorised these contributions.

To begin, I will engage with the body of literature that focuses on women's participation in the Zambian anti-colonial struggle and political organisation more broadly. I will then take a closer look at the WID, WAD and GAD framework, demonstrating how this paradigm has been applied to making sense of how women's work fits into larger economic and development systems. I will, in turn, argue that the framework can be applied to understanding how women's work has been framed in similar ways with regard to political and anti-colonial systems. Yolanta Chona, Mama Chikamoneka and the Women's Brigade become a site of analysis for reframing women's contributions as integral to the process of the anti-colonial movement in Northern Rhodesia.

Northern Rhodesian Women's Historiography

Much of the literature on Zambian political agitation and the anti-colonial struggle does not include discussions of women and their contributions at all. For instance, Ian Henderson's 1973 article entitled 'Wage-Earners and Political Protest in Colonial Africa: The Case of the Copperbelt' focuses on labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia, but does not centre women in these spheres in his analysis.[16] By virtue of writing about wage work and trade unions in the colonial era, Henderson's attention is directed away from women and onto men. His discussion of political protests and agitation is structured around men's participation. This is not an inherent flaw within his analysis per se; I merely note that the focus of this particular essay on labour and resistance does not include an analysis of women. Similarly, John Flint's 1983 discussion of decolonisation across the British colonies in Africa more widely also omits any sort of gendered analysis or conversation around the role of women in these processes.[17] Additional works, such as Charles Ambler's 1990 article on popular politics in Northern Rhodesia, featuring discussions of racial segregation and alcohol, overlook women's work as relevant content.[18] Bizeck J. Phiri's 2001 article, focused on postcolonial-era politics in Zambia, also lacks discussions of how women's labour contributed to the public political sphere.[19] The dominant narrative within Zambian historiography prioritises the work of men in political arenas at all levels.

16 I. Henderson, 'Wage-Earners and Political Protest in Colonial Africa: The Case of the Copperbelt', *African Affairs*, 72, 288 (1973), pp. 288–99.

17 J. Flint, 'Planned Decolonization and Its Failure in British Africa', *African Affairs*, 82, 328 (1983), pp. 389–411.

18 C. Ambler, 'Alcohol, Racial Segregation and Popular Politics in Northern Rhodesia', *Journal of African History*, 31, 2 (1990), pp. 295–313.

19 B.J. Phiri, 'Colonial Legacy and the Role of Society in the Creation and Demise of Autocracy in Zambia, 1964–1991', *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 10, 2 (2001), pp. 224–44.

There were, however, some scholars concerned with women's work in the late 20th century. Jane Parpart's 1983 research on labour in the Copperbelt region of Northern Rhodesia, circa 1920s to 1960s, provides discussions of work and resistance while employing a Marxian class-based analysis.[20] Parpart focuses predominantly on the male mineworkers, while intermittently discussing female labour in the context of mining compounds. Her analysis of the mining sector focuses on a much earlier period than the freedom-fighting years of the 1950s and 1960s, but resistance against the mining industry still must be seen as anti-colonial resistance. However, despite this attention to the circumstances of women, her analysis is much more class-centric than gender-centric. At the centre of her analysis is the distinction she makes between 'capitalist and non-capitalist production modes'.[21] Parpart frames her analysis of labour not around public versus private spheres in a gendered sense, but around capitalist and non-capitalist forms of work. The Marxian lens she applies here, examining class and modes of production, supersedes any gendered analysis she provides. For instance, even when she discusses the domestic labour provided by the wives of the mineworkers, she focuses on the income-generating capacity of that labour. She explains, '[s]ince women did the brewing, only married workers made beer, which became an important source of income. Brewing was usually done near paydays to maximize sales'.[22] Parpart's understanding of the importance of female labour is framed through a lens of monetary productivity and does not centre around the usefulness of the domestic labour women provided in the homes of the mineworkers, or the support they provided to the unions' causes through their domestic labour.

In her 1989 book entitled, *Distant Companions: Servants and Employers in Zambia, 1900–1985*, Karen Tranberg Hansen examines the role of domestic labour in the making of colonial Northern Rhodesia. She interrogates the differences between male labour and female labour, making the distinction between paid work and unpaid work. She writes, '[i]n the colonial scheme, it was very important to keep women back on the farm. Their work subsidised migrant workers' substandard wages and ensured reproduction of a new generation of workers without cost to the administration'.[23] While many men were employed in domestic work as servants, Hansen differentiates between that form of paid domestic labour – making it productive labour – and the unpaid, reproductive domestic labour carried out by women. She explains that when more men were needed as mineworkers (making them migrant labourers), more women were then employed as domestic servants in colonial households. Hansen's gender-based analysis of labour in Northern Rhodesia, however, does not broach the subject of political activism and protest. Her discussion of male versus female, productive versus reproductive and public versus private spheres is useful inasmuch as it demonstrates how labour is framed within the literature, but her analysis stops of short of demonstrating how these frameworks can be applied to the labour associated with processes of decolonisation.

Gisela Geisler, who writes prolifically about women in politics in Southern Africa, challenges the construction of female roles in the political sphere in Zambia in her 1995 article.[24] Geisler explains, '[w]omen's role in politics is often understood to be limited to a particular female space, such as a party's women's wing, where its members are given little or no scope to influence policy formulation, not even policies directly relevant to them'.[25]

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20 J. Parpart, *Labour and Capital on the African Copperbelt* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1983).
21 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
22 *Ibid.*, p. 42.
23 K.T. Hansen, *Distant Companions: Servants and Employers in Zambia, 1900–1985* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 86.
24 G. Geisler, 'Troubled Sisterhood: Women and Politics in Southern Africa: Case Studies from Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana', *African Affairs*, 94, 377 (1995), pp. 545–78.
25 *Ibid.*, p. 546.

She continues by explaining that understandings of what can be considered political have depended upon the false dichotomies of public versus private, causing women to be associated with providing the private underpinnings that support the political work being done by men. The second wave feminist movement in the west in the 1960s challenged this structure by asserting that 'the personal is political', allowing women to question what could be considered political and where political events could take place.[26] This allowed for women to become politically engaged in new ways.[27] According to Geisler, these dichotomous categories persist within African societies, as they were ingrained by colonial states and perpetuated by postcolonial regimes, and only in recent years have younger women begun questioning and challenging them.[28]

In a subsequent article, Geisler reiterates that 'participation in formal politics was restricted to the women's wing of political parties, and where political spaces and discourses were largely defined by the interests of men'.[29] She emphasises that within the public/private dichotomy, women's issues were not considered political issues, and therefore women's political participation, within the public realm, was superfluous to the work of the male politicians.[30] She highlights the work of the Women's Brigade in Northern Rhodesia, explaining that '[i]ts members were expected to help men achieve political power and not to seek it themselves'.[31] Geisler argues that women's branches of political parties in colonial, and even postcolonial, southern African states remained marginalised and relatively powerless in their larger political contexts. Despite Geisler's suggestion that what should be considered 'political' can extend beyond conventional understandings, her work focuses on the overtly political participation of women. She attempts to challenge the discursive framework but then works within it. Hers remains an analysis that relegates women's political contributions to the public, productive realm.

Another prominent Zambianist, Miles Larmer, also engages with the ways in which women contributed to political causes in Northern Rhodesia, as he references Parpart's work concerning the mining sector on the Copperbelt.[32] He explains that the mineworkers' wives, about whom Parpart also wrote, were frequently instrumental in agitating for wage increases and improved living conditions in the mining compounds.[33] Looking specifically at the women's capacity to organise and protest, Larmer writes, '[t]he MUZ [Mineworkers' Union of Zambia] provided no forum for these women to organize, and the consistent unwillingness of mine companies to recognize them as a legitimate constituency, led them on a number of occasions to don their husbands' hardhats and overalls during demonstrations'.[34] Larmer's analysis of women's political contributions remains in the context of overt political activism and organisation, even in instances where the women's concern was for their domestic, private spheres.

Two striking categories arise when examining the literature on women's work and politics in Zambia: one where women are evaluated only for their domestic contributions and one where they are celebrated for their political activism. Scholars' propensity to

26 *Ibid*. The phrase 'the personal is political' is linked to the feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s and is not attributed to any single scholar or activist, but was made popular by several prominent feminists of the era.
27 *Ibid.*, p. 547.
28 *Ibid*.
29 Geisler, '"A Second Liberation": Lobbying for Women's Political Representation in Zambia, Botswana and Namibia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 1 (2006), pp. 69–84, quotation from p. 69.
30 *Ibid.*, p. 71.
31 *Ibid*.
32 M. Larmer, '"If We Are Still Here Next Year": Zambian Historical Research in the Context of Decline, 2002–2003', *History in Africa*, 31 (2004), pp. 215–29.
33 *Ibid.*, p. 223.
34 *Ibid*.

separate these two forms of female labour demonstrates a missed opportunity in recognising the multifaceted and comprehensive ways in which women have contributed to their political circumstances and, in this case, to a decolonisation struggle. The earlier studies cited here, which focus on the private sphere of women's work within the home, argue that female labour is important within society, regardless of how political it is seen to be. The later works, which point to the ways in which women entered the public sphere of political demonstration, imply that an analysis of Zambia's political history is incomplete without an understanding of how women contributed. I argue, however, that both fall short of a holistic understanding of the importance of women's contributions to independence in Zambia.

A number of current works apply a more intersectional approach to political organisation in Zambia.[35] Mwizenge S. Tembo helpfully discusses how colonialism affected the gendered divisions of labour in Northern Rhodesia in his 2012 text, *Satisfying Zambian Hunger for Culture*. He explains, '[t]he patriarchal structures or men-centered decisions, attitudes, and the gender ideology of the British men from the European society were brought to and often imposed on the women in their African colonies'.[36] Tembo elaborates on the history of men being called away from their farms in order to provide physical labour for railways, plantations and mines, thereby leaving women at home to perform the double duty of their traditional domestic labour and filling the void of farm labour left behind by absent men. He characterises this as women being 'thrust indirectly into the struggle and resistance to British colonialism' between 1910 and 1960, while also noting that '[b]esides working to produce food in the villages, to raise their children, support their husbands and families, some Zambian women were political activists who participated and made more direct contribution and impact in the fight against colonialism'.[37] Additionally, Tembo discusses how women contributed to the domestic aspects of political meetings, as Yolanta Chona did. The way he discusses these two forms of female labour in tandem – holding space for both overt political action and traditional domestic labour as contributions to the resistance – demonstrates that he values women's work as equally political.

Further, Sacha Hepburn's 2019 article 'Service and Solidarity: Domestic Workers, Informal Organising and the Limits of Unionisation in Zambia' examines the effectiveness and limitations of labour unions for the growing informal sector of domestic labourers in Northern Rhodesia colonially, and Zambia postcolonially. Hepburn analyses the ways in which domestic workers were able to advocate for themselves, acknowledging that '[t]he labour relations of domestic service are often highly personalised, informal and, in postcolonial states like Zambia, grounded in a history of racialised and gendered socio-economic inequality'.[38] Further, in critiquing the data collected both by the colonial and postcolonial governments as well as the union and labour organisations, she asserts that the statistics misrepresent the ratio of male to female domestic labourers, largely negating the

35 'Intersectionality' as a concept refers to the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression based on a person's identity or positionality; an intersectional analysis takes into account the ways a person's gender, sexual orientation, race, age, socio-economic status and more all compound one another to account for the ways society either privileges or oppresses them. It was coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, who credits the work of predecessor Angela Davis for its foundations. See S. Cho, K.W. Crenshaw and L. McCall, 'Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38, 4 (2013), pp. 785–810, that issue of the journal being titled 'Intersectionality, Theorizing Power, Empowering Theory'. I also recommend reading I. Oluo's *So You Want to Talk About Race* (New York, Seal Press, 2018) for more on the topic.

36 M.S. Tembo, 'How Zambians Ruled and Governed Themselves in Traditional and Modern Zambia', in M.S. Tembo (ed.), *Satisfying Zambian Hunger for Culture* (Bloomington, Xlibris Corporation, 2012), Chapter 9, pp. 197–219; quoted text from p. 210.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 210, 212.

38 S. Hepburn, 'Service and Solidarity: Domestic Workers, Informal Organising and the Limits of Unionisation in Zambia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 45, 1 (2019), p. 32.

prevalence of women and girls in this informal sector.[39] Hepburn builds upon and cites extensively the works of Hansen, demonstrating 'that the number of people employed in domestic service has increased since independence and that the sector has been gradually feminised'; further, 'junior kin and children have long provided domestic services in Zambian households'.[40] By pointing to these aspects of the identities of domestic labourers, Hepburn provides a more well-rounded and intersectional analysis. One gendered issue she focuses on is that of maternity leave, which, she explains, was something the labour unions were fighting for; she also discusses the role of child labour in the domestic labour sector, explaining that it was only in 2011 that legislation addressed this concern.[41] Hepburn's contributions portray women's work in the public and private spheres as integrated endeavours. She engages with the limitations of labour organising in Zambia on the basis of 'class-based and gendered inequality', while also acknowledging age and other forms of power relations that exist within the labour sector and its collective actions for improved working conditions.[42] This contemporary analytical work allows us to see all aspects of labourers' identities as political and to appreciate the political work done by women in places such as Zambia.

Applying the Paradigm

Women in Decolonisation

To draw the parallel with the development theory paradigm of WID, WAD and GAD, I turn now to Rathgeber's discussion. Rathgeber explains that '[t]he term "women in development" came into use in the early 1970s, after the publication of Ester Boserup's *Women's Role in Economic Development*'.[43] Boserup's work pioneered the concept of using a gendered analysis in labour and development studies. While her work was subsequently criticised for oversimplifying women's labour, her contribution became a building block for later analyses.[44] Before the 'women in development' (henceforth, WID) perspective, Rathgeber explains, women were infrequently thought of as requiring their own analysis: '[i]t was assumed that the norm of the male experience was generalizable to females'[45] This can be seen within the aforementioned works of Henderson, Flint, Ambler and Phiri, who provide discussions of the political sphere in Northern Rhodesia without engaging in a gendered analysis of women's roles.

In development praxis, the WID approach worked to integrate women into existing development efforts rather than challenging the systems that subjugated women's needs. This manifested as adding women to development programmes already under way, focusing on increasing economic productivity and assessing how their economic development progressed. However, according to Rathgeber, researchers rarely took into consideration the amount of reproductive and domestic labour these women carried. Within WID programme analyses, only productive, economic work was evaluated and appreciated.

Rathgeber critiques the way WID was ignorant of what we now distinguish as intersections of positionality, such as race and class; she explains that WID 'focused on women or gender as a unit of analysis without recognizing the important divisions and

39 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
40 *Ibid.*
41 *Ibid.*, p. 43; see also S. Hepburn, 'Girlhood, Domestic Service, and Perceptions of Child Labour in Zambia, *c.*1980–2010', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 12, 3 (2019), pp. 434–51.
42 Hepburn, 'Service and Solidarity', p. 37.
43 Rathgeber, 'WID, WAD, GAD', p. 490, referencing E. Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (London, Earthscan, 1970).
44 *Ibid.*
45 *Ibid.*, p. 491.

relations of exploitation that exist among women'.[46] This type of analysis is now considered outdated in development literature, although at the time it was progressive. Rathgeber also states that WID attempted to elevate women's productive work, while diminishing the importance of reproductive and domestic work.[47] She asserts that this 'liberal-feminist approach … is based on the assumption that gender relations will change of themselves as women become full economic partners in development'.[48] That is to say, once women are economically productive, their status within society will improve.

To apply this framework to the example of women's participation in the anti-colonial struggle in Northern Rhodesia, we can think about the ways in which historical literature has written about women doing the 'productive' work of organising and demonstrating for political gain. This literature includes the provided examples of Geisler's and Larmer's studies, which discuss the overtly political work associated with resistance. Political organising and anti-colonial struggles in Africa have historically been written about as male-dominated phenomena. Here, I refer to the prolific works written by and about Kwame Nkrumah, Kenneth Kaunda, Patrice Lumumba, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere and Nelson Mandela: the public, political sphere is most often the place to which men's work is relegated, rather than women's. When women are celebrated as important political figures, they are tokenised, and considered unique figures. The volume of literature on women's organising pales in comparison to that which focuses on the contributions of men to their national struggles. Further, the works written about women's so-called productive political labour, like the ones that focus on the Women's Brigade, are most often written by female scholars. This reflects the trend within gender history that is consistent with Rathgeber's analysis of the WID approach: that women are scarcely seen as a unit for analysis within development discourse and programmes and, likewise, within the dominant historiography. It has often fallen to female scholars to carve the niche of gender-based analysis, and a focus on women, within the scholarship. This remains true for the literature on decolonisation in Zambia.

By disregarding the role of domestic labour in an anti-colonial process, a 'women in decolonisation' approach would solely value overtly political acts, such as meetings and protests, like those the men were performing – and like the airport protests. Such historiographical interventions assert that women participated in politics by showing that the Women's Brigade held meetings, Mama Chikamoneka led protests and Yolanta Chona did her best to attend them. The women who protested against colonialism in Northern Rhodesia were juggling the reproductive labour of raising their families with the productive labour of attending protests, such as the one discussed here, just as the women in WID-approach programming were responsible for their own domestic work and the paid work associated with the programmes. By declining Yolanta's participation in the protest, Mama Chikamoneka was acknowledging the importance of her domestic work and recognising that her labour in that sphere was equally necessary to the anti-colonial struggle.

The WID approach, according to Rathgeber, did not attempt to make systemic changes within the patriarchal systems and male-dominated programmes. Likewise, literature on the Northern Rhodesian Women's Brigade states that the women did not mean to challenge the male-dominated system through their works. Gisela Geisler writes that '[l]eaders of the Women's League of the United Independence Party [*sic*] (UNIP) in Zambia were, during the 1970s and 1980s, at pains to assure men that their involvement in politics was not intended to overthrow male authority and male defined "tradition"'.[49] This framework demonstrates

46 *Ibid.*, p. 492.
47 *Ibid*.
48 *Ibid.*, p. 492.
49 Geisler, 'Troubled Sisterhood', pp. 547–8.

how women can be inserted into the discussion without changing the terms of the discussion: women acted politically, but the underlying definition of what constitutes political action is never challenged. Through this lens, if Yolanta Chona had participated in the famous protest, she would have been considered a political agent, but since she did not, she might be seen solely as a housewife who did not contribute to her nation's struggle.

Just as WID-based programmes interjected women into the development programmes already under way, the 'women in decolonisation' lens erroneously works to demonstrate that the addition of women into the public political sphere was supplementary rather than complementary or equal in significance. Women's presence in the Northern Rhodesian anti-colonial struggle has been portrayed in this type of historiography as a side-project and their efforts are discussed by scholars as though they should be considered in addition to the already validated male labour of freedom fighting.

Women and Decolonisation

The 'women and development' (WAD) framework takes on a neo-Marxist feminist approach, emerging in the later 1970s in response to the limits of WID and the assumption that women had not been implicitly involved in development work prior to their integration through WID programmes.[50] WAD takes the stance that women have always participated in development in their communities: '[t]he WAD perspective focuses on the relationship between women and development processes rather than purely on strategies for the integration of women into development'.[51] WAD contends that women's productive and reproductive work has always been crucial to economic growth in their communities. While still reinforcing the male/female binary of labour analysis and the productive/reproductive dichotomy of women's work, WAD is slightly more critical of women's oppression within development processes in the capitalist system.[52] Rathgeber explains that WAD is conscious of class and acknowledges that many men in the Third World are also negatively affected by the international inequalities in the global capitalist system; however, WAD 'gives little analytical attention to the social relations of gender within classes' or class within gender.[53] Concurrently, the WAD approach asserts that women's conditions will be ameliorated with the general improvement of economic equity internationally and does not take into consideration how women are disadvantaged by the influence of patriarchy and class within their own communities. While the WAD analysis was progressive in its time, we can now see its limitations.

According to Rathgeber, the WAD approach aims to resolve these issues by redesigning development programmes to suit women's circumstances in order to increase their participation.[54] Like WID, its interventions focus on economic activities, ignoring the reproductive and domestic labour required of women at home, since it seemingly has no economic benefit to the community. One key critique Rathgeber provides of the WAD approach is the imposition of western assumptions and biases that assign value, or lack thereof, to female labour in the global south. The parallel that can be drawn between the WAD approach and 'women and decolonisation' is using this lens to understand how certain forms of domestic labour have been considered important for the independence struggle in Northern Rhodesia.

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50 Rathgeber, 'WID, WAD, GAD', p. 492.
51 *Ibid.*
52 *Ibid.*, p. 493.
53 *Ibid.* Literature from the era in which Rathgeber published her paper used the Cold War-era terminology of the 'Third World' to describe what is now called the global south, although even that term is under scrutiny. I use this outdated terminology here to be consistent with the literature.
54 *Ibid.*

The 'women and decolonisation' lens can be applied to the works of Parpart and Hansen. Parpart and Hansen prioritise female reproductive labour, asserting its importance in society. Parpart's Marxian discussion of transforming the act of brewing beer from a household task into a wage-earning task reflects the ways that the WAD paradigm focuses on the commodification of female labour. Similarly, Hansen's discussion of domestic work moving from being a male-dominated form of productive labour to a female one also demonstrates how certain reproductive work is promoted to being considered productive. The reassigning of economic value between the public and private spheres is consistent with the WAD approach within development discourse.

For Yolanta Chona, this looked like playing hostess to the political meetings where her husband and his colleagues gathered to discuss strategies and plans. It also looked like ironing the suits he wore to the meetings where he and his compatriots negotiated Zambian independence from British colonialism. This type of work is domestic and therefore reproductive in nature, but can be viewed as part of the political process; the WAD paradigm 'redesigns' the development praxis lens to include additional aspects of women's work, based on their circumstances. It does, however, still negate and ignore the rest of the domestic work that Yolanta Chona and women like her were doing necessarily in their own homes to keep their families alive.

This analysis is consistent with what Rathgeber writes about the WAD approach: that women's circumstances will improve with overall community improvement and that patriarchal and class-based oppressions do not feature largely in the conversation. Works that focus on the ways in which women used their domestic labour to contribute to the men's political work value that labour insomuch as it had productive ends. In general, however, the 'women and decolonisation' type of literature ignores the larger socio-economic and political structures that necessarily relegate women to domestic spheres. As the historiography discusses the ways in which women participated in the anti-colonial struggle beyond obvious interjections like protests – by discussing what I call semi-productive domestic labour – it ignores that women were subjugated to the roles of domestic help in general.

The timeline of the two frameworks of WID and WAD within the literature is, however, inverted when compared to their places in the development discourse. Where we can see in Rathgeber's work that WID preceded WAD, the older examples of historical literature reflect the 'women and decolonisation' framework and the more recent ones reflect the 'women in decolonisation' framework. This discrepancy can be understood by seeing that the earlier works, including Parpart and Hansen's, focus on domestic labour and women's works in a more general context, not specifically by looking at the decolonisation process. While historians and anthropologists have been concerned with gendered labour and cultural practices in Northern Rhodesia since the early 20th century, it is only more recently that scholars have raised concerns with these issues as they relate to the anti-colonial struggle, which transpired in the mid 20th century.[55] Despite the inversion of the lenses, they still provide a useful methodological approach for reading these works.

Gender and Decolonisation

The 'gender and development' (GAD) model arose in the 1980s, in critique of the WID model, 'linking the relations of production to the relations of reproduction and taking into

55 I refer here to the anthropological works of people like Audrey Richards and Elizabeth Colson, who wrote about Northern Rhodesian peoples as early as the 1930s. See A. Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: An Economic Study of the Bemba Tribe* (London and New York, Oxford University Press, 1939); A. Richards, *Bemba Marriage and Present Economic Conditions* (Livingstone, Rhodes–Livingstone Institute, 1940); E. Colson, *Social Organization of the Gwembe Tonga* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1960).

account all aspects of women's lives'.[56] This socialist feminist approach examines the social relations between men and women, understanding that women's oppression is based on the ways productive and reproductive work have been socially constructed. Rathgeber writes, 'GAD is not concerned with women per se but with the social construction of gender and the assignment of specific roles, responsibilities and expectations to women and to men'.[57] Instead of looking solely at women, women's work and women's conditions like the WID and WAD approaches would, GAD 'analyzes the nature of women's contribution[s] within the context of work done both inside and outside the household, including non-commodity production, and rejects the public/private dichotomy that commonly has been used as a mechanism to undervalue family and household maintenance work performed by women'.[58] That is to say, the GAD approach is not interested in upholding the false dichotomies created by western scholars and development practitioners.

Rathgeber explains that the GAD framework views women as agents in their circumstances and critically examines the ways in which men and women participate in constructing (and deconstructing) systems of oppression.[59] The GAD approach does not merely work to interject women into programmes (WID) or provide opportunities for women to participate where they may not already be (WAD): '[i]t leads, inevitably, to a fundamental re-examination of social structures and institutions'.[60] Rathgeber concedes that the GAD approach is rare and difficult to enact, as systems of patriarchy, classism, racism and capitalist oppression are so deeply entrenched in most national and international arenas, including development praxis.[61] Likewise, I argue that a 'gender and decolonisation' lens has been exceedingly rare in African anti-colonial historiography. Scholars such as Mwizenge S. Tembo and Sacha Hepburn, publishing as recently as 2012 and 2019 respectively, have managed to provide more holistically gendered analyses of the ways in which Zambians have organised politically for improvements in their working conditions. Tembo's text synthesises female contributions to the independence struggle by simultaneously acknowledging the ways in which women supported men, replaced them when necessary and complemented their endeavours with protests of their own. Hepburn's article on domestic workers includes analyses of, and in fact interviews with, both male and female domestic labourers, thereby not separating the two from one another as though they require separate analyses. She engages with the issues of domestic labour as productive wage labour, not merely discounting it as unimportant, feminised reproductive labour, while taking into account the identities of domestic workers across Zambia. She discusses the racialised aspect of the labourer/employer relationship, the misrepresentation of the gender ratio of domestic workers in annual reports by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the ages of labourers and how unions ignored children's issues, and how unions were effectively powerless to protect women from losing their jobs due to maternity leave; Tembo and Hepburn's scholarship alike takes a comprehensive and, indeed, intersectional approach in engaging with the gendered nature of political organising in Zambian history.

The example of Yolanta Chona's contributions to her nation's anti-colonial movement provides an opportunity to understand this historical moment through a 'gender and decolonisation' lens. A 'gender and decolonisation' perspective would deconstruct the productive/reproductive dichotomy and see all the work done in the anti-colonial struggle as equally important and necessary to the process. Rather than discussing the contributions of

56 Rathgeber, 'WID, WAD, GAD', pp. 493–4.
57 *Ibid.*, p. 494, emphasis in original.
58 *Ibid.*
59 *Ibid.*
60 *Ibid.*, p. 495.
61 *Ibid.*

men and women as separate tasks, with varying degrees of significance, a 'gender and decolonisation' lens portrays the project of decolonisation as a necessarily integrated process that requires all forms of labour in order to succeed. I argue that it is crucial that as historians we understand the anti-colonial movement as an interconnected set of efforts, built upon public and private, productive and reproductive, overtly and subtly political acts.

This reframing is necessary for two reasons: first, that colonialism itself is a gendered process and therefore decolonisation must be understood as a gendered process; and, second, because historiography has framed decolonisation in western paradigms, making sense of anti-colonial struggles in western terms. This body of literature requires a decolonisation of knowledge, stemming from the removal of western lenses that impose gendered perceptions and categories onto the work of anti-colonial movements and the resulting significances of that work.

By stating that colonialism is a gendered process, I refer to the differing ways that European structures and systems imposed themselves on men and women in any given colony. There is ample literature on the gendered dimensions of British colonialism in Northern Rhodesia, looking at issues such as matriliny, matrilocality, homestead structures, hut taxes, wage labour, agriculture, coerced labour migration, education and numerous others.[62] Ania Loomba explains that British colonialism touched every aspect of colonial life, leaving irreversible change; colonisation left people with vastly changed epistemological relationships to their worlds.[63] However, as Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford discuss, women under colonial systems experienced a double colonialism: first, by the patriarchy that may have existed in their cultures of origin and, second, by the imposition of the colonial system from outside.[64] In this way, women – such as Yolanta Chona and Mama Chikamoneka, in the Northern Rhodesian anti-colonial movement – fought against two forms of oppression at the same time. For them, there was no differentiating between the struggles in the way that historical and development literature have differentiated between public and private, or productive and reproductive. According to Geisler, '[w]omen in Africa, in fact, had forced their way into the politics of anti-colonial movements against male resistance, and they had done so with the expectation of gaining a better society, including their own position within it'.[65] She argues that women were fighting two simultaneous battles. Consistent with the lens of intersectionality, these multiple forms of oppression are integrated, persistent, inextricable and compounded upon one another.[66]

The second reason for the 'gender and decolonisation' reframing is that as scholars we have imposed western cultural paradigms onto historical events, interpreting the actions and reactions of colonised peoples in the global south in terms we can comprehend. The valuing and devaluing of anti-colonial tasks based on their gendered agents is a western imposition. I am not arguing that concepts of 'men's work' and 'women's work' did not exist in Northern Rhodesian communities, either pre-colonially or colonially; I am, however, arguing that the historiographical emphasis on the male-dominated aspects of these tasks as taking on

62 Most prominent among this literature are works by Audrey Richards, Elizabeth Colson, Kenneth P. Vickery, Karen Tranberg Hansen and more. See K.P. Vickery, *Black and White in Southern Zambia: The Tonga Plateau Economy and British Imperialism, 1890–1939* (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1986); Hansen, *Distant Companions*; K.O. Poewe, 'Matriliny in the Throes of Change Kinship, Descent and Marriage in Luapula, Zambia, Part One', *Africa*, 48, 3 (1978), pp. 205–18.

63 A. Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York, Routledge, 2005), p. 53.

64 K.H. Petersen and A. Rutherford, *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women's Writing* (Mundelstrup, Dangaroo, 1986), p. 9.

65 Geisler, 'A Second Liberation', p. 71.

66 Again, I refer to the concept of intersectionality, as coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshawe.

singular, or superseding, importance demonstrates a western prioritisation of the tasks that were necessary to the decolonisation struggle.

In our interview in 2018, Vernon Mwaanga explained the pivotal role played by Yolanta Chona and women like her: he stated '[t]hey were the ones making sure that the freedom fighters got up, they were fed, they got out every day to go and prosecute the struggle against colonialism'.[67] Referring specifically to Mrs Chona, Mwaanga continued by elaborating on

> [a]ll the encouragement she used to give … . 'Don't give up! You people must continue this fight!' And we had to continue the fight because we received a lot of encouragement. We received a lot of encouragement from people like her. They were always there, to make sure that we ate, she would even wash our clothes. Iron them for us.[68]

Mwaanga valued the contributions made by the women associated with the struggle as equal to the contributions of men. He explained:

> [t]he women did a lot. It was clear that the demographics of our country were such that the women were slowly overtaking men in terms of numbers. They had to play a role. And we had also been following activities of women in countries like Ghana … and Nigeria and Kenya and Tanzania, the role they played. And our women were also motivated to play that role … and they were part of the struggle for independence. We all needed each other in the struggle.[69]

The 2012 national ceremony, wherein Yolanta Chona and her cohort were honoured as freedom fighters, also works to show that their contributions were valued by the highest echelons of power in the country. If the men in the struggle valued the women's contributions, we as scholars need to hear their voices and do the same.

Conclusion

National independence from British colonial rule was obtained in 1964 by UNIP, led by Kenneth Kaunda and his compatriots. Yolanta Chona's husband, Mainza Chona, was a founding leader of the party and was instrumental in the anti-colonial movement, working alongside Kenneth Kaunda. Mainza and Yolanta Chona worked together in the struggle. He participated in the public, productive political work and she did much more of the reproductive and domestic, private work, but it would be errant to frame this partnership as separate endeavours. They were working toward the same goal: independence for their nation. Although the literature highlights the contributions of the men, the men themselves have pushed to ensure that the women were formally recognised for their efforts.

Yolanta Chona's award in recognition of her participation as a freedom fighter exemplifies the two-pronged reasoning for the discursive reframing of historical events. It demonstrates that, on a national level, women's work is valued and understood to be integral to the struggle, which validates the thesis that anti-colonial work was inherently gendered because colonialism was gendered. Further, it supports what Mwaanga asserted when he said that the men in the struggle knew the importance of the women's contributions and that they valued the domestic and public work being done by the women. The devaluing of female-associated tasks is a western academic, retrospective imposition and not the way the activists in the struggle perceived their work. By highlighting and relying on the voices of Zambians themselves, we work toward a decolonisation of knowledge production, which

67 Author's interview with Vernon Mwaanga, 20 November 2018.
68 *Ibid*.
69 *Ibid*.

allows for a different understanding of the events – an understanding that is more closely aligned with that of the participants themselves.

In this paper, I argue that the work contributed by women in Zambia's anti-colonial struggle is inextricable and inseparable from the male labour in the struggle for independence: the gendered aspects of the labour in the anti-colonial efforts are mutually significant and necessary for achieving independence. This reframing allows us to understand the gendered contributions to the independence struggle as more than just the sum of their parts: the literature that featured men's work and the literature that complements it by demonstrating women's contributions each only show a portion of the picture. We can understand more fully and holistically how the anti-colonial movement transpired by seeing these forms of labour as working hand in hand with one another. Men and women depended on each other for their productive and reproductive labour as they fought together against their common enemy of colonialism. The work done by each gender was necessarily contingent upon, and supportive of, the work of the other gender. As UNIP, the official party, consisted mostly of men, it needed and respected its Women's Brigade branch. The work was never meant to be scrutinised as two separate processes. A cohesive analysis of the entire process of the independence movement allows for a more comprehensive valuing of the work that was done by everyone involved.

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