

Victoria O. Okoye, International Studies and Journalism

Year in School: Senior

Hometown: Lincoln, NE

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Tola Olu Pearce, Sociology

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The advancement of women in decision-making roles in Nigeria, Tunisia and South Africa

As democratic systems replaced previous military or single party governments, the social and political environment in Africa presented the opportunity for more gender equal participation in the political realm and women's roles in decision-making became an important issue. However, despite the establishment of democratic governments, in terms of positions and salience, women's progress in this area has failed to reach its potential (Tripp 2001). Pre-colonial and colonial ideas of masculine dominance continue to thrive and men occupy well over the majority of decision-making positions, resulting in the under-representation of women. This study will investigate why women's progress, in light of the establishment of democratic systems, has failed to provide gender-equal representation in the area of decision-making, as stipulated by the Beijing Platform for Action. The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) was the outcome of an international conference that pointed out issues of concern in many areas of women's lives, including political life. On this issue, the Platform for Action called for action on the part of countries and international organizations to implement more gender-equal representation to promote better governance (United Nations 1995). This project examines the responses and progress of three post-colonial African countries to increase women's participation in decision-making in the national politics. There exist in these countries both indigenous institutions and Western-style institutions inherited from colonialism that in many ways disenfranchise women. This project shows that in order to increase women's representation, these countries must modify these systems in the areas of education, laws, policies and women's associations, thereby executing a multifaceted approach to reform these both indigenous and modern institutions so as to bring women forward in national politics.

This project was completed to fulfill a Capstone requirement.