

#AfricaDay2018

The Women Africa must never forget!

#WomenPowerAfrica

#AfricaRemembersYou

Agathe Uwilingiyamana (Rwanda)



Sometimes known as **Madame Agathe**, she was a [Rwandan political figure](#). She served as [Prime Minister of Rwanda](#) from 18 July 1993 until her assassination on 7 April 1994, during the opening stages of the [Rwandan Genocide](#). She was Rwanda's first and so far only female Prime Minister.

She was educated at Notre Dame des Citeaux Secondary School, and obtained the certificate to teach [humanities](#) at 20. In 1976 she received a secondary school diploma in mathematics and chemistry. She became a mathematics teacher in [Butare](#). In the same year she married Ignace Barahira, a fellow student from her village. Their first child was born later in the year; they would go on to have five children.

In 1983 she taught chemistry at the [National University of Rwanda](#). This was financially possible because her husband obtained a post at the university laboratory at twice the salary of a math teacher. She received a B.Sc. in 1985, and taught chemistry for four years in Butare academic schools. Rwandan media was later critical of her scientific education, as it was thought that girls should not study science

In 1986 she created a Soriority and Credit Cooperative Society among the staff of the Butare academic school, and her high-profile role in the self-help organization brought her to the attention of the Kigali authorities, who

wanted to appoint decision makers from the discontented south of the country. In 1989 she became a director in the Ministry of Commerce.

She joined the [Republican Democratic Movement](#) (MDR), an opposition party, in 1992, and four months later was appointed Minister of Education by [Dismas Nsengiyaremye](#), the first opposition prime minister under a power-sharing scheme negotiated between President [Juvénal Habyarimana](#) and five major opposition parties. As education minister she abolished the academic ethnic quota system, awarding public school places and scholarships by open merit ranking. This decision earned her the enmity of the Hutu extremist parties.

On 17 July 1993, after a meeting between President Habyarimana and all five parties, Agathe Uwilingiyimana became the first woman prime minister of Rwanda, replacing Dr. Nsengiyaremye, the man who had appointed her Minister of Education, and whose exoneration of the president was unpopular with the other parties. On the day of her appointment, Nsengiyaremye suspended Uwilingiyimana's MDR membership, which had opposed the formation of any interim government excluding the rebel [RPF](#).

Though short, her political career was precedent-setting as one of the few female political figures in Africa. She was contemporaneous with [Sylvie Kinigi](#), Prime Minister of [Burundi](#). As a memorial to the late Rwandan Prime Minister, the [Forum for African Women Educationalists](#) (FAWE) established *The Agathe Innovative Award Competition*. The award funds educational and income generating projects aimed at improving the prospects of African girls. One of FAWE's founding members was Agathe Uwilingiyimana.

Agathe Uwilingiyimana was killed alongside her husband by the then Rwanda presidential gaurd at the UN Compound in Kigali at the height of the Rwanda Genocide on 7th April 1994.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agathe_Uwilingiyimana

Gisèle Rabesahala (Madagascar)



Rabesahala was the first Malagasy woman to be elected as a municipal councilor (1956), political party leader (1958), and to be appointed minister (1977). The lauded leader also founded Imongo Vaovao newspaper, and is best known for dedicating her life to Madagascar's independence, and advocating for human rights. –

Source: <https://thisisafrica.me/africas-10-iconic-women-leaders/>

Nzinga Mbandi - Queen of Ndongo and Matamba (Angola)



Mbandi is described as a “deft diplomat, skilful negotiator and formidable tactician,” according to [UNESCO](#). Nzinga encouraged her people to resist Portugal's colonial influences, and even worked with the Dutch to drive the colonisers out. The queen resisted colonisation right until her death in 1663.

Source: <https://thisisafrica.me/africas-10-iconic-women-leaders/>

Women Soldiers of Dahomey – Military leaders (Benin)



The admired but feared warriors of Dahomey Kingdom were also known as the “Dahomey Amazons” in the 18th century. They contributed to the kingdom's military power, and were respected for being brave and never running away from danger.

Source: <https://thisisafrica.me/africas-10-iconic-women-leaders/>

Leymah Gbowee (Liberia)



Leymah Roberta Gbowee (born 1 February 1972) is a Liberian peace activist responsible for leading a women's peace movement, Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace that helped bring an end to the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003. Her efforts to end the war, along with her collaborator Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, helped usher in a period of peace and enabled a free election in 2005 that Sirleaf won.^[1] She, along with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Tawakkul Karman, were awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize "for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leymah_Gbowee

Therese Sita Bella (Cameroon)



Also known as Theresa Bella Mbida or as Sita Bella. Born in 1933 in beti tribe in southern Cameroon. Become the first woman film maker of Cameroon and Africa as a whole. She received education from the catholic missionaries. She Went to Paris in 1950's to continue with her studies after attaining her baccalaureate from a school in the Cameroon capital of yaunde. It is in Paris where she developed an interest in journalism and film making. 1955 she started a career in journalism. 1963 become the first African woman filmmaker in Cameroon and all of Africa. 1964-1965 worked in France at the French newspaper LA VIE AFRICANE which she co- created. 1967 she returned into Cameroon and joined the ministry of information and become the deputy chief if information. 1963- Directed the documentary *TAM TAM*

A PARIS. TAM TAM A Paris is frequently cited as being the first film by a woman from sub-Saharan Africa. Sita Bella was considered to be a trailblazer and the one of the rare woman working in the film industry that was being dominated by men. She spoke about film in the 70's saying "camera woman in the 1970 at that time we were very few, there were few West Indians a woman from Senegal called SAFI FAYE and I, but you know cinema is not a woman business". She died in February 2006 from colon cancer. Sita Bella film hall at the Cameroon cultural centre was named after her to honor her

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Th%C3%A9r%C3%A8se_Sita-Bella

Freedom Nyamubaya (Zimbabwe)



She was born in 1958 in Uzamba in Mashona land. She was a poet, dancer, farmer, feminist, and revolutionary from Zimbabwe__She is known as one of Zimbabwe's celebrated "guerilla fighter-poets", with two published collections of her poem During the Rhodesian Bush War, she served as one of the few female field operation commanders. In 1979, she was elected Secretary for Education at the first conference of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) Women's League.

She left secondary school at the age of 15 to join the Zimbabwe African national liberation Army [Zanzla] during the insurgency against Rhodesian predominantly white government. She travelled to zanzla training camp in Mozambique believing she could change something. She was one of the few female field commanders during the Rhodesian bush war.

She was also an education secretary at the first conference of the Zimbabwe African union (zanu) woman league. After Zimbabwe independence 1980, she remained an active for empowerment and rights of Zimbabweans.

1980 she founded the civil society organization management outreach training services for rural and urban development {MOSTRUD} in Marundera Zimbabwe with the initial aim of helping refugees and people who had been displaced as a result of the war for independence by providing rehabilitation reintegration and training in agricultural skills to support livelihoods. She continued to lead the organization until her death integrating a particular focal on rural development agricultural support and theatre for woman and young people.

In her poem 'Introduction', which opens *On the Road Again*, Nyamubaya expressed her commitment to continue to fight against injustice after the end of the bush war

*Now that I have put my gun down
For almost obvious reasons
The enemy still is here invisible
My barrel has no definite target
Now
Let my hands work –
My mouth sing –
My pencil write –
About the same things my bullet
aimed at.*

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_Nyamubaya

Mary Wambui Otieno (Kenya)



Also known as Virginia Edith Wambui Otieno. Was born in 21st June 1936 in Kiambu district in southern kikuyu land. She was a Kenyan activist, politician and a writer. she received a missionary education including being a border at Mambere girls secondary school, a secondary school with the highest level

of education then available for African girls. In 1952 when at secondary school Wambui swore an oath of allegiance to *Mau Mau* and in 1954 she left home to join the Mau Mau insurgency in Nairobi after a brief detention of her father.

She spied on the British and mobilized woman and domestic staff to obtain arms. She was also involved in the campaign to eradicate the color barn Nairobi which designated separate areas in public spaces for Europeans, Asians and Africans. she was arrested briefly for the activities and issued with orders excluding her from Nairobi which she flouted.

After a defeat of *Mau Mau* forces she become involved in trade union activists and worked closely with Tom Mboya and other trade unionist.

She states that her eventual arrest in July 1960 for mobilizing woman for strike and riots and her subsequent detention resulted from a betrayal by her fiancé. She was detained in a camp in Lamu until January 1961 and records that she was raped and impregnated by a British prison officer while in detention. After her release from detention, Wambui joined Tom Mboya's *Nairobi People's Convention Party* as leader of its Women's wing. This party later became part of the Kenya African National Union (KANU), and in 1963 Wambui was elected head of the women's wing of KANU and was also involved in *Kiama Kia Muingi*, an organization that was a successor to *Mau Mau*. She was one of the first women to run for political

office in post-colonial Kenya as a KANU candidate in 1969 and stood again in 1974, although she was unsuccessful both times, and she served as an official in a number of Kenyan and international Women's organisations.

In 1985, Wambui left KANU because of the party's manipulation of elections and lack of internal democracy and, in the last 30 years of her life, was involved with almost every Kenyan opposition party. In 1991, she joined the Forum for Restoration of Democracy which aimed to promote multiparty politics in Kenya. This party experienced a split in 1997 and Wambui joined the National Development Party of Kenya, unsuccessfully standing for election in the same year. In 2007, she established a new political party the Kenya's People's Conventional Party and unsuccessfully contested a parliamentary seat as its candidate. Wambui never realized her ambition to be elected to Kenya's parliament.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wambui_Otieno

Funmilayo Ransome Kuti (Nigeria)



Also known as **Funmilayo Anikulapo-Kuti**. She was born in 25th October 1900. She attended Abeokuta Grammar School for secondary education, and later went to England for further studies. She soon returned to Nigeria and became a teacher. On 20 January 1925, she married the Reverend Israel Oludotun Ransome-Kuti. He also defended the commoners of his country, and was one of the founders of both the Nigeria Union of Teachers and of the Nigerian Union of Students. She served with distinction as one of the most prominent

leaders of her generation. She was also the first woman in the country to drive a car.

Ransome-Kuti's political activism led to her being described as the doyenne of female rights in Nigeria, as well as to her being regarded as "*The Mother of Africa*." Early on, she was a very powerful force advocating for the Nigerian woman's right to vote. She was described in 1947, by the West African Pilot, as the "Lioness of Lisabi" for her leadership of the women of the Egba people on a campaign against their arbitrary taxation. That struggle led to the abdication of the high king Oba Ademola II in 1949 as a teacher, political campaigner, woman activist and a traditional aristocrat in Nigeria.

Throughout her career, she was known as an educator and activist. She and Elizabeth Adekogbe provided dynamic leadership for women's rights in the 1950s. Ransome-Kuti founded an organization for women in Abeokuta, with a membership tally of more than 20,000 individuals, spanning both literate and illiterate women.

Ransome-Kuti launched the organization into public consciousness when she rallied women against price controls that were hurting the market women. Trading was one of the major occupations of women in the Western Nigeria at the time. In 1949, she led a protest against Native Authorities, especially against the Alake of Egbaland. She presented documents alleging abuse of authority by the Alake, who had been granted the right to collect the taxes by his colonial suzerain, the Government of the United Kingdom. He subsequently relinquished his crown for a time due to the affair. She also oversaw the successful abolishing of separate tax rates for women. In 1953, she founded the Federation of Nigerian Women Societies, which subsequently formed an alliance with the Women's International Democratic Federation.

Funmilayo Ransome Kuti campaigned for women's votes. She was for many years a member of the ruling National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) party, but was later expelled when she was not elected to a federal parliamentary seat. She was the treasurer and subsequent president of the Western NCNC Women's Association. After her suspension, her political voice was diminished due to the direction of national politics, as both of the more powerful members of the opposition, Awolowo and Adegbenro, had support close by. However, she continued her activism. In the 1950s, she was one of the few women elected to the house of chiefs. At the time, this was one of her homeland's most influential bodies.

She founded the Egba or Abeokuta Women's Union along with Eniola Soyinka (her sister-in-law and the mother of the Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka). This organisation is said to have once had a membership of 20,000 women. Among other things, Ransome-Kuti organised workshops for illiterate market women. She continued to campaign against taxes and price controls.

During the Cold War and before the independence of her country, Ransome-Kuti travelled widely and angered the Nigerian as well as British and American governments by her contacts with the Eastern Bloc. This included her travel to the former USSR, Hungary and China, where she met Mao Zedong. In 1956, her passport was not renewed by the government because it was said that "it can be assumed that it is her intention to influence ... women with communist ideas and policies." She was also refused a U.S. visa because the American government alleged that she was a communist.

Prior to independence she founded the Commoners Peoples Party in an attempt to challenge the ruling NCNC, ultimately denying them victory in her area. She received 4,665 votes to the NCNC's 9,755, thus allowing the opposition Action Group (which had 10,443 votes) to win. She was one of

the delegates who negotiated Nigeria's independence with the British government.

In old age her activism was overshadowed by that of her three sons, who provided effective opposition to various Nigerian military juntas. In 1978 Ransome-Kuti was thrown from a third-floor window of her son Fela's compound, a commune known as the Kalakuta_Republic, when it was stormed by one thousand armed military personnel. She lapsed into a coma in February of that year, and died on 13 April 1978, as a result of her injuries.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Funmilayo_Ransome-Kuti

Nehanda Nyakasikana (Zimbabwe)



Also known as Nehanda Charwe Nyakasikana. She lived in the hills around mazoe in the mid 19th century. She was considered to be the female incarnation of the oracle spirit *Nyamhika Nehanda*. As medium of the spirit Nehanda Nyakasikana made oracular pronouncements and performed traditional ceremonies that were thought to ensure rain and good crops. She held great authority even before the 1896-7

Rebellion and yet funnily, no greater than that of the Anglican Church.

She was a powerful woman and spirit medium staunchly committed to upholding traditional Shona culture. Mbuya Nehanda was instrumental in organizing the nationwide resistance to colonial rule during the First Chimurenga war of 1896–7. Even Lobengula recognized her as a powerful

spiritual medium in the land. But she was not the first 'Nehanda' of fame or importance.

As the spirit medium of Nehanda at the time, Charwe Nyakasikana at first promoted good relations between the Zezuru people and early European settlers pioneers. However, following the imposition of a "hut_tax" and other tax assessments in 1894, both the Ndebele and Shona people revolted in June 1896, in what became known as the First Chimurenga or Second Matabele War. The rebellion, in Mashonaland at least, was encouraged by traditional religious leaders including Nyakasikana.

After the end of the rebellion in 1897, she was captured. Nyakasikana was charged with the murder of Native Commissioner Pollard. She was found guilty after eyewitnesses claimed that she had ordered an associate to chop Pollard's head off. Consequently, she was hanged.[[]Much mythology grew up around the difficulty involved in killing her.

Nehanda's heroism became a significant source of inspiration in the nationalist struggle for Zimbabwe's liberation in the 1960s and 1970s. Her name is now usually prefixed by the respectful title of *Mbuya*, or grandmother. The maternity section of Parirenyatwa_Hospital in Harare is named after her. The College of Health Sciences of the University of Zimbabwe is located there as well.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nehanda_Nyakasikana

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