

I. Feminism, Culture and Development in Africa

*Ciarunji Chesaina**

1.0 Introduction

African women continue to scrambling for leftovers and crumbs as far as participation in the development of Africa is concerned. They are still victims of tokenism that is used to exonerate African societies of discrimination against and injustice towards women. In essence, African women are still victims of gender inequality. However, in the second decade of the 21st century they have gone a step further in their search and indeed struggle for justice. Rather than sit back or stand aloof and mourn about their plight, they are holding each other's hand and from this strong vantage point, they are better able to interrogate the social elements that militate against their participation in the development of the African continent. That is why we are here today.

The purpose of this paper is to interrogate culture as one of the elements or backbones in our social fabric that are used to create obstacles against women's participation in the development of our continent. It is important to emphasize from the onset that culture *per se* is not the culprit here; culture and the aspects that go with it are misused to discriminate against women and to institute other forms of oppression on women. For instance, in many African societies women are culturally assumed to be companions for men, who always have to take the second position. As they proverb goes, "the man is the head, the woman is the neck".

* Ciarunji Chesaina is a Full Professor of Literature , University of Nairobi