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## 8 | Cultivating African Feminist Ethics of Liberation with Hannah Kinoti

Telesia Musili

### Introduction

Hannah Wangechi Kinoti was born in Nyeri District (now Nyeri County) in August 1941 to Ruben and Ruth Gathii. She was the sixth and last-born child to her parents, a position that conferred her the privilege of attending the best schools. Hannah Kinoti was educated at Alliance Girls High School, Makerere College School in Kampala, and the University of Nairobi, where she did her doctorate in religious studies (Wamue, 2001). Her parents were among the first natives to convert to Christianity and joined what is to date the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. As a result, Kinoti grew up under the moral guidance of both Christian dictates and African culture, specifically Gikuyu culture, especially during her hay days in Kahuhia Primary School. Born amidst the Second World War (1939-1945) and impeding colonialism, Kinoti experienced a cultural mixture that almost eroded her identity. Though equipped with the knowledge, medical know-how, and a loving savior, the presence of colonialists, Jesus, who loved us all, must have been a sweet, bitter experience that would later shape Kinoti's frame of thought with regard to morality. Raised and schooled within an environment where nationalism, political freedom, and a quest for independence became a daily cry for all, even amidst Christian values, she immersed herself in critical thoughts, out of which she endeavored to find her identity and that of her Gikuyu people.

Hannah Wangechi Kinoti's seminal work *African Ethics Gikuyu Traditional Morality*, published in 2013, posthumously portrays her critical mind as she details her significant concerns. While affirming the introduction of modern education, mass media, and more accessible means of transport, Kinoti decries the spread of social evils in the country even after inculcating Christian ethos within the society (Kinoti, 2013). Moral decadence in Kenyan society was so immense as corruption,

robbery, prostitution, broken homes, and sexual promiscuity, among others, ravaged the community. She noted that “contemporary African society is lamenting a moral world fallen apart ... Today the African society ... seems to be in a state of near chaos in the realm of morality” (Kinoti, 1992:75, 86). The moral decadence, the disdain for African culture, and the bashing of their heritage and value systems by the missionaries had to be addressed. Kinoti followed in the thought trail of Mudimbe, who, as early as 1988, had already called for a critical interrogation of western and Eurocentric religious discourses in order to place the African World view at the center of their lives. Kinoti affirms that the missionaries had insisted on Africans’ absolute loyalty to missionary teaching, rendering indigenous knowledge and values as ‘pagan’ and ‘evil’ (Kinoti, 2013:15). She was, however, convinced that Africans and the Gikuyu specifically had a worthy cultural heritage and systems that had cohesion and integrity better than any colonial system could offer. Determined, Kinoti joined her contemporaries in search of authentic nationalism after the colonialists’ mentalities had somewhat distorted it.

Jesse Mugambi, a renowned Kenyan theologian, raised the concern with a pose on “how can Africans maintain the African ethic while embracing modernity?” (1997:19) he affirmed that Africans could become modernized and, at the same time, maintain their cultural and religious heritage. Several scholars, such as Nasimiyu Wasike (1992); Eitel (1986); Oruka (1990); Mageza (1997); Gyekye (1998), and Wiredu (1998), among others, joined in the drive of Africanizing morality. Laurenti Magesa (2004:23) called for an Africanization of Christianity, “a process that included integration of Christian doctrines and teachings with useful African traditional cultural values and modern way of life intending to make Christianity more relevant and acceptable to the African cultural contexts.” The search for an authentic African moral identity became the new field of scholarship from the 1990s onwards. This is not to indicate that there is a common African moral identity but a realization of the situatedness of acceptable behavior and marching up to societal expectations within a particular context. Scholars agree that imperialists’ indoctrination was a strong mental erasure of certain African religious beliefs, practices, values, and manners (Eegunlusi, 2017).

Nevertheless, African religion and African morality are inseparable. John Mbiti's (1969) infamous assertion that Africans are notoriously religious permeates every dimension of our lives. This is to assert that each people have their own religious system, values, a set of beliefs and practices that they swear by for their cohesion. As Husien & Kebede (2017:59) opine, "religion is the strongest element in the traditional background and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned." As such, in Africa, religion can neither be explained away from morality nor can morality be singled out from religion (Ezeanya, 1980). In fact, the relationship between philosophy, religion, and morality is one of unity. The intertwining is exemplified by John Mbiti, a renowned religious scholar and theologian that Philosophy, religion, and; morality are life, thus community in its entirety is life. There is therefore no room for separation within the African worldview, but only complex interdependence (Mbiti, 1969). Thus, the imperial indoctrination of Christian ethics without a blend with whom the African children were and the environment within which they flourished was doomed to fail. Wiredu (1998) asserts that "in traditional Africa, what is morally good is conceived to be what is decent for humanity, and it brings dignity, respect, contentment, prosperity, and joy to man and his community. On the contrary, what is morally bad brings misery, misfortune, and disgrace." The communitarian characteristic of African morality rested on the well-being of society in all people's dimensions. Any disruption to orderliness accrued punishment instantaneously from the community, both the living and the ancestral spirit world. Though revered, the Christian concept of punishment in the afterlife, and the promise of hell, distorted the orderliness the community basked under in its indigenous moral systems. While lamenting this ideological crisis, Kinoti (1997:112) cites Kenyatta (2015:251), who asserted that:

Religious rites and hallowed traditions are no longer observed by the whole community. Moral rules are broken with impunity, for in place of unified tribal morality, there is now... a welter of disturbing influences, rules, and sanctions, whose net result is only that a Gikuyu does not know what he may or may not ought or ought not to do or believe but which leave him in no doubt at all about having broken the original morality of his people.

The distortion of Gikuyu's morality was real and disturbing, hence the quest for its recovery. Further, Kinoti, on the one hand, worried about the misogynistic paradigm that western modernism inculcated in her society through a patriarchal gospel. Only men became church leaders and catechists and owned land and property, of which children and their wives were part of property worth owning. On the other hand, she was grateful as demeaning practices within her Gikuyu culture were named and called out by the same patriarchal gospel. For instance, the celebration of the boy child over a girl child and female genital mutilation, among other ills, were components that had Kinoti argue for a balanced approach. She retorts,

There is a need for the Church in Africa to be truly African. Only then can the Church reconstruct a morality that is both African and Christian...contemporary African society is lamenting a moral world that has fallen apart. Therefore, there is a need to rekindle the memory of the many good moral and cultural values that guided and guarded traditional African societies (Kinoti, 1997:125).

Armed with the problem and challenges that had engulfed the Gikuyu community, Kinoti's consciousness to liberation was awakened, a task she undertook enthusiastically. In the preceding section, I engage contextually with Kinoti's literature to unearth ways that she utilizes to cultivate a feminist ethic that is liberating not only for the Gikuyu community but for all humanity.

## **Towards a feminist African ethic of liberation**

Women theologians worldwide use their existential experiences for authentic theological reflections to enhance women's liberation consciousness. The Circle of Concerned African Women theologians, founded by Mercy Amba Oduyoye in 1989, of which Hannah Wangechi Kinoti was a member, employs narratology and women's life experiences to theologize. Indigenous knowledge systems embedded in folklore, riddles, proverbs, stories, folksongs, and other vehicles for passing down culture to future generations are thus interrogated and utilized towards life-affirming theologies. Kenyan feminist scholars such as Hannah Kinoti, Teresia Hinga, Musimbi Kanyoro, Mary Getui, Nyambura Njoroge, Philomena Mwaura, Hazel Ayanga, and Esther Mombo, among

others, have engaged in liberation and empowerment strides in their scholarship, following the framework of liberation theology. Liberation, empowerment, and women's rights have been a bedrock of women's scholarship, especially in interrogating repressive cultural and religious tenets that impede women's realization of their full potential. Therefore,

...the subject of women as liberators affirms women's consciousness in establishing authenticity in the face of alienation, marginalization, and oppression. Such consciousness is known to stem from corporeal limitations and the awakening of gender mainstreaming in all avenues of development. This has led to women's concern to participate actively in liberation and empowering themselves as a response to the conscientization of their roles both in the Church and society (Kabugi, 2014:3).

Hannah W. Kinoti's consciousness of women's oppression in various socio-cultural and religious realms is evident in several instances. Therefore, the theological reflections forthcoming from such varying cases are paramount to unearthing her drive for women's empowerment and liberation.

In the article "Growing Old in Africa: New Challenges for the Church" (2013:191-218), Kinoti recounts a few reminiscences with aging people within her community and residence in Nairobi. First, she recounts a story of a village man named Muraguri, whom she observed growing senile as she grew up in the village. Upon Muraguri's death, Kinoti tells how he was buried, "Muraguri's two sons wrapped him in his entire beddings which they had secured with strong strings made from fresh bark." The second story is of a frail old woman struggling to put a load of firewood on her back near Kangemi, one of the shanty towns of Nairobi city. Kinoti recounts stopping her car and helping the old lady transport her load easily. As they engaged, she narrated to Kinoti how she lost her family members through the Mau Mau liberation struggle, hence the anguish of compounding loneliness and poverty. Apart from these two pitiful stories, Kinoti recounts beautiful memories of visiting the mother of one of her teachers. She was a generous and talkative woman who entertained her and her friends till they were late for their afternoon class. Even though they received punishment for the lateness, they were happy they had visited a woman she thought deserved care despite her mental

state. In another teenage episode, Kinoti met a significantly older woman, again with a load of firewood on her back. Stooping to rest, she placed her hands on her knees for balance and engaged with young Kinoti. The old woman was concerned about the eating habits of Kinoti, who, being a teenager, looked tall and lean. She questioned Kinoti about her health and eating habits despite their being strangers. The concern never astonished Kinoti, who grew up in an environment where parenting was a communal responsibility. We realize that Kinoti recognizes, identifies, and supports those in dire need, especially aging, as a sign of solidarity with Christ. Kinoti avers that aging people are human. It's only that poverty, political unrest, civil war, and displacement, among other challenges, affect them adversely. She opines that the community and the Church, in particular, have a crucial role in addressing the plight of the aged.

Through the conviction that every human has an intrinsic worth, Kinoti utilizes her lived experience and storytelling to conscientize humanity with an ethic of liberation wrapped in care, not just for the aging persons but for the community as well. In her narrative analysis, several themes emerge that are crucial building blocks for her liberation ethic. They include:

### *I. Human Values*

The well-being of a community is dependent on the relationships that exist among them. Kinoti avers that the well-being of an African indigenous community must be “understood from their context and experiences, in the totality of their environment (Kinoti, 1997:112).” She opines that it is from life's experiences that well-being is comprehended and subsumed in “a host of other concepts including peace, harmony, goodwill, blessings and divine providence (Kinoti, 1997:113). All these are human values and virtues worth cultivating. Kinoti defines virtue as “all that in human behavior and deportment contributes towards social goodwill, harmony, peace and to an individual's sense of well-being (Kinoti, 1997:199). Moral values are outstanding in Kinoti's literature. Her concern for the aging persons and the drive to assist the women with loads of firewood attests to the care that she expects from humanity concerning those in unfortunate situations. She affirms that old age is a blessing that

God confers to people of good character, a component that highlights a connection between virtue, God's blessings, and old age.

Kinoti employs a metaphor from her doctorate fieldnotes exemplified by the Reverend Meshak Murage, formerly a minister from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, that

...a good person has nine legs. With four the baby crawled; with two the growing up child and the mature adult walked; in ripe old age the old man and woman use three legs, the staff serving as support because the legs have become so weak. Hoary hair and the staff are the eventual rewards of a man, and of the woman, who is variously called *mutugi* (the hospitable man), *nyaguta* (the hospitable woman), *mwendwo ni iri* (the one loved by substance), *muumaandu* (the generous, charitable one) and *muthingu* (the righteous one) so are they the rewards of a *muthamaki* (worthy leader/counsellor) (Kinoti, 1997:197).

Symbolically, the staff had a crucial meaning among the Agikuyu. It is handled through ritual life in anticipation of eventually being used in old age. A small child was given a *gathanju* (wand) for grazing animals, while a girl was given a *ruthanju* (wand) to invite her relatives to her initiation ceremony. As a young bride, *muithuiya* (special staff) is given to symbolize married life. She would use the same staff later while returning to her mother, soon after marriage, and the staff symbolizes *gucokia makinya*. She would lean on the same staff and support herself in her old age, while for the older men, the staff is known as *muthigi* (elder's staff). The ritualized handling of staff cut across one's life and, at a deeper level, cultivated good character that would eventually make it possible to lean on the same at an older age (Kinoti, 1997). She affirms that virtue and morally upright character is not borne later in life but it is nurtured right from childhood, hence the proverb *Njuguna njega yuumaga ikuuniro* (A good club is got from the source). The ritualized staff that is owned since childhood links old age to being virtuous and blessed. It involved the inculcation of virtues by the socializing agents, internalization of the earned virtues, and an intentional uptake of the societal responsibility to pass the learned virtues over to the next generation. Inculcation of virtues is thus a communal responsibility that an individual takes up, not only as an avenue of experiencing a sense of belonging but also as ratified by the societal structures that bless and curse.



Kinoti thus utilizes her indigenous language, metaphors, and proverbs to situate the importance of human values and virtuous life as a prerequisite for blessing and attaining old age. Even though aging comes with frailty, she affirms that it is an age that accrues respect from the young, far and wide. Older people are respected in African communities as carriers of traditions, culture, moral framework, wisdom, and inheritance. The resource that the aging in our communities cements a communal relationship that transverses humanity to include the health of the animals, plants, and the entirety of the ecosphere. Kinoti affirms that “community and individual well-being was maintained through the observance of values of community life (Kinoti, 1997:115). The concept denotes a communitarian component of the liberative ethic grounded in relationships.

## ***II. Indispensable relationships***

A community’s moral order shapes the individuals that constitute it, and the individuals define the moral character of the community they are part of. Most African communities are organized along the Kinship system. A kinship system refers to a collaborative relationship between members of one household and members of a large linear group. The kinship system encompasses social responsibilities and expectations that ensure that the group members support one another (Mbiti, 1969). The social order of a community is maintained through ancestries.

The kinship system creates parenting cultures where all members are involved in the early training and care of the children. It is the responsibility of everyone in the community to parent and guides children in a morally upright manner. In one of the stories narrated by Kinoti, we note that an older woman was concerned about Kinoti’s eating habits. She worried that Kinoti was so lean, given that she was nearing teenagerhood, and encouraged her to feed. In other stories, she narrates how the aging men and women were taken care of not only by their relations but by other people as well. Kinoti herself narrates helping unknown older women along the way with their luggage. The obligation to take care of the children goes beyond the biological parents and the kinship formed of extended family members. Various African sayings and proverbs explain the culture of bringing up children. For example, the saying, “It takes a

village to raise a child,” signifies that raising a child is a shared responsibility by several kinship group members. The kinship community rules and participation are exalted over an individual.

Kinship denotes a community’s most vital force in Africans’ lives. It is a relationship between people with shared attitudes, a common origin, and living a common life. In addition, kinship is a system that has outlined family responsibilities, boundaries, interactions, and rights. They affect all aspects of human life in Africa, including care, marriages, and social status, since kinship controls people’s relationships, moral values, and attitudes. The kinship systems govern care, sexuality, marriage, reproduction, socialization, parenting, and other aspects of social organization. In African kinship systems, caregiving for older people and children flows from the relationships and attributes governing the kinship system. The kinship ties are an essential guide to who provides care and to what extent. The relationships formed dictate that the other members will care for older people in a kinship system. The responsibilities are shared among members based on the care required for older people and children. In a kinship system, a member cannot lack basic needs or care since members should care for one another.

Values of benevolence continued to flourish even in death. Kinoti exemplifies the moral values with the Gikuyu proverb, *iri tha ni iri iria* (the compassionate (cow) is the one that has milk (1997:118). The reciprocity of God’s generosity to them was gauged through the sharing that one engaged in amongst relations. Those who depicted this positive attribute were guaranteed old age, which would transition to the venerated ancestorship status. The ancestors are revered in the Gikuyu customs, as they watch over the community, rewarding and punishing moral behaviors. People of *iri* (substance-in terms of good character, good deportment, and diligence) never die; they are immortalized through naming. Naming children after their grandparents endowed with *iri* ensured a continued lineage of good morals and a solid society. Kinoti affirms a spiritual rebirth of the old in the young that morally ensures that society keeps her morals intact. Thus, relationships are evident in this life and continue even in death, forming a cyclic foundation that holds society together. Kinoti affirms that “a community’s well-being is expected to be enjoyed in life beyond the grave. She asserts that even though the Gikuyu

did not distinguish between heaven and hell, they distinguished between those who enjoyed peace in death and those who did not. The former she offers had adhered to a morality of virtue which enabled them to enjoy well-being. They are known to have cultivated moral attributes such as diligence, generosity, courage, temperance, and a sense of justice (Kinoti, 1997:119). Leading a morally upright life is a sure guarantee of being reborn through naming and enjoying peace in the land of the living dead, which can be said to be a liberating concept of non-gendered. Both men and women enjoyed ancestral status among the Agikuyu.

### ***III. Mystical and Spiritual power***

Reverence and veneration of the ancestries is a crucial component among the Gikuyu that Kinoti amplifies. Invoking the ancestral spirit world for justice upon immoral acts such as corruption and the killing of a loved one was common among the Gikuyu. The spirits were also consulted during calamities such as droughts and famine. Prayers and sacrifices were made facing Mt Kirinyaga (Mount Kenya), and there were uncompromising in his attitude and action to liberate people from suffering or to avenge the perpetrators. Most Gikuyu believed in the mystical and spiritual powers abhorred by their ancestors in managing the moral fabric of their society, as exemplified in the proverb *Ma ndikuaga* (Truth never dies) (Kinoti, 1998:56). The supernatural powers among the Gikuyu are believed to be keenly interested in matters of justice and fair play for the community's well-being. This heritage is crucial in the liberating as the inflicted punishment does not discriminate along any lines, such as gender, age, wealth, and clan, among other categories, but the spirit world is concerned with proper morality. Thus, moral caution is observed in adhering to proper morality to deter curses from the dying entering the spirit realm (Kinoti, 1998). While analyzing Muraguri's death and burial, Kinoti believed that his sons would later face his wrath for burying him indecently. Thus, African spirituality is crucial in maintaining social integrity and well-being, which feeds into Kinoti's liberating ethic.

While Kinoti affirms the indigeneity of morals, she does not shy away from Christianity. According to Masando (2018:209), "Christianity was meant to colonize the conscience and consciousness of the colonized in

ways that would make them lose their indigenesness. Ironically, it created conditions for the Africans to desire to be free, a factor leading to notions like ‘brotherhood’ and ‘oneness in Christ.’” Having been raised in a missionary environment, Kinoti affirms a blend of Christian morals within African morality. She argues that “African morality must be based on the love principle, and life-affirming morality taught by Jesus Christ, but not on the more negative, world-denying and absolutist affirmations which have characterized western Christianity for a very long time (Kinoti, 1997:126). Kinoti (2003:69) argues that the “power of the cross is a melting power of love for all.” This melting power of love at the cross brings reconciliation between man and God and between fellow human beings. Even though a Christian value, love is a virtue and a moral value that Africans embrace through their relationality within kinship structures. Thus, Kinoti’s feminist ethics centers on communitarian notions of care and communal engagement that are driven by moral values, the indispensability of human relationships, and ratified through mystical and spiritual powers that all revere. Kinoti’s three building blocks for her liberative ethic depict the possibility of constructing home-grown epistemology using decolonizing components that are crucial for advancing a just identity and community, as discussed below.

### **Decolonizing paradigms in Kinoti’s African Feminist Ethics**

Decolonial theories protest the normalized, internalized patronizing epistemologies that impede just identities. European imperialism, monopoly of knowledge production, and Christian moralities demeaned African indigenous systems almost to the verge of extinction. However, Kinoti, among other scholars, detected the menace adherence to Christian ethics was breeding within the society and opted to confront it. Through her use of the indigenous language, Gikuyu, Kinoti affirms that morality and ethics are not universal everywhere. Societal expectations, just like individual experiences, differ greatly across localities. For instance, while arguing for care and respect for the aging in the communities, she affirms that respect is not pegged on patriarchal and gendered structures that regard men to the detriment of women but is anchored on seniority and character. Kinoti follows the thought thread of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, a

renowned Gikuyu writer who affirms the centrality of location in one's realization on self and follows knowledge production. Thiong'o notes (2008, 9) that "knowing oneself and one's environment is the correct basis of absorbing the world." In the same spirit, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians advocates for contextualized theologizing, where one's lived experiences form the foundation of critical engagement of matters of concern. Thus, the use of indigenous knowledge systems such as proverbs, language, tribe, clan, and kinship structures to advocate for change and search for one's identity is a positive step towards deconstructing "colonization of imagination, colonization of the mind and colonization of knowledge and power (Ndlovu, 2018:99).

The communitarian ethic that Kinoti exemplifies is not only situated but offers a solid ground for a critical engagement of one's identity. Understanding oneself is the first step towards analyzing and recognizing all aspects that are not in tune with one's identity. The moral identity that Kinoti drums for goes beyond blood relations to encompass all humanity (Metz, 2013). The principle of humanism, understood as concern for others by virtue of their intrinsic worth, is the first step towards an ethical, social praxis that upholds well-being. Practice and adherence to this principle seal all avenues for discrimination, stigmatization, and exclusion, since, at the center of it all is a call to interpersonal relationships that includes all. Though communitarian, acting this form of morality invites self-introspection when deciding the action to be undertaken. The internalized values and cultivated virtues guide the subject in opting to respectfully help those in need and liberate those at the fringes of lack, domination, and oppression.

The African traditional communal way of life integrated older people into the extended family where the community was dutiful towards them. Old age was a social status that gave them vital responsibilities in the family and society, such as custodians of morality. Stigmatization of the aged due to western civilization, the generation gap, conflict of ideas between the aged and the young, and urbanization created a moral challenge that forced Kinoti to self-introspect in line with her identity. She realized that the new morality she was being inculcated with relegated some aspects that were crucial in her childhood. She utilized the Agikuyu proverb, *Nyumba na riika itiumaguo* (family and age group cannot be

abandoned), to ground her search for reconnecting with her roots. Thus, African identity becomes a crucial component to consider in decolonizing African ethics. As we seek to empower and liberate women, it is paramount that we are grounded, not only in our experiences but in the very beliefs that shape our being. Breaking all socialized and internalized normativity articulated by Simone De Beauvoir, cited by Simons (2010:26), that “humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being...She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the subject; he is the Absolute. She is the other.” But Kinoti rose beyond the stereotyping and provided a solid ethics governing the Agikuyu. This affirms that the subaltern can speak in deed (Dube, 2016).

Kinoti theorizes Agikuyu’s reality and lives by it even in her writings. She deliberately leans on Christian ethics through values that she located within her kinship structures. Human values undergird humanism and spring forth communitarian living. This navigation can retrace and rediscover precolonial African identities that respect our identities without bias. Kinoti’s attempt to situate an African feminist ethic that is communitarian, value-laden and toward care for humanity confirms that feminist scholars in Africa can construct a philosophy from the “lived experiences and material situations (Du Toit & Coetzee 2017:334).” Tamale (2020:43) holds similar sentiments: “if African women are to successfully challenge their subordination and oppression, they need to carefully and rigorously develop home-grown conceptualizations that capture the specific political economies and cultural realities encountered, as well as their traditional worldviews.” Thus, localized thought frames in navigating our day-to-day challenges is a promising ground for philosophizing and theologizing our way toward our liberation. As Mignolo (1999:235) would argue, decolonial thinking involves the “unveiling of epistemic silences” and “affirming the epistemic rights of the...devalued”. Thus, what is urgently required is an ontological and epistemological articulation of African female identity that can speak for, of, and from the African woman’s perspective for the good of humanity (Njoroge, 2000). Nyambura Njoroge (2000:173) confirms it is possible to successfully deconstruct repressive cultures while embracing the values

of solidarity, sisterhood and respect that hold others in esteem and value. She proudly speaks of the women's Guild in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa,

...From its beginnings in 1922, the Gikuyu women of the Women's Guild spoke out against injustices in the Kenyan Church and society. The "council of the shield" gathered itself to assert the dignity of African women. These women led the struggle against female circumcision, which was the socially accepted rite of passage into adulthood for Kenyan girls. As a society of churchwomen, the Guild also trained Bible women who taught classes of nearly one thousand participants. They developed a theology that emphasized the diversity of women's gifts (Romans 12) and the strident call of the great commission (Matt. 28:19). They nurtured themselves with fellowship, and grew spiritually through prayer, singing and Bible study. By the 1950s, the Guild had instituted structures to help women achieve a full range of ministerial activities in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa.

Kinoti's search for authentic Gikuyu ethics and Njoroge's articulated framework put in place by the PCEA women's Guild affirms that with the right spirit, enthusiasm, and solidarity, African feminists can retract to their roots, unlearn, learn, relearn and construct even an African feminist philosophy. A Feminist philosophy that does not just respond to the biased western or African male philosophies but a grounded philosophy that asks, responds to authentic questions and speaks to women's contexts, experiences, and situations.

## CONCLUSION

The paper aimed to construct Hannah Wangeci Kinoti's African Feminist Ethic of Liberation. As moral decay ravaged the country in the 1990's Kenyan scholars worried about what had become of the young generation and their moral systems and opted to rescue it. Against this backdrop, Kinoti advanced a communitarian ethic based on ethical values and virtues that undergird human behavior for social cohesion. While challenging the blind adoption of Christian ethics as introduced by the missionaries, Kinoti adopted a blended form of ethics, where values that cut across Agikuyu culture and western Christianity were incorporated into her ethic. Outstanding in the virtue of love that oozes from the cross

of Christ that invites all for reconciliation. Kinoti utilizes her call to care for the aging to situate a communitarian and humanistic ethic that respects the well-being of all without any form of repression, discrimination or stigmatization. Aging persons are a societal resource that safeguards societal morality for peaceful co-existence. Kinoti's ethics is built on three pillars: human values/virtues, indispensable relations, and mystical and spiritual powers vested in the ancestries that undergird people's morality. Kinoti's ethic is built on indigenous knowledge systems known to the Agikuyu community, such as indigenous language, proverbs, rituals, and stories. Their utilization attests to the untapped resource and hence a call to prioritize looking back to the precolonial history to rebuild our identity as an avenue of philosophizing and theologizing within our geographical contexts and lived experiences. Liberation thus flows from recognizing the repressions we are going through and understanding our identity, locale, and what we deserve as humans toward communal well-being. Thus, locating ourselves on solid ground, where our positive ancestry speaks forth life, is a better ground for attaining total liberation.

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