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## 7 | **Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics and a Theology of Women Empowerment:**

Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro's Global Pilgrimages of Justice

*Dorcas Juma*

### **Introduction**

Religion and sacred texts remain central to the spirituality of many African women. Therefore, when women take the center stage in the interpretation of sacred texts it is possible to underscore ways in which religious discourses change when women emerge as central players in gendered forms of religious discourses and historical memory deconstruction and reconstruction. For Maha Marouan (2018:130), women's active participation in religious liberation discourses "reclaims African women's relationship to the divine and presents them as women with authority." Without women's voices in religious liberating discourses like biblical interpretations, women continue to be socialized to be custodians of retrogressive cultural ideologies continuously relegating them to the periphery. Through religious rituals, ideologies and cultural practices such as birth rites, naming, initiation rites, marriage, polygamy, death, burial rites, widowhood rites and wife inheritance, older women socialize girls and younger women into being acceptable, respectable and noble women in the family and their communities. African women are at the center of the family institution and structure. The Family institution is central in transmitting religious and cultural values from one generation to the other. That is why; African women remain the custodians of religious and cultural values of every African society. According to Fulata Lusungu Moyo (2004:72-72), "families and marriages are the basis of the African community. Their procreative value ensures the structure of the religio-culture of the people. It influences conception of body-selves, our relationships with others and with God through our ancestor." Thus, religion, culture and sacred texts continue

to be the canon – the measuring rod of many African Christian communities. Men in patriarchal societies like Kenya for example use the Bible to demand total submission of women in the name of God.

The book of Book of Ruth for example, arguably reinforces theologies and cultural ideologies of wife inheritance in many African Christian societies. The Book of Ruth illustrates how women are supposed to accept wife inheritance by the brother of the deceased. The idea behind is to keep the family property within the family line and to help the deceased continue his lineage through procreation. In fact, the issues of wife inheritance in the Book of Ruth stems from the Ancient Israelite society, which was highly patriarchal (see Carol L. Meyers 2014:19-25). This shows how patriarchal systems lessen the worth of women. For many African Christian women, the Bible is central to their spirituality. Female characters in the Bible speak directly to their experiences. Women read their stories through the voices of female characters in the Bible and retell their stories through the experiences of female characters in the Bible (see Madipoane J. Masenya 1995:154). That is why Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro (2002), introduces feminist cultural hermeneutics as the key to African women's liberation theology. In her approach to African culture as a resource for doing theology, Kanyoro (2002) takes serious the experiences and the practices of African women and the role of feminist cultural hermeneutics in reading the Bible.

Kanyoro's feminist cultural hermeneutics is arguably a global pilgrimage of Justice and a Theology of women empowerment. While speaking about women's liberation and the African freedom struggle, Thomas Sankara on October 4, 1984 at the General Assembly of United Nations passionately exclaimed that, there is no true social revolution without the liberation of women (Judicaelle Irakoze 2018). The liberation of women in African Christian societies should start with the way they read sacred texts. The Bible for example, is a two-edged sword that can be used to oppress the vulnerable in the society or liberate them. With the correct tools of hermeneutics, the Bible is strong ammunition against the oppression and marginalization of women (see Alice Yafeh-Deigh 2021:61). In her life as a student when Kanyoro joined the movement against apartheid in the 1970s, her focus was to fight for women and girls. In many African patriarchal societies, retrogressive cultural practices have

a direct bearing on women and girls. Yet, when one reads the Bible especially the Old Testament, it is possible to see that the cultural setting and practices of the ancient Israelite society are in many ways similar to those of many societies in Africa. Aloo O. Mojola (2014:1) notes, “the Old Testament (OT) is much loved in Africa, perhaps due to its close cultural and religious affinities with traditional African culture and ethnic religions.” Therefore, culture, context, the vantage point and experiences of African women are very important in biblical interpretational discourses that have the aim of liberating women from retrogressive cultural practices that deny women the right to live with dignity. To argue that Kanyoro’s cultural hermeneutics is a global pilgrimage of Justice means to analyze how culture conditions how African women understand reality and apply the meaning of sacred texts.

In many African societies like Kenya, patriarchy uses culture to create hierarchy and gender binaries. In the name of religion, culture influences the behavior of women, determines the values, worldview, and attitudes of society towards women’s bodies in general and reproductive health, and rights in particular. This way, culture continues to shaped authority, responsibility, and identity among many African communities. In fact, according to Tunde Adeleke (2011:123), “culture is a powerful authority in Africa. It makes demands and imposes obligations that no man-made law can undermine or challenge.” That is why, when she served on an Independent Commission on sexual misconduct, accountability and culture change at Oxfam, co-chaired by Zainab Bangura and Katherine Sierra, Kanyoro saw the need to underscore culture as the main burrier to women’s empowerment and dignity. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2021), defines culture as a “complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society.” David T. Adamo (2001:44) defines cultural hermeneutics as “an approach to biblical interpretation that makes African social cultural context a subject of interpretation.” Implicit in these definitions is the fact that at the center of feminist cultural hermeneutics is the issue of contextual reading of biblical texts. The context of the reader or the community of readers makes a difference if one reads the Bible as a straight white male who is born in Canada; a

lesbian who is born in Africa, an Asian man living in America, a black woman living in Europe or an African woman living in west Africa, central or East Africa (see David J. Ndegwah 2020). That is why Kanyoro presents feminist cultural hermeneutics as a means of seeking justice and liberation for African women (Esther Mombo & Heleen Joziassa 2012:190).

## **The Context of Kanyoro's Cultural Hermeneutics**

In order to understand the significance of Kanyoro's feminist cultural Hermeneutics, it is important to analyze the historical, cultural, economic and religious contexts that motivated her work. Kanyoro has worked for over three decades with women and girls (Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs 2023). One thing that stood out for her is that all women are connected. Their life conditions may differ. Yet, their problems are similar, and that women must learn from each other. Kanyoro was lucky to be raised and influenced by her parents who were health workers. While working as a volunteer at a shelter for abused women, she realized that cultural traditions both nourish and imprison us, and that we must sift out the bad habits and only keep what makes us grow (All American Speakers Bureau 2023). Kanyoro was blessed to study in a girls-only secondary school, which she says gave the girls the assurance that they can do any subject and become whatever they want. She did her undergraduate at the University of Nairobi, obtained a PhD in linguistics at the University of Texas and later a doctor of ministry. After working on language research and training of Bible translators, she was active for ten years in the Lutheran World Federation. Kanyoro has published 11 books and many articles on feminist theology, development and women's leadership. She was born in the rural Kenya and together with her nine siblings; they received a good education, supported by their parents, who considered this the best inheritance for their children (WikiPeaceWomen 2023). It is important to note that the rural areas of Kenya are still very rich with African societal cultural heritage. Therefore, it is possible to see that her interest in cultural hermeneutics was highly shaped by her upbringing.

Kanyoro's greatest motivation is that every woman has the power; every woman has the potential; every woman can shape her destiny and the world around her. Because of her interest in the empowerment of women and girls, since 1998, Kanyoro (53) has been chief executive officer of the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) that reaches more than 25 million women and girls in 122 countries. One arguably sees that the answer to Kanyoro's Cultural hermeneutics lies in understanding the impact that social location has on each individual (see Yafeh-Deigh 2021:62). Social location of every individual being such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, disability, language, beliefs, behaviors, customs and worldview influences who they are and who they become. Kanyoro's feminist cultural hermeneutics shows that social locations are the lenses through which people read and interpret sacred texts (Kanyoro 2002). Every person who interprets sacred texts approaches them with assumptions, life experiences, cultural biases, religious affiliations and identity binaries in terms of position of power and privilege in relation to others in society (see C. Behan McCullagh 200:39). While a person's social location influences the way one reads sacred texts, it is important to note that sacred texts do not come to our contemporary world in a vacuum; and are not read in a vacuum. The Book of Ruth, which informed much of Kanyoro's cultural hermeneutics, comes to the contemporary African society with a rich cultural heritage of the ancient Israelite society (see Irmtraud Fischer 2007:143). Besides being a patriarchal society, Israel lived various experiences that shape their thinking, way of life and response to various aspects of life such as life and death (see Matthew Levering 2021:164). Power dynamics between the wealthy and the poor, the educated and uneducated, those with power and authority and those in positions of subordination characterized Israelite society as indicated in Deuteronomy 15:7, Proverbs 22:16, Isaiah 41:17, and Ecclesiastes 5:8.

Of relevance to this discussion is the fact that the biblical world like that of the book of Ruth finds a fertile ground in Africa's cultural societal settings. Women and girls who marry husbands from ethnic groups that do not share a cultural heritage with theirs for example, struggle to integrate into a foreign culture just like Ruth in 1:16-17. In many African Christian societies as noted by Lovemore Togarasei (2021: 127), "the Bible

forms the basis upon which Christians think about and practice their religion.” Therefore, submission, asserting identity as a ‘foreigner,’ loyalty, objectivity, invisibility, powerlessness and vulnerability in a foreign culture characterize the lives of many African Christian women. Saibu Mutaru 2018:257) for example points out that patriarchy in some African societies expect women to show respect towards husbands by remaining highly submissive. According to Mutaru (2018-257), “this cultural requirement contributes to the vulnerability and powerlessness of women.” Thus, the context of Kanyoro’s feminist cultural hermeneutics offers an alternative reading of biblical texts in ways that allows female biblical characters to speak to the experiences of women regardless of time and space. This happens in ways that the context of the Bible also informs the experiences of women in a liberating way. This way, the argued position of presenting cultural hermeneutics as a pilgrimage of justice is re-affirmed. Just like in the book of Ruth for example, the Luo community and many other African communities practice the Deuteronomy 25.5-10 levirate marriage. The Levirate custom of inheriting widows among the Supyire People of Mali for example also has theological pointers for Christian marriage as discussed by Jemphrey, Michael (2011). Knowing how cultural practices such as widow inheritance have a bearing on women and girls, one sees the importance of underscoring Kanyoro’s’ feminist cultural hermeneutics as a theology of women empowerment and a pilgrimage of Justice.

### **Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: A Theology of Women Empowerment**

Kanyoro (2002) constructs feminist cultural hermeneutics as a collective story of African women doing communal theology. Community theology is a theology of communal solidarity; shared theological expressions and experiences informed by the traditions of people’s faith and believes. Communal theology acknowledges the fact that salvation is an individual relationship between an individual Christina and God as indicated in Philipians 2:12-13. However, we are called to be in community with one another because we are the people of God (see Benjamin H. Dunning 2006). Communal theology finds expression in the Ubuntu African

philosophy that places emphasis on ‘being self through others’ (see Susan Mans & Marius H. Smit 2021:202). When it comes to feminist cultural hermeneutics therefore, community theology finds meaning in the larger feminist liberation discourses when women read the Bible together and engage with the culture of the biblical world from the perspective of their collective experiences (Kanyoro 2001). Kanyoro (2002) uses this strategy of communal theology when she puts women in groups to do a Bible study of the book of Ruth. Her approach of doing communal theology using feminist cultural hermeneutics empowers women in her community to use their own experiences and vantage points to find meaning in the bible. Thus, feminist hermeneutics is generally the theory, art and practice of interpretation in the interest of women. Feminist hermeneutics addresses a broad realm of things, ranging from the Bible and other theological texts to human acts and products, with the aim of challenging and correcting the effects of patriarchy on them (Maxwell Constantine Chando Musingafi, Racheal Mafumbate, Thandi Fredah Khumalo 2021:57). Ruth A. Wienclaw (2023) defines feminist theology as “a theological movement primarily within Christianity and Judaism that is intended to reexamine scriptural teachings on women and women’s roles from a woman’s perspectives.”

Feminist cultural hermeneutics is part of the larger voices of feminist theologies advocating for the inclusion of women’s voices as equal partners with male voices in theological reflections and discourses. According to Mary Nyangweso (2018:145), feminist cultural hermeneutics emerges out of the concern that “although feminists have long aimed to fight gender inequality, they have stirred controversy due to a failure to accommodate diverse cultural, historical, and racial differences.” Even so, it is important to note the feminists open the way for contextual approaches to the interpretations of sacred texts in ways that have given voice to many women around the word to name, expose and criticize oppressive structures that deny women and girls the right to live with dignity. Feminists for example have empowered African women scholars to use taboo subjects like sex to propose ways of steering sex dignity talks in ways that unmute women’s voices on matters sex and sexuality (see Dorcas Chebet Juma 2022). Religion and culture remain a major source for theological reflections and biblical expositions in afro-feminist



approaches to biblical interpretations. However, feminist critical approaches to sacred texts have also empower women from African contexts to underscore religion and culture as the main sources of women's oppression (see Juma 2023:2-3). It is from this perspective that one would say that cultural hermeneutics shows how "local forms of Biblical contextualization and interpretation offer unique forms of empowerment to African Christians in general and African women reading and interpretations of sacred texts in different contexts."

Thus, as a Theology of empowerment, feminist cultural hermeneutics first, equips women with the necessary cultural hermeneutical tools to counter dominant interpretations of biblical texts that continue to present women as inferior religious objects. Kenya and many other African religious spaces have in the recent past witnessed heart-breaking incidences where sacred texts have been used to convince followers to do unimaginable things. Reverend Njohi, a local pastor at the Lord's Propeller Redemption Church in Kenya, for example ordered the female members of his congregation to attend church without any form of underwear so that they can receive the spirit of Jesus Christ in the best possible way (BellaNaija.com 2023). When men dominate biblical interpretations, ministerial and leadership spaces, it will be difficult for women to be liberated from oppressive patriarchal structures objectifying women in the name of religion. In another aspect of misleading biblical interpretation, one controversial Kenyan preacher Pastor Paul Mackenzie used the Bible to convince his followers that Jesus Christ is coming soon and that they must starve to death through fasting the way Christ fasted in Mark 2:18-22 to meet Jesus immediately. Unfortunately, women and children are his major victims and of other wrong biblical interpretations that continue to cost the lives of many in the name of God. The autopsy reports on exhumed bodies of the famous Shakahola Massacre incident in Kenya reveal that the causes of death were starvation and asphyxiation (Citizen Digital 2023). On the other hand, an analysis of Yasuyoshi Chiba (2023) on the life of Mackenzie shows that Mackenzie taught his followers that starvation brought salvation. As part of empowering women in diverse ways of countering gender inequalities, it is very important for biblical approaches such as feminist cultural hermeneutics to be mainstreamed within patriarchal structures in order to empower

especially women to faithfully interpret, apply, and teach passages of Scripture.

Secondly, Feminist cultural hermeneutics uses a gendered lens to interpret scriptures from either inside or outside traditional religious and structures of dominance. This is done to expose and criticize the marginalization of women with the aim of bringing justice, freedom, and equity between men and women. Stories of the widows like in the story of Ruth and Naomi in the book of Ruth for example who are at the periphery of the society shift to the center of liberation theological discourses. Glen Enander (2005:55) argues [the Bible] “and its interpretation have often been used by those in power to maintain their dominance over women, especially since it originated in a *kyriarchal* culture that used androcentric language.” As a tool of empowerment, feminist cultural hermeneutics is based on an active reading of scriptural texts through the lens of women’s issues from both ancient cultural practices and contemporary worldviews. Kanyoro’s feminist cultural hermeneutics is a theology of women empowerment since it is based on the active readings of women in the book of Ruth. Unlike androcentric biblical interpretations presented from an individual’s point of view, Kanyoro’s feminist cultural hermeneutics takes the approach of communal theology where women’s community experiences inform their liberation theological reflections.

Finally, yet importantly, feminist cultural hermeneutics considers African traditional religion and culture the pre-Christian traditions of African religiosity and postcolonial structures as a rich heritage in which sacred texts can be understood today. Speaking about strategies that African women use in interpreting scriptures, Mercy Oduyoye (2001:11), points out “cultural hermeneutics enables women to view the Bible through African eyes and to distinguish and extract from it what is liberation.” It is from the same perspective that feminist cultural hermeneutics empowers women doing theology in Africa to celebrate liberating aspects of African traditional religion and culture, but also to challenge oppressive cultural ideologies and religious beliefs. V. Ndikhokele & N. Mtshiselwa (2016) for example reads Ruth 4 and Leviticus 25:8-55 in the light of the landless and poor women in South Africa in ways that also elevates the contextual approach to ancient texts

by Esias E. Meyer who argues that Leviticus 25:8-55 holds liberating possibilities for women who are invisible. In contexts like Kenya where patriarchy is persistent and has striking similarity with that of the biblical world, it is important to equip women with alternative tools of biblical interpretations that are sensitive to the plight and experiences of women. Gender-sensitive biblical hermeneutics are alternatives that have the real potential to African women's liberation. The liberation is in empowering African women to realize their role as characters in the text and exponents of the texts as proposed by Nambalirwa Helen Nkabala (2013). Just like in the book of Ruth, poverty, land, powerlessness and the silenced voices of women are a justice issue. That is why the reality of poverty and landlessness on the part of women in many African societies remains the basis for reflection and more specifically in the fields of social and political sciences (V. Ndikhokele & N. Mtshiselwa 2016).

## **Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics as a Pilgrimage of Justice Today**

While introducing feminist cultural hermeneutics as a communal theology, Kanyoro (2002) underscores the importance of the accountability of the church, women's organizations in the church and African women theologians. Religion and culture remain the main sources of women's oppression. The church uses religious ideologies and biblical cultural structures to socialize women to be passive recipients of injustices as observed by Moyo (2004:73). According to Holly Morse (2017:71), "the story of Eve in Genesis 3 remains an important symbolic site of female oppression, a religious and cultural myth that has been used and indeed the Bible as a whole is a key source of women's oppression." It is therefore important for the Church to accept responsibility of how the Church has historically oppressed women, by accounting for the negative attitudes towards the leadership roles of women bearing in mind that women are the majority in many African Christian churches. Justice is justice if judgment is dispensed and the reparation of women blended with efforts for women empowerment in Church. Eric A. Seibert (2018:2) notes with concern how "Christians have waged wars, executed "witches," brutalized children, oppressed women, enslaved Africans, massacred

Muslims, and exterminated Native Americans.” According to Seibert (2018:2), “during its 2,000-year history, the church has been responsible for unspeakable atrocities and massive amounts of bloodshed.” Thus, the question of justice on matters women’s oppression in the Church cannot take place without some serious consideration of reparations for women. One of the pilgrimage journeys for justice towards the issues of women oppression is a holistic approach towards the transformation of oppressive structures in ways that allows women to ascend into leadership positions without any barriers. Samuel Peni Ango (2016:152) for example gives an account of how “African instituted Churches as well as other newly established ministries across Nigeria are becoming more unequivocally supportive of women playing equitable roles just as men are doing.”

When it comes to the accountability of women’s organizations in the church, it is important to note that women’s organizations are largely responsible for the development, growth and economic sustainability of many churches in Africa. Some of the women’s organizations are just in form of Bible study groups in the church yet their contributions are transforming rigid church structures. Some of the women’s organizations have a long history of contributing to challenging religion and culture even during missionary Christianity in Africa. In the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) for example, women have organized themselves into a women’s organization called the woman’s Guild (The Presbyterian Church of East Africa – PCEA 2023). The women’s guild is a fellowship of women and girls of the PCEA that started in 1922 with the goal of rescuing young girls from the oppressive traditions and bringing them to Christianity. Unfortunately, the works and contribution of women’s organization remain undocumented and unrecognized. In the Reformed Church of East Africa – RCEA, women played a key role in championing for women’s ordination. The women’s desk collaborated and networked with women across the world, with Professor Esther Mombo playing a key role. After years of discussion, the RCEA General Synod approved the ordination of women at its synod in November 2017 under the leadership of Rev. Musa Kipkorir Kapkong Maina, the then RCEA moderator (see Phil Tanis 2018). Part of the barriers towards women ordination in the RCEA is culture and the interpretations of biblical texts such as Leviticus

11:1-15:33, 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:13-14. In a pilgrimage of Justice against retrogressive cultural practices, women must work with men as partners because we are all equal in the eyes of God and we are gifted differently.

As we remain on the issue of accountability as a pilgrimage of justice, African women theologians on the other hand are doing a great job in accounting for the contribution of African women theologians. Some of them are showing how women theologians are challenging retrogressive cultural practices relegating women of all categories to the periphery. Zorodzai Dube (2016) for example uses theories from cultural studies, critical theory, and contextual and gender studies to locate the voices of African women theologians in their discussion of Alternative masculinity using the art of academic writing. Teresia M. Hinga (2017) also uses an African Christian feminist approach to take on a pilgrimage of justice journey in an enduring search for what matters. Part of her enduring search for what matters is her exposition of the biblical mandate for social transformation. Culture is a social construct that requires proper cultural hermeneutical tools to deconstruct oppressive cultural ideologies. The approaches should escalate advocacy for a just society that enables the lives of all to flourish regardless of gender, race, social class and context and vantage point. In Kenya and many other African patriarchal societies, widows are highly oppressed when it comes to land and property inheritance rights because women do not have right to inherit land or property. Priesting Kanyoro's feminist cultural hermeneutics as a pilgrimage of justice means lobbying for the ascension of women into key leadership position that determine the policies that address every aspects of women discrimination. Juma (2016:57) points out that "African women grapple with low social status and inequitable social relationships because of lack of representation in Key societal and religious leadership positions."

Feminist cultural hermeneutics is therefore a global a pilgrimage of justice. Today, Christian communities around the world have become more conscious like never before of the so many socio-economic injustices threatening life. The hope is in the shared faith and commitment of Christians globally in affirming the God of life by calling upon each other to affirm, sustain, and protect life by walking together to

transform society for the good of all. In the same spirit, feminist cultural hermeneutics is a global pilgrimage of justice because of its role in using scripture to empower women with the necessary hermeneutical tools that affirm life in ways that move the stories of the marginalized to the center of theological discourses. According to John Connell (2011:17), a “pilgrimage is a rite of passage, a journey of moral significance from the profane to the sacred, undertaken to propitiate supernatural forces responsible for causing illness, death and misfortune to restore shalom.” The above discussion therefore, has presented feminist cultural hermeneutics, as a pilgrimage of Justice is two perspectives. First from a *sankofa* point of view, feminist cultural hermeneutics opens up possibilities for remembrance in order to take accountability of historical injustices in church and society. The word *Sankofa* is from the Akan *Twi* language of the people of Ghana, which literally means to retrieve. The word *Sankofa* comes from the Akan proverb: “*Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi*” translated to mean, “it is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot.” The African philosophy of *Sankofa* is in the aspect of knowing your history and your heritage understanding yourself currently, the world around you, and how to learn from the past to transform the present for the sake of the future as explained in detail by Christel N. Temple (2010). Thus, it is important to retrieve from our culture what is empowering, deconstruct what is oppressive, and reconstruct a society that is prolife for the sake of our future.

Secondly, as a theology of empowerment, feminist cultural hermeneutics takes every concerned theologian on a global prophetic journey of hope for a better tomorrow. As a Global Pilgrimages of Justice, feminist cultural hermeneutics has opened up dignity liberation theological discourses for posterity. All oppressions are connected to the multiple levels of systemic structures of injustices that affect people’s lives, with each system of oppression connected to a corresponding system of privilege and domination as pointed out by Dena R. Samuels, Abby L. Ferber & Andrea O’Reilly Herrera (2003). It is therefore important for all human beings to work together as core partners to bring down historical systems of oppression. By blending a concept of communal theology to the feminist cultural hermeneutics, Kanyoro arguably summons all to a way of life that is spiritually transformative to encounter

the vulnerable. Thorough feminist cultural hermeneutics, all are all called to find ourselves in a vulnerable place of becoming vulnerable to others by purging off one's own prejudices, preoccupations, priorities and pride moving from a comfort zone to destabilizing the status quo. As a global pilgrimage of Justice, feminist cultural hermeneutics is a transformative journey; a dialogical conversation that puts prioritizes the needs of others and the vision of God. By using a communal theological approach to do feminist cultural hermeneutics the community of believers around that world is called upon to fighting for equality by turning the tables on gender injustices upside down and rooting out all forms of oppression as observed by Joan Acker (2006).

## **OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro the founding member of the Circle stands out for her courage to take women on a Pilgrimage of Justice in her many publications. Through her scholarly engagements, it is possible to see that one of the many tools of liberation is for women to find voice through publishing I the art of academic writing. In the discussion of one of Kanyoro's scholarly works in Kanyoro, (2002). *Introduction to Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: A Key to African Women's Liberation Theology*, it is possible to see how African women's voices have the potential to draw the attention of the world to the plight of the marginalized of the society for example the widows. Kanyoro's voice therefore stands out as a justice conversational tool that opens up more possibilities for doing contextual biblical interpretations. Even though women in patriarchal contexts like Kenya and other African societies remain vulnerable to misleading biblical interpretations, Kanyoro's feminist cultural hermeneutics offers hope that something good is happening within the same structures of women's oppression where sacred texts occupies a central place in the spirituality of women.

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