



REPRESENTATION OF RESILIENCE, SISTERHOOD AND FEMALE ACTIVISM IN GBOWEE'S MIGHTY BE OUR POWERS



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ABSTRACT

*This paper critiques the conventional marginalization of female characters in narratives of war and conflict, where they are often portrayed as mere victims, dependents, and secondary to male-dominated storylines. The objective is to challenge these depictions and reposition women as central, empowered, and resilient figures in war narratives, amplifying their voices and those of other women facing similar challenges. By examining Leymah Gbowee's *Mighty Be Our Powers*, this paper highlights women's agency, strength, and transformative roles in narratives set in conflict situations, positioning them as resilient war heroines who transcend trauma and victimhood, actively challenging the patriarchal structures that perpetuate gender-based violence. These women emerge as change-agents and pillars of strength for their communities amidst the chaos and devastation of war. *Leymah Gbowee's Mighty Be Our Powers* serves as the primary source, with supplementary sources drawn from academic journals, library resources, and online databases. Findings suggest that while the full potentials of women-centered portrayals in war literature remains underexplored, efforts by gender-sensitive writers are gradually challenging negative gender stereotypes. These writers depict women in varied roles, especially as breadwinners, family heads, peace and change-activists, and community leaders, contributing to a shift in societal perceptions. While this paper seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature promoting gender inclusivity, it also calls for active societal efforts to dismantle patriarchal and hegemonic ideologies. By fostering more inclusive and equitable narratives, writers can move beyond biased perspectives and better represent the multifaceted roles and contributions of women in conflict-driven narratives.*

KEY WORDS: Agency, Conflicts, Female Activism, Resilience, Trauma, Sisterhood Solidarity

INTRODUCTION

The representation of women and girls in narratives of war has long been a subject of critical examination. Traditional narratives have habitually marginalized female characters, often portraying them as passive victims or secondary to the central male protagonists. The burning question here according to Gloria Chuku and Sussie Aham-Okoro, is “why are women often minimized or negatively represented in war narratives especially those written by men” (Chuku & Aham-Okoro 11).

These writers further agree that the factors responsible for this anomaly are “patriarchal norms of societies and states that placed men above women in decision-making processes”(Chuku & Aham-Okoro 11). According to Lorraine Dowler in her essay on “Women on the Frontlines: Rethinking War Narratives Post 9/11”, The September 11th attacks have prompted a proliferation of war narratives across academic and popular platforms, attempting to contextualize and understand the tragedy. However, there has been limited discussion

in the United States regarding the gendered dimensions of the attack. She posits that,

What we have witnessed is the tendency to masculinize the heroes of the attack as gallant warriors and ignore the contributions of women firefighters, police officers and rescue workers who had also risked their lives. (Dowler)

Historically, war narratives have often depicted women and girls as the collateral damages of conflicts no matter whatever contributions they bring to the table as in above situation. They are frequently shown as victims of violence, dependents in need of protection, or symbols of the home and family that soldiers fight to defend. Instances of these portrayals can also be found in works like Dave Egger's *What Is the What* (2006), which presents female characters as mere appendages and victims of the Sudanese civil war, often highlighting their sufferings and helplessness in traditional roles. Kevin Power's *The Yellow Birds* (2012) also emphasizes the heroic roles of the soldiers during the Iraqi wars, while presenting those of the women in their lives as passive sufferers of the war's impact. These portrayals reinforce gender stereotypes and minimizes the active roles that women and girls can play in times of war.

However, most contemporary war narratives are increasingly shifting this perspective, bringing women and girls to the forefront as central figures who exhibit resilience, agency, and leadership. In recent years, there has been a significant shift in how women and girls are represented in war narratives. Contemporary authors and filmmakers are challenging traditional depictions by highlighting the diverse experiences and contributions of women during conflicts. These narratives showcase women not just as victims, but as survivors, resisters, and leaders. Some of these narratives include Jeanne Celestine Lakin's memoir, *A Voice in the Darkness*, which provides a first-hand account of the Rwandan genocide, illustrating the strength and agency of women and girls amidst horrific violence; Nadia Murad's *The*

Last Girl, which tells her story as a survivor of ISIS brutality and sexual violence in armed conflict and her subsequent activism for justice and human rights; and Denis Mukwege's *The Power of Women*, which portrays women as resilient and agential, shedding light on their strengths, determination, and crucial roles in advocating for justice and social change.

Consequently, this paper is focused on highlighting these positive representations of women as resilient and agential, underscoring resistance, resilience, activism, and the impact of their roles in promoting transformative change as explored by Leymah Gbowee in her memoir, *Mighty Be Our Powers*. In addition, it shall examine the themes of resilience and survival, agency and leadership, sisterhood and solidarity, activism, and advocacy in Gbowee's memoir as experienced and exhibited by women characters during the Liberian Civil war.

Furthermore, this paper shall draw from a complex theoretical approach deploying the feminist literary and literary trauma theories to critically situate the memoir viz-a viz the patriarchal, gender and power dynamics of society and war, and to underscore the effects of trauma on women in conflict and war narrative settings. Therefore, the third wave of feminism, which advocates for positive representation of women in literature and emphasizes intersectionality—highlighting the overlapping identities, experiences, and values of women based on race, gender, religion, ethnicity, class, and sexuality—is considered more appropriate for this paper.

Additionally, the **Survivor Narratives** and **The Recovery and Resilience** trauma concepts are deployed to appropriately interpret the trauma theory part of the eclectic theoretical approach. While the survivor concepts are accounts of traumatic events told from the perspective of survivors, emphasizing the importance of amplifying survivor voices, exploring the ways in which trauma is narrated, remembered, and processed in literature, the Recovery and Resilience

Trauma concept acknowledges the resilience of survivors and explores narratives of recovery, healing, and transformation. To situate this analysis within the narrative framework of the memoir, a concise overview of the book is provided. This summary serves to bridge the gap between the analysis and the stories told within the memoir, enriching our comprehension of the characters' journeys and the themes that emerge throughout the text.

Synopsis of *Mighty Be Our Powers* (2014)

Mighty Be Our Powers is Leymah Gbowee's gripping memoir, detailing her experiences amid Liberia's civil wars and her crucial role in mobilizing women for peace. Gbowee, the fourth daughter in a close-knit family in rural community was seventeen years old in 1989 at the onset of the civil war in Liberia. Her early years were characterized by a nurturing environment, where family and neighbours collectively cared for each other's children. Gbowee's narrative unfolds into a harrowing portrayal of violence, displacement, and her unwavering determination for change. Central to the memoir is Gbowee's leadership in the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement, a grassroots effort that united women across religious and tribal divides, to demand peace through nonviolent means.

Additionally, the narrative also explores the spiritual and traditional elements that sustained hope during turbulent times. It sheds light on the trauma of sexual violence in conflicts, and advocates for addressing gender-based violence in peace-building efforts. Through vivid storytelling, *Mighty Be Our Powers* not only recounts the war horrors but also celebrates the transformative potential of grassroots activism, particularly when led by women. Gbowee is a 2011 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and her memoir with the title, *Mighty Be Our Powers* reflects the collective strength and resilience of these women, bonded by solidarity and strategic activism, stands as a proof to courage, resilience, and the pursuit of peace in the face of adversity.

Representations of Trauma and Resilience in *Mighty Be Our Powers*

Trauma is a psychological, emotional, or physical response to an event or series of events that are deeply distressing or disturbing. It can result from various experiences such as accidents, violence or natural disasters or personal losses that can lead to lasting effects on a person's mental and emotional health. The Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Centre asserts that "It results from exposure to an incident or series of events that are emotionally disturbing or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being". (Trauma-Informed Care). American Psychological Association on the other hand notes that it is "an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, crime, natural disaster, physical or emotional abuse, neglect, experiencing or witnessing violence, death of a loved one, war, and more. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical" (American Psychological Association)

Nevertheless, literature emerges as a potent catalyst for confronting and processing trauma, amplifying both individual and collective voices. By bearing witness to trauma, literature provides a vital platform for articulating the often-inexpressible realities of traumatic experiences, facilitating a deeper understanding and validation of the affected individuals and communities. Examples of war/conflict-bred trauma narratives, testimonials, autobiographies, or memoirs abound like Ishmael Beah's, *A long Way from Home* (2008) Ada Agbasimelo's, *The Forest Dames* (2014), Dr. M.A Mahey's, *Abandoned in Sambisa* (2015), Farida Khalaf's, *The Girl Who Escaped ISIS* (2016) and a host of others. Notably, narratives of trauma by both female and male writers are fast dominating the modern literary landscape.

Resilience on the other hand is the ability to recover from, or adapt to challenging situations, such as trauma, stress, or adversity. It is a measure of how well someone can bounce back from

difficult experiences and maintain or regain their mental and emotional well-being. Resilience involves coping mechanisms, support systems, and sometimes a sense of purpose or hope that enables individuals to navigate through tough times. According to Kendra Cherry in “How Resilience Helps you in Life Changes”, “Resilience is what gives people the psychological strength to cope with stress and hardship. It is the mental reservoir of strength that people are able to call on in times of need to carry them through without falling apart” (Cherry). Many modern war narratives focus on the resilience of women and girls, highlighting their abilities to endure and adapt in the face of extreme situations. These stories often explore the inner strength and resourcefulness required to survive in war-torn environments.

In *Mighty Be Our Powers*, Leymah Gbowee presents compelling narratives of resilience and trauma, depicting how women navigate through the harsh realities of war while simultaneously fostering strength and hope. She represents the transformation of women's roles in war literature from traditional portrayals of docility to more diverse and dynamic representations highlighting their heroic and spirited efforts to cope regardless of their adverse experiences in times of wars and conflicts. We witness the intersection of trauma and resilience in the representation of women characters who endure trauma, stress, and life challenges, showcasing their emotional regulation, social support, and problem-solving skills. The author delves into themes of trauma, healing, and resilience among women and communities affected by conflict and violence portraying how women navigate and overcome the profound impacts of war, transforming their sufferings into strength and their pain into power.

For instance, through her personal journey and the collective experiences of the women she works with, she x-rays the harrowing impact of the Liberian civil war on individuals and communities, highlighting the pervasive trauma experienced by women and children. She recounts her own

sufferings and struggles which includes an abusive relationship with Daniel, the challenges of raising four children alone during the war, and her own moments of despair, breakdown. According to her, Daniel was so controlling and “he didn’t like my friends visiting...if we needed food, he had me wait for him to come home from work...” (Gbowee 44). These personal experiences highlight the broader impact of the conflict on individuals and the emotional toll of living in a war zone.

Additionally, she underlines her courageous confrontation with trauma as she worked directly with child soldiers and survivors who had experienced unimaginable horrors during the war. Most times she was faced with threat of attack from the boys she was working to re-integrate into the society. On one occasion according to her, she narrowly escaped a brutal attack from one of them- “ he rushed to my side and raised his fist to strike me. I can’t tell you why or how, but I didn’t flinch, just looked into his eyes. Coldly, daring him” (Gbowee 91). This show of resistance and resilience enabled her to channel her pain into purpose, demonstrating that trauma resilience is not just about personal healing but also about using one’s experiences to create positive changes. Moreover, embracing a trauma-informed approach, fuelled her resolve and empowered others to join her, thus highlighting the transformative power of turning personal suffering into a force for collective good. She constantly alludes to her trauma filled, war experiences, especially being in and out of an abusive relationship with Daniel which left her a single mother of four without any form of income or financial support, “the sadness makes me more helpless” she admits. According to her,

When you’re depressed, you get trapped inside yourself and lose energy to take actions that might make you feel better. You hate yourself for that. You see the suffering of others but feel incapable of helping them and that makes you hate yourself too. The hate makes you sadder and helpless, the

helplessness fills me with more self- hate (Gbowee 85).

Notwithstanding the relentless trauma as captured above, Gbowee's story is ultimately one of resilience. She confesses that she literarily found purgation from the above circle of trauma- induced sadness by working in a trauma relieve center, World Federation Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Programme (THRP). Demonstrating an unwavering determination to overcome her personal hardships and channel her pain into positive action, she acknowledges that "Working at the THRP broke that cycle for me. I wasn't sitting at home thinking endlessly... I was doing something, something that actually helped people" (Gbowee 85). She finds a sense of purpose working with the THRP and begins to heal by helping others heal which marks a turning point in her journey.

Her first few weeks at the center saw her leading a workshop for war- traumatized rural women from the Lofa County. Instead of relying solely on the handbook dealing with loss and grief provided by THRP for the one-day workshop, she moves beyond traditional methods and shares her own experiences, creating a space for collective healing and empowerment. According to the narrative, the workshop was a great success as her personal war stories amplified the voices of the women, encouraging them to recall and their own stories of village destructions, the deaths of their children, and rape experiences. Gbowee tells us that while listening to the personal stories and pain of some of them, she made to stop them and save them the embarrassment, however an elderly woman among them disagreed. According to her,

A very old woman rose up on her walking stick. Don't let us stop... The UN brings us food and shelter and clothes, but what you have brought us is much more valuable. You've come to hear the stories from our bellies. Stories that no one else asks us about. Please don't stop. Don't ever stop (Gbowee 121).

The above excerpt underscores the much needed talking- therapy which is achieved for both herself and the women. It shows that through literature, trauma is once again laid bare, highlighting the crucial concepts of survivor testimony, witness, and interpersonal trauma that are fundamental to the literary trauma theory employed in this paper. Moreover, the talking- therapy referenced earlier reinforces Mirela Lapugean's poignant assertion that "the traumatized carry an impossible history within them, impossible to understand, impossible to forget, and impossible to voice"(Lapugean 2). Consequently, articulating trauma and gaining linguistic mastery over it becomes the paramount struggle for those who have been traumatized, as they strive to make sense of their experiences and find the words to express the inexpressible.

Again, Gbowee's resilience is further exemplified through her leadership in the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement, the grassroots initiative which united women across religious and ethnic divides to demand peace through nonviolent means. This movement's achievements underscore the power of solidarity and strategic activism in overcoming adversity and driving social and political change.

Sisterhood, Solidarity and Bonding

Themes of sisterhood and solidarity are prominent in narratives that focus on women and girls in war. These stories often highlight the bonds formed between women as they support and protect one other, creating networks of care and resistance. However, generally, the notions of Sisterhood, solidarity, and bonding refer to the powerful connections and relationships among women, particularly in the context of feminist movements and struggles for social justice. These concepts emphasize unity, mutual support, and collective strength among individuals, particularly among women and are vital in fostering strong communities and achieving social and personal renewal, especially in contexts of victim/ survivor, trauma/resilience. Similarly in literature, these concepts play significant roles in highlighting the

power of collective action and emotional support among individuals, particularly women. They underscore how personal and collective struggles can be navigated and overcome through mutual support, shared goals, and unified actions.

Whereas the term Sisterhood refers to the emotional and social connections among women based on shared experiences, struggles, and goals, it also includes building relationships that transcend individual differences, promote collective inspiration, and embodies the idea of women supporting one another through understanding, empathy, and mutual respect. The key thoughts of Sisterhood include shared experiences, mutual support, and empowerment, while the importance lies in the fact that connecting with other women with similar experiences and realities help victims and survivors of traumatic experiences find strength and solace

Solidarity represents a powerful principle of unity and collective support, particularly in the face of adversity, oppression, or injustice. In the context of women's relationships, solidarity entails acknowledging, amplifying, and validating each other's voices, experiences, and struggles. It involves collaborative action towards shared goals, fostered by a sense of shared interests, emotions, and purpose. Through solidarity, individuals come together to advocate for common causes, challenge oppressive systems, and drive transformative change. This collective unity is a vital force in feminist movements and collective actions, enabling women to support one another and work together towards a more just and equitable world. Wickström et al. posit that,

Feminist solidarity is a way of being that is embedded in cultural traditions and movements that resist women's socio-economic inequalities and patriarchal power. It unites women in, inter alia, a refusal to accept the ongoing prevalence of sexism and misogyny; the exploitation of women's labour, emotions, and bodies; physical and financial violence towards

women; inequalities of work opportunities and entrenched gender pay disparities. (Wickström et al.2)

Additionally, Caroline Sweetman asserts that "both feminist activists and progressive developments draw on ideas about challenging inequalities through mobilization and solidarity. They emphasize the need to draw on collective power – 'power- with' to overcome the 'power-over' of domination of elites. (Sweetman 217). She further opines that "Social economic and political change can come from individuals realizing their common interests in challenging unequal power relations and asserting their full and equal rights as members of society" Sweetman 217).

Bonding on the other hand is also a feminist thought that emphasizes the significance of vital connection and safety net for women, particularly during times of war and conflicts. This foundation of shared experiences, struggles, and activities fosters a sense of community and belonging, giving rise to the interconnected principles of sisterhood and solidarity. Bonding enables survivors to overcome isolation, shame, and disempowerment by finding common ground and support. Through emotional connections, shared activities, trust, and loyalty, women can rebuild their sense of self, regain agency, and collectively challenge patriarchal structures. The combined forces of sisterhood, solidarity, and bonding form a powerful catalyst for women's empowerment, social change, and collective action, ultimately creating a more harmonious and inclusive world.

For Gbowee's *Mighty Be Our Powers*, she vividly portrays the themes of sisterhood solidarity and bonding as crucial elements in the fight for peace and justice. Throughout the narrative, Gbowee highlights the metamorphosis power of women coming together across religious, ethnic, and social divides to form a united front for peace and against the violence and chaos of the Liberian civil war. The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement, which Gbowee co-founded, exemplifies this spirit of sisterhood and solidarity.

Women from diverse backgrounds joined forces, demonstrating that their collective strength could challenge the prevailing warlords and political leaders. The movement's success was rooted in the deep bonds of trust, mutual support, and shared purpose among its members. For instance, at the night of sharing and unburdening which Liberian women aptly dubbed “the shedding of weight”, women told their stories honestly, sharing personal experiences, purging their shame regardless of class, ethnicity, and religion. To underscore the importance of the sisterhood, Gbowee enjoins them as illustrated below, to set aside every other identity signifier and see themselves as women with common goals.

Lawyer, doctor, mother, market women. Put them in this box... I am locking them away. We are not Lawyers, activists or wives here. We are not Christians or Muslims, we are not Kpelle, Loma, Krahn or Mandigo. We are not indigenous or elites. We are only women. (Gbowee 128)

The above excerpt demonstrates the power of sisterhood and bonding among the women in *Mighty Be our powers*.

Gbowee's account emphasizes how these women supported one another emotionally, physically, and spiritually, creating a powerful network that enabled them to sustain their activism despite the dangers and hardships they faced. Their unity was not only a source of strength but also a beacon of hope for their communities, illustrating that peace and reconciliation were achievable through collective action. Moreover, the personal relationships that Gbowee formed with other women activists across the globe like Thelma Ekiyor, the brilliant lawyer/ activist from Nigeria, are a testament to the importance of sisterhood in sustaining resilience and hope. She testifies to how Thelma encouraged her and pushed to get the best out of her, “you're using only 50 percent of what you have ... and was among the first to see abilities in me that I hadn't yet learnt how to tap and use” (Gbowee 109). These bonds provided a source of

comfort and encouragement, helping them to navigate the immense challenges posed by the conflict. Through their shared struggles and triumphs, the women in *Mighty Be Our Powers* demonstrate that sisterhood and bonding are essential tools for overcoming adversity and driving social change. According to Gbowee, to show the importance of the women standing and pulling together, they posed the following rhetoric questions, “Does the bullet know Christian from Muslim? Does the bullet pick and choose?” (Gbowee 129). This approach yielded the much-desired firmer bond amongst them as we learn that at the end of their meeting, they agreed that both the Christians and Muslims would work together via their nonviolent activism to achieve their set objective of bringing peace back to the war-torn Liberia.

Perhaps one huge approach to the deployment of sisterhood and bonding is that Leymah and the women of Liberia used “sex strike” as part of their strategy to pressure the warring factions to negotiate for peace. The ability of the sisterhood to convince themselves to hold off is quite remarkable. We are told that it was more effective in the rural areas because the women tied their refusal to religious reasons and prayers, so the men were scared off. According Gbowee, “they already set aside a separate space where they sat each day and men couldn't come. They based their refusal on religious reasons, saying they wouldn't have sex “until we saw the god's face for peace” (Gbowee 147) This act of nonviolent protest, where women withheld sex from their partners to garner support for the peace movement, was one of the tactics employed to draw attention to their demands and to motivate the men to push for an end to the conflict.

Agency and Female Activism

Agency refers to the empowerment of individuals to take deliberate action, make informed decisions, and shape their own destiny. For women and marginalized communities, agency represents the freedom to make self-determined choices,

exercise autonomy over their bodies, and claim their rights in pursuit of their own goals, unencumbered by oppressive societal expectations. In the context of war, women and girls are increasingly represented as dynamic actors, with multifaceted roles as soldiers, spies, resistance fighters, and peace advocates, highlighting their capacity for leadership and agency.

Conversely, activism involves championing transformative change in society, politics, or the environment. It encompasses collective efforts to confront and dismantle systems perpetuating inequality, discrimination, gender-based violence, and oppression, particularly those affecting women and marginalized communities. Female activism assumes various forms, including protests, awareness campaigns, and community mobilization, and remains a potent narrative thread in contemporary war stories. These accounts highlight the courageous ways women and girls mobilize for peace, justice, and societal transformation, often in the face of significant personal danger. Examples of feminist activism in contemporary literature include accounts in Denis Mukwege's *The Power of Women* which is a profound testament to feminist activism's role in addressing and overcoming gender-based violence, Jeanne Celestine Lakin's *A Voice in the Darkness* which provides a first-hand account of the Rwandan genocide, illustrating the strength and agency of women and girls amidst horrific violence.

Therefore, effectively addressing and advancing women's issues necessitates a dual focus on agency and activism, for several critical reasons: empowerment, increased social visibility, advocacy for rights, policy and legal reforms, and cultivating solidarity. The intersection of agency and activism occurs when women challenge the existing power structures; by exercising their agency, women disrupt the status quo, while activism amplifies this disruption by mobilizing collective action to challenge oppressive norms. This combined approach is crucial for driving transformative change and ensuring that women's voices,

experiences, and perspectives are acknowledged, valued, and prioritized. According to Lois McNay in her essay, "Agency",

When agency and feminist activism intersect, they empower women to not only recognize their own potential and rights but also to actively participate in movements that seek to dismantle patriarchal structures and promote equality (McNay 40)

This combination has been central to many historical and contemporary feminist movements, highlighting the importance of both individual and collective action in achieving social change.

Additionally, critics like Srilatha Batliwala notes in "Building Feminist Organizations" that,

Rather than hundreds or thousands of women who identify with a particular agenda rushing around incoherently doing different things, movement-created organizations help them create coherent cohesive planned actions that can have greater effects. (Batliwala 2013)

The above statement emphasizes the very important role of collective resistance in facilitating women's activist groups to contest and transform the prevailing sexist power structures, ultimately challenging the institutionalized male privilege that reinforces gender inequality.

It is essential to emphasize that in feminist discourse, agency and activism are deeply intertwined, with agency being a fundamental precursor to feminist activism. The quest for collective action and social transformation, which prioritizes amplifying women's voices, experiences, and perspectives, hinges on acknowledging and empowering individual agency. Activism not only advocates for the recognition and protection of women's agency but also strives to create environments where women can freely exercise their agency without obstacles or constraints, thereby fostering a culture of empowerment and inclusivity.

While many writers, explore the above themes of women's agency and activism in their

books, *Mighty Be Our Powers* offers unique perspectives and insights by highlighting grassroots activism and peacebuilding. Despite facing early challenges such as abuse, failed relationships, displacement, and periods of instability in refugee camps, Gbowee, a young mother, finds the strength to transform her adversities into catalyst for action. Recognizing the potentials of women united, she was inspired by the notion that their collective power, (emphasizing the book title (*Mighty Be Our Powers*)) could be an unstoppable force. Coupled with her profound understanding of the heightened suffering experienced by women and children during conflicts, Gbowee deploys an admixture of women-centered nonviolent strategies to bring about the much-needed peace in Liberia. Her strategy is a combination of grass root mobilization of women's nonviolent protests, prayers, and sex starvation.

According to her, "this war has been going on a long, long time and all of us have been suffering...we need to step forward and get involved" (Gbowee 126-127). Not only is the above a strong testament for the deconstruction of the just-victimhood representation of women in war narratives, but it is a call for organized activism and marks a turning point for women to take their destinies in their own hands and fight for themselves, their children and for posterity. To convince, motivate and mobilize other women to join the Liberian Mass Action for Peace, she had to constantly remind them of their present realities, "You are the one who has been raped by the fighters! Your husband is the one who has been killed. It is your child being forced into the army" (Gbowee 127). Her statement touched the core of every woman hearing it, thus activating their agency and galvanizing them to action.

Before Gbowee, there have been other women organizations like the Liberia Women Initiative (LWI) and The Mano River Union Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET). However, she threw her weight behind Women In Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), an alliance of

Christian and Muslim women who courageously engaged in public protests, directly challenging Liberia's authoritarian president and rebel warlords. The movement became formidable and a proof to the transformative power of collective action. Ultimately, their relentless efforts played a pivotal role in leading the nation towards peace without firing a gun shot or engaging in any form of violence. They appointed community leaders in the rural areas, mobilized government workers, NGOs, university female students, female professors market women and displaced women from the camps, all came out in their white T-shirts and placards, all clamoring for peace. According to Gbowee, they all stood up to Charles Taylor, the presidential warlord, by sitting down for peace, "... the women rose, walked to the roadside and faced the president's convoy holding a huge banner: THE WOMEN OF LIBERIA WANT PEACE NOW!" (Gbowee 137)

The pinnacle of the collective power of these women was demonstrated at the General Abdulsalam Abubakar-mediated, ECOWAS and UN-backed peace negotiations in Ghana. During this two-week gathering, Gbowee and the protesting women not only threatened to use naked protest—"a shaming tactic rooted in the history of sub-Saharan Africa, especially among mothers and grandmothers" (Chuku and Aham-Okoro 26)—but also barricaded the entrance to the negotiation venue, demanding the signing of a peace agreement. The women declared, "We are holding these delegates, especially the Liberians, hostage. They will feel the pain of what our people are feeling at home" (Gbowee 161).

Although the book showcases huge doses of agency and activism, the narratives are profoundly influenced by the authors' unique gender perspectives and experiences, highlighting the fact that the work serves as a powerful testament to the firsthand experiences of a woman who has endured gender-based war atrocities

CONCLUSION

This paper analyzed the representation of resilience, sisterhood, and female activism dynamic roles of women as central characters in *Mighty Be Our Powers*. This analysis examined the prominent representation of women in the book, noting a significant departure from the traditional depiction of women as marginalized, powerless, and helpless victims in narratives of conflict-related sexual violence. Instead, the author presents a nuanced and empowering portrayal of women as resilient survivors, active agents, peace activist and courageous change makers, who subvert stereotypes and challenge the patriarchal norms that perpetuate war and gender-based violence.

Furthermore, the memoir *Mighty Be Our Powers* by Leymah Gbowee, boasts of a title that aptly encapsulates the narrative's core focus. It spotlights the pivotal themes of female strength, resilience, activism, and solidarity, particularly among survivors of trauma and abuse. The title also echoes the authors' emphasis on empowering women, celebrating their courage, and showcasing their collective support in rebuilding their lives and overcoming adversity. Notably, the title choice underscores the multifaceted roles women play in fostering hope, healing, and change – a central concern of the narrative and a primary objective of this paper, "Representation of Resilience, Sisterhood, and Female Activism".

Additionally, Gbowee's narrative functions as a powerful testimony, bravely confronting the unspeakable truths of trauma and amplifying the voices of those who have endured suffering in silence. By sharing her story, Gbowee creates a space for marginalized voices to be heard, breaking the silence, and shedding light on the dark realities of war trauma and abuse.

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