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Reinstating the Inherent Dignity of Marginalized Communities In Ghana

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ABSTRACT

When a representative democracy implicitly or explicitly undermines minority rights and prevents marginalized people from actively participating in a democratic process, it facilitates social exclusion. This paper focuses on how Ghana's democracy, coupled with traditions, aggravate social exclusion. The research discusses the democratization process of Ghana and its role in the marginalization of minorities. Particularly, this paper looks at the class-based marginalization of women on the one hand and the sex-based marginalization of the LGBTQI+ community on the other, in Ghana. Finally, this paper explores how Soka Education, as a way of life, can support these marginalized communities in Ghana.

Keywords: Democracy, Ghana, LGBTQI, Soka education, Social Exclusion, Women.

INTRODUCTION

Democracy in Africa is not new. It has a long history that predates the wave of democratization that occurred on the continent in the 1990s. Democratic values were prevalent in African political systems that existed before colonization (Bradley, 2005). According to Bradley (2005) and Bansah (2015), African political systems were collectivist systems, where leaders made decisions based on a consensus. Bradley (2005) states that the main distinctions between Western and African democracies were that the voice of the people was represented through state bodies in the west, whereas African democracies identified with traditions and ethnicity.

One primary concern about democratic systems, whether traditional or western, is the extent to which they represent the people. A sign of a healthy democratic system is the ability of rules and practices to protect minority rights (J.E.W., 1965). Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. For a long time, western democracies pretended that democratic rules that applied to a subset of their population, mainly white adult males, were sufficient to make them democracies (Dahl, 1999). In traditional African systems, collectivism, whether egalitarian or utilitarian, puts the groups' interest over that of the individual, but who made the final decisions for the group? Mill (2010) points out that government systems based on the rule of a majority group often produce systemic inequalities and the social exclusion of minorities. Social exclusion is the deliberate or unintentional marginalization of a minority group by a dominant group (Burchardt et al., 2002). It is no doubt that humans desire a community in which they can belong. Societies, no matter how large or small, act as shelters for their members. They also create some form of safety and solidarity for their members. Social exclusion occurs when the rules governing a society do not capture all the members' voices and experiences (Williams et al., 2005). According to Williams et al. (2005), Minorities feel compelled to conform to unjust laws because of safety reasons and their need to belong. Oppressed people obeying laws that deny their inherent dignity illustrates the complex nature of social exclusion. For instance, individuals would rather be silent than to demand their civil rights in unfair systems to avoid ostracization. LGBTQI+ members and women are noticeable groups who find themselves in such a situation. How much liberty do minorities need to surrender in exchange for societal acceptance and equal treatment? How can minorities regain their humanity?

In this paper, I examine the ways in which multiparty democracy in Ghana serves as a veneer for the continued marginalization of women and people in the LGBTQI+ community. I then explain how Soka education could help reverse the marginalization and restore the dignity of oppressed people.

Soka is a Japanese word that means value creation. Soka education focuses on the shared humanity and uniqueness of individuals (Ikeda, 2006). It is a stance toward learning and living in which an individual commit to valuing their inherent dignity and that of others (Heffron, 2008). The founder of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was against the Japanese government's effort to militarize the education system (Gebert, 2009). He fought against this system as he believed that education should enable children to live happily rather than serving as a factory for producing mechanized humans for the state (Gebert & Goulah, 2009). Ikeda (1996) emphasizes that value creation is essential for the restoration of individual enfranchisement and eventually, world peace. Soka education's approach to global citizenship and empowerment could help the LGBTQI+ community and marginalized women in Ghana to dismantle oppressive systems that inhibits them from actualizing their potentials. While each individual could benefit from Soka education's liberating effect, leaders need to remember that society exists for people, meaning individuals do not need to trade their liberty for social acceptance and equal treatment under the laws.

DEMOCRACY BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER COLONIZATION; THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY.

Scholars have written extensively about the democratic political system of the Akan and Igbo Kingdoms in pre-colonial Africa (Bansah, 2015). Before the introduction of colonial rule, African societies had political systems that varied from participative democracy to different forms of monarchies and decentralized systems (Bansah, 2015). Societies held public forums where issues affecting the whole communities were discussed and reached a consensus. Adult men and women participated equally in the decision-making process during community gatherings. In the Akan kingdom, women shared power equally with men in different spheres in the kingdom, including the home. Hierarchies existed in pre-colonial Africa, but the systemic emphasis was on representation and inclusion. Democratic values in these Pre-colonial kingdoms emphasized accountability and the voice of the people. Kings and queens did not act on whims but in close consultation with their subjects.

The imposition of colonial rule transformed traditional political practices. Despite the relentless resistance from the different kingdoms – the Akans, the Anlo, the Gas, and the Northern kingdoms – the British succeeded in introducing their system of government through oppressive governance, indirect rule, and the creation of a western educated local elite class (Acemoglu et al., 2001; Bansah, 2015; Pinto,2019). The British provided

western education to a small group of Ghanaians, specifically men in the South, through whom they ruled and maintained their oppressive systems (Abass & Doskaya, 2017). This in turn intensified the already existing social classes and elitism in Ghana with women relegated to the lower classes (Fletcher, 2013; Okoreeh, 2018; Pinto, 2019).

The creation of the elite also gave rise to the independence movement. In the late 1940s, in an attempt to abolish colonization, two major parties, the UGCC and CPP, were formed (Morrison, 2004). Minorities also created their parties based on territories and ethnicities to represent the voices of their people. The Northern Peoples Party (NPP) and the Togoland Congress (TC) are two examples. Even though the whole country was in agreement to fight against colonization, representation mattered to each group, mainly because of the social stratification created by the colonial administration. The northern part of the Gold Coast, for instance, was a deprived area because the British had no interest in establishing their institutions there even though they traded in the north. Although historians have not adequately acknowledged the contribution of women to the independence movement, elite women groups, like the Native Ladies of Cape Coast (NLCC), as well as market women, played key roles in the independence process (Akurang-Parry, 2004; Johnson, 2019).

In 1954, the Gold Coast adopted a new constitution, allowing for the election of government officials through single-member constituencies, which replaced the system of appointing officials through tribal councils. The electoral process gave rise to two major parties, the UGCC and CPP. The strong supporters of the UGCC were the upper class anti-colonial male elites. Although they opposed colonialism, most of them worked in colonial institutions (Morrison, 2004). The members of the CPP, on the other hand, consisted of equally trained intellectuals who belonged to the working class. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, a well-educated activist, led the CPP. Whereas the UGCC was campaigning for Ghana's independence in the least possible time, the CPP advocated for "independence now." The CPP won twice over the UGCC and the other political parties because their policies reflected popular opinion better, and they demanded equity. In 1957, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and the CPP led Ghana to independence from the British.

As a radical socialist, Nkrumah embarked on economic projects that would allow the average Ghanaian to earn a decent living (Biney, 2008). As a Pan-Africanist, his visions transcended Ghanaian nationalism as he was dedicated to creating a united Africa. For instance, his administration built the Akosombo dam to generate electricity for Ghana, spearheaded other state-run companies, and built educational institutions in Ghana and across the

continent (Fischer, 2016). His commitment to a united Africa saw to his relentless economic and political support for African countries that had not yet achieved independence and, the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 (Asante, 2012; Berry, 1994; Biney, 2008). Although Dr. Kwame Nkrumah had great visions for Ghana and Africa as a whole, his rule threatened Ghana's democracy when he introduced the Preventive Detention Act (PDA) in 1958. Biney (2008) explains Nkrumah's one-party state:

> Nkrumah's decline into authoritarianism was marked with the introduction of the Preventive Detention Act (PDA) in 1958 and its subsequent amendments, the detention of political opponents, the non-existence of civilian groups and political bodies unaffiliated to the Nkrumah's ruling Convention People's Party (CPP), increasingly stringent security measures after 1962 and the lack of independence of the judiciary. This was followed by the inauguration of a one-party state in 1964 (p. 139).

In 1966, Ghana's military and police service, with help from the US and Britain overthrew Nkrumah's government through a coup d'état (Quaidoo, 2010; Quist-Adade, 2016). Ghana's government underwent three military regimes, characterized by political instability with no sight of democracy, until 1992 when the government reintroduced a multiparty system independent of foreign control. The 1992 constitution restored universal suffrage, assured a free and fair election, and the protection of all citizens. The return to multiparty democracy led to the formation of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the National Patriotic Party (NPP), the two major parties that currently dominate Ghana's politics (Morrison, 2004).

Although the restoration of universal suffrage in the 4th republic allowed citizens to participate in government, it was far from being a real democracy. If anything, it brought about an elite unanimity, which was missing from the first three republics (Osei, 2015). Ghanaians identify the two major political parties with two main ethnic groups; the NDC is the Ewe party and the NPP, the Ashanti party. Even though Ghana is known for having free and fair elections, the lack of recognition and representation in the rural areas from the colonial period still lingers on (Stacey, 2015). The north-south socioeconomic divide inherited from the colonial era persists (Langer, 2009). Also, the governing elites act as though they are above the law and evade calls for accountability despite paying lip service to the idea that their power comes from the electorate.

Women's involvement in politics is traditionally limited in scope. Apart from exercising their voting privileges, the furthest they can go is to

stand as candidates to be elected into office or organizers for their political affiliations during campaign seasons (Bawa & Sanyare, 2013). Bawa & Sanyare (2013) posit that in cases where women are elected into office, the tokenistic and performative nature of their positions limit their active participation in governance. Graham (1971) and Steady (2007) as cited in Bawa & Sanyare (2013), recognize the marginalization of Ghanaian women in political spaces as a reproduction of Victorian political systems, which was introduced by the British colonizers. Since homosexuality is considered a taboo and the LGBTQI+ community is criminalized in Ghana (Mohammed, 2019), there is no LGBTQI+ representation in Ghana's governance. The challenges outlined above diminishes the quality of Ghana's democracy.

Ghana's sociocultural background cannot be discussed without acknowledging the role of religion. Although Ghana is a secular country with no national religion, a critical majority of the population are either Christians or Muslims. The 2010 government census revealed that approximately 71% of Ghanaians are Christians and 18% Muslims. This implies that although politicians may not exactly practice their faith in their positions, their religious beliefs and traditions influence their ideologies and decision-making processes. The religious background of the people therefore informs their attitude towards women and the LGBTQI+ community. For instance, most believers believe that the Bible, teaching handbook for Christians states that a woman is subordinate to a man in God's order of hierarchy (Bawa, 2019). According to Kligerman (2007) and Gunda (2010), Muslims and Christians justify their homophobia and transphobia with the teachings of the Quran and Bible respectively. Politicians, on the basis of religious teachings criminalize gender-nonconforming people and sexual minorities (Gunda, 2010). Although democratic laws aim to protect the rights of individuals, they also allow the right to preserve religious norms, whether discriminatory or not (Stopler, 2003). The laws of Ghana are no different. The law, together with religious and cultural practices, perpetuate class-based discrimination against women and sex-based discrimination against the LGBTQI+ communities in Ghana.

THE CLASS-BASED MARGINALIZATION OF GHANAIAN WOMEN IN THE HISTORY OF GHANA'S DEMOCRACY.

The systematic relegation of women in public life started during the colonial era. Women lost their political, economic, and social power when colonial institutions displaced traditional democratic institutions (Abass & Doskaya, 2017). Initially, the colonial administration excluded both men and women from colonial administrative duties, but the colonizers had to employ

the locals since they did not have enough European staff (Abass &Doskaya,2017). Oppong et al. (1975) as cited in Abass & Doskaya (2017) posit that local men were chosen over local women because colonial systems were heavily patriarchal. To make them productive in their colonial jobs, men received western education, allowing them to eventually gain political power and elite status (Abass & Doskaya, 2017). On the other hand, the colonialist objectified local women (Sutherland-Addy & Diaw, 2005). The few women who had the opportunity to attend school learned subjects, like home management, typing, and note-taking, because the colonial administration saw women as homemakers or secretaries. The imposition of religion also played a major part in the relegation of women. Christian missionaries preached to married women that submission to their husbands in the home was the accepted way to live (Yita & Dako, 2012). Women from matriarchal societies, like the Ashantis, suffered the most under the European and religious patriarchy. This form of institution insinuated that men were the leaders of the home, and by default, should own and control property (Manuh, 1997; Yita & Dako, 2012).

A few women, however, managed to obtain higher education, just like their male counterparts. These literate women formed social movements to demand equality under the law (Abass & Doskaya, 2017). The most popular elite women's group was the NLCC (Akurang-Parry, 2004). According to Akurang-Parry (2004), They corresponded with other women-led social groups, especially Anti-colonialist Afro-European women groups, to cause change (Abass & Doskaya, 2017; Denzer, 1987). Their main goal was to carve a niche for women in the colonial government that systematically excluded them from governmental decisions. They also sought to be the political mouthpiece of all women, especially in the southern part of the country. Drawing from solidarity systems that existed before colonial rule, elite women and market women held community meetings that allowed women to contribute to public deliberations (Akurang-Parry, 2004).

Although these women wanted a good life for all women, social stratification was prevalent. First, these elite women were from affluent and influential homes (Akurang-Parry, 2004). Also, the elites lead the movements, making it easier for them to discard traditional practices that offended their western-educated sensitivities. Again, women in other parts of the country, especially in the Northern part of the country, were excluded from the women's movement. Due to this, representation was a little questionable. Undeniably, the social, political, and economic climate at that time was not in favor of women, and so these elite women may have been doing what they thought was best for every woman. Though not popularly

recognized, elite women also played significant parts in Ghana's independence process (Abass & Doskaya, 2017).

Admittedly, there has been a significant increase in the number of women who have attained paid jobs in the civil service since independence; however, there is still a lack of representation and inclusion in the political offices (Sossou, 2011). There have been many interventions aimed at achieving gender equality in public institutions. For instance, the Girls' Education Unit was established in 1997 to ensure that girls are enrolled in basic schools and take care of matters relating to girls' education (Bardley, 2000). There have also been women empowerment interventions from international bodies; the SDG No Poverty Project (UNDP, 2020) is a typical example. Despite all of these interventions, women have not attained parity due to patriarchal and discriminatory practices that are deeply ingrained in key institutions since Ghana's independence. Most of these interventions provide solutions without addressing the root causes of women's marginalization. Sossou (2011) writes:

> To overcome the institutionalized power relations and bring about total transformation in the system, actual processes of empowerment have to occur at several levels. The empowerment process must challenge and change the of ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and practices in gender relations; in institutions and structures such as family, the household, the villages, the marketplaces, and the churches; and in the local communities (p. 8).

In the quote, Sossou notes that some social and institutional practices and beliefs makes it difficult for interventions to empower women to succeed. For instance, both women and men would choose a male president over a female president because, culturally and socially, some Ghanaians consider men to be better leaders than women (Sossou, 2011). In the summer of 2019, at the *Women Deliver 2019 Conference* held in Canada, the current President of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, said that Ghanaian women are not dynamic enough to obtain better leadership positions. He went on to say that the female representatives in his cabinet lack dynamism and activism (The Charleston Chronicle, 2019). Such beliefs are holding back the career advancement of women.

The percentage of female representatives in parliament is 13.5%, and the percentage of women in the labor force, both private and public, is about 67% of the female abled adult population (Dzradosi et al., 2018). Although the percentage of female representatives in government is relatively insignificant, it is an increment from the previous government. The issue,

however, is the extent to which these women effectively advocate for all women in governmental spaces. First, these women representatives are educated, wealthy, abled, heterosexual elite women (Sossou, 2011). Most of them have not experienced the lives of working-class women, transgender women, lesbians, bisexual women, and disabled women - who have been deprived of basic human rights - so rather than being the mouthpiece of all women, they conspire with their fellow parliamentarians to fulfill their political agendas. Consequently, female representation does not translate into inclusive governance since the experiences of women from different contexts do not reflect in policies. Considering the history of women's marginalization, representation and affirmative action are not enough; they do not create value. For Ghana to become a real democracy, the political leaders need to dismantle the patriarchal system and rebuild it in a truly inclusive way that centers the voices of marginalized women.

THE SEX AND GENDER BASED MARGINALIZATION OF LGBTQI+ COMMUNITIES.

Ghanaians started debating LGBTQI+ rights seriously and publicly in 2006 when the Gay and Lesbian Association of Ghana attempted to hold a national conference to advocate for their rights (Baisley, 2015). Homosexuality is a criminal offense under Ghana's 1960 Criminal Code. Chapter 6, Section 104 of the Criminal Code considers LGBTQI+ sexual orientations as unnatural and is in the same classification as bestiality (Solace Brothers Foundation, 2015). The law enforcement community prosecutes members of the LGBTQI+ community under this section of the criminal code with some regularity. Many Ghanaians approached the conversation from a moral perspective rather than a human rights perspective. Opponents of LGBTQI+ members consider them as sexual deviants who engage in unnatural sexual activities. Leading opponents of the conference were religious leaders and the former president. Opponents labeled sexual minorities as mentally ill, animals, and deviants, which allows them to advocate for denying their basic human rights (Baisley, 2015). Some of the religious leaders even offered to cure non-heterosexuals and transgenders from mental and spiritual illnesses.

Another inhumane argument made by opponents is that non-heterosexuality is "unghanaian" and that it is a form of western imposition (Essien & Aderinto, 2009). In 2011, the former president of Ghana, John Evans Atta-Mills, warned Ghanaians to desist from such immoral acts because it is not part of Ghanaian culture and traditions (Baisley, 2015). The current president of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, declared in an interview with

Aljazeera that the country has no intention to legally protect sexual minorities and gender expansive people, and assured religious leaders that it will not happen under his watch (Duffy, 2018). Proponents of LGBTQI+ rights rejected such characterization and offered multiple examples to show that non-heterosexuality is indigenous to African societies. Alimi (2015) stated that most African cultures embraced homosexuality and sexual diversity in pre-colonial Africa. He stressed that in the Northern part of Nigeria, the term *"yan daudu"* is used to describe effeminate men who were partners to other men. The Nzema people, who are part of the Akan clan, held ceremonies for same-sex marriages in pre-colonial Africa (Evaristo, 2014). The intolerance of the identities of sexual minorities rather, on the contrary, is a colonial import (Nyeck & Epprecht, 2013).

Britain, Ghana's colonizer, criminalized homosexuality and transsexuality from the 16th century through the 20th century (Whipple, 2012). More so, the two dominant religions in Ghana Islam and Christianity perpetuates transphobia and homophobia since the bible and Qur'an explicitly condemn the identities of sexual minorities. Furthermore, given the willingness of the same leaders to adopt western religious practices, it is hypocritical for them to deny the human rights of their fellow citizens on the grounds that their sexual orientation and gender identities are foreign. Debating the humanity and basic rights of LGBTQI+ people only depicts the extent to which Ghanaian democracy preserves the status of heterosexuals and cisnormative people.

In the quest to legitimize the rights of sexual minorities in Ghana, proponents argued that people do not choose their sexuality. They likened the persecution of sexual minorities to that of slaves and people with disabilities (Baisley, 2015). In a 2011 debate, advocates equipped that the inability of Ghanaians to accept that denying sexual minorities of their human rights is dehumanizing suggests that they did not learn anything from the history of the slave trade (Baisley, 2015). The advocates suggested that homosexuality and transsexuality are human defects similar to a disability, making sexual minorities deserving of the same human treatment given to people with disabilities (Baisley, 2015). Proponents framed their arguments using dramatic analogies, hoping that it may resonate with the Ghanaian public (Baisley, 2015). Agreeably, sexual orientation is not a choice, but comparing it to slavery and disability wrongly appropriated the generational trauma of people whose ancestors were enslaved and demeaned people with disabilities. Sexual minorities deserve equal rights just like every human being; however, obtaining their rights does not have to lead to the dehumanization of other oppressed minorities.

The systemic denial of non-heterosexual rights explains the country's unwillingness to provide appropriate sex education and healthcare for sexual minorities. As of 2017, 17% of documented cases of HIV infections in Ghana were men who have sex with men (Kushwaha et al., 2017). The laws of Ghana refusing to protect sexual minorities exposes them to violence, abuse, and discrimination from the public. Because Ghanaians continue to treat homosexuality, transsexuality and gender expansiveness as moral issues, they blame the victim of such hate crimes and fail to prevent them from occurring (Keifer, 2016). In the Ghanaian society, coming out to family and friends may expose sexual minorities to mental health deterioration, homelessness, and economic hardship due to ostracization. Some gender expansive people and sexual minorities are forced to self-stigmatize themselves in an attempt to escape rejection in cisheteronormative societies. (Keifer, 2016). Some members in the LGBTQI+ community are in heterosexual relationships and participate in homophobic mainstream cultures due to societal conditioning and the fear of being disowned. Social exclusion in Ghana prevents sexual minorities and gender expansive people from living to their full potentials. As a result, LGBTQI+ members seek asylum in countries that recognize their rights.

In the debate of LGBTQI+ rights in Ghana, foreign interventions have threatened to cut off the foreign aid Ghana receives if Ghanaian laws are not adjusted to protect them (Baisley, 2015). Although it can be seen as a way to pressurize the Ghanaian government to accept them, it can also be observed that the focus has shifted from the humanity of LGBTQI+ members. Instrumentalization of humans is deeply problematic to the human lives at stake and society as a whole. Not only does the instrumentalization of minority groups dehumanize their existence, it also inhibits their ability to explore their capabilities.

Amidst all the systemic discrimination sexual minorities face, they have been able to create safe spaces for themselves. Associations, like the LGBT+ Rights Ghana and the LGB gathering (Derby et al., 2020) continue to organize both online and offline to create a safe space their members in the best possible way. Together with other equal rights allies, they educate Ghanaians through social media, dialogue sessions, and other informative programs. This form of resistance to social pressures shows the self-determination of the LGBTQI+ community to claim and demand their rights in a democracy that intentionally excludes them.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Soka Education or value-creating education, at its core, is a social justice project. Though there is no universally accepted definition of social justice (Bogotch, 2002), some of its widely accepted principles focus on dismantling institutions that actively participate in any form of ostracism (Gewirtz, 1998; Theoharis, 2007). The founder of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was an activist who denounced the militarization of education and the lack of care in Japanese schools. He believed that education should allow students to develop their full potential because it would help them contribute to the development of their locality and the world at large. His advocacy for value-creating education and opposition to the militarization of the Japanese education system and society was fundamental since the Japanese culture was extremely conservative at that time (Ikeda, 2018). The Japanese government imprisoned him for his anti-war views and commitment to value creation in education, but he died in prison instead of recanting his beliefs (Ikeda, 2018). The lesson here is that Makiguchi put his life on the line in criticizing the oppressive structures of the Japanese government in his time. Although his context was different, he demonstrated how adherents to Soka education principles ought to challenge oppressive systems, including oppressive liberal democratic systems. Liberal democracy in Ghana promised to cater to the needs of all people, but it failed to be inclusive from the onset. Ghanaians need to oppose the existing liberal democratic regime in the country – a fallacy as it stands – to ensure that it becomes more inclusive of women, gender non-conforming people and sexual minorities. Projection of the voices of oppressed minorities is an initial step to dismantling the status quo, which is deeply rooted in bigotry and discrimination. On the intricate relationship between human rights and democracy, Landman (2018) states that:

> Democracy and human rights are grounded in the shared principles of accountability, individual liberty, integrity, fair and equal representation, inclusion and participation, and non-violent solutions to conflict (p. 49).

According to Landman (2018) and Kirchschlaeger (2014), since human rights protect the rights of every human being and transcends national laws, it the responsibility of a liberally democratic nation to prevent the violation of such laws. Kirchschlaeger (2014) posits that fundamentally, human rights reflect the simultaneous intersections of political, moral and legal rights. Koch (2005), Landman & Cavalho (2009) and Landman & Kersten (2016 as cited in Landman 2018) emphasize that in order to fulfill human rights, the state is required to be intentional about investing in and implementing policies for the

radical comprehension of human rights. Human rights education is critical in overcoming the reductive and simplistic idea of democracy and, in empowering oppressed minorities to defend their rights (kirchschlaeger, 2014).

From its beginning, Soka education, as a social justice movement, focused on recognizing the inherent dignity of each individual and helping them manifest their humanity. It placed a premium on human qualities, such as compassion, wisdom, and care for oneself and others. Additionally, other principles that are essential in achieving social justice, include "respect, care, recognition and empathy" (Theoharis, 2007; p. 223). An individual who manifest these social justice qualities in their daily lives gears towards global citizenship.

Makiguchi's global village analogy captured his view of global citizenship. He argued that a global citizen is someone who, despite having firm roots in their local community, is able to understand how people in other parts of the world support his or her existence (Makiguchi, 2002). Makiguchi reasoned that we will be able to treat each other with respect and care when we recognize the interconnectedness of our lives (Makiguchi, 2002). He asserted that instead of Japan focusing on teaching the administrative compositions of the country, teachers should teach students about the essential features of the world, the people that live in it, the potentials and complications that exist in the world (Armstrong & Martin, 2000).

As difficult as it is to define, global citizenship views individuals as inhabitants of the world, who encourage diversity rooted in ethics and emphasize on the significance of humanity (Dower & Williams, 2002). Brecher et al. (1993) point out the complexities of global citizenship by stressing on the existing world order and social stratifications. They explain that global citizenship can further aggravate marginalization if approaches to make the world a global community are based on top-down dominant methods. In the quest to decolonize oppressive systems, embrace diversity, achieve integration, restore justice and advance human solidarity, global citizenship must aim to amplify the voices of marginalized people. Global citizens should recognize that they are not truly free until everyone else, especially oppressed people are free. Recognizing that every individual's voice matters and providing respectable and meaningful help to marginalized people are key in fostering global citizenship. In his 1996 speech at Teachers College Columbia, Daisaku Ikeda stated three embodiments of global citizenship. He stated as follows:

- The wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living.

- The courage not to fear or deny difference, but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures, and to grow from encounters with them.
- The compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places.

Taking a stand against oppression automatically means fighting against a system that perpetuates injustices around the world. Global citizens must examine their positionality in systems that foster and thrive on injustices. Global citizens who belong to the numerical majority in a society automatically enjoy benefits from unjust systems explicitly and implicitly. For instance, because heterosexuality is considered the standard sexual orientation, heterosexuals benefit from societal acceptance like healthcare systems and legal protection. Reevaluating one's positionality will enable them to have a critical sense of their role in creating a just world.

It is also important to be well abreast with global issues and news concerning marginalized people around the world. The internet provides access to resources, ranging from queer and feminist theories, to blogs and videos that have been curated by women and the LGBT+ community in Ghana. Reading, watching and engaging widely with these resources wide will enable people to gain an insight on exactly how power dynamics work to discredit the lives of marginalized people. There are respective women's right and LGBTQI organizations that work both online and offline to create social change in Ghana. A typical example is Marie Stopes International, a healthcare organization that offers contraception and safe abortion services to Ghanaian women in deprived areas. Global citizens need to proactively search for and support such organizations. The use of social media is also a way to enhance solidarity and global citizenship; through spreading awareness, joining campaigns and sharing the stories of marginalized people Mehra et al., 2004). Makiguchi (1989) in their book *Education for Creative Living, Ideas and Proposals of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi* state that:

> "If education is to achieve its purpose of fostering the abilities of students to create value toward the well-being of all of society as well as themselves, it must diversify its efforts into three methodological areas: the nurturing of virtue, of benefit, and beauty. Each constitutes but one side of the complete human personality, this kind of threefold education is a necessity" (P. 50).

It is important not to limit education to the classroom. Education in its broader context occurs everywhere and is never-ending. Human rights denial of

oppressed minorities inhibits the development of potentials of all human beings. A truly democratic society fosters an environment that allows its members to explore their potentials with emphasis on these three elements or similar contextual ones. The happiness and freedom of each member of a society is the happiness of all of society. Conventionalism as it stands now stifles the growth process of oppressed minorities, therefore, inhibiting their ability to contribute creatively and fully to their societies. In Ghana, women, gender expansive people and sexual minorities are forced to conform to a system that actively excludes their humanity. This lack of empathy silences the voices of these minority groups and ultimately, inhibits them from fully actualizing their potential. To create value, education should lead human beings into recognizing their full potentials (Heffron, 2018). Structures including so-called democratic ones does the complete opposite by upholding systems that thrive on conformity. In a bigger context, these structures even stifle the personal development of the people who defend them because it facilitates narrowmindedness.

Makiguchi advocated for the use of community epistemologies and lived experiences of students to foster empowerment (Gebert, 2009; Gebert & Goulah, 2009). He believed that children, through the knowledge rooted in their lived experiences are already empowered. In her empowerment analogy at TedxSussexUni in 2019, Kelechi Okafor shared a story of her time in a Special Forces Program in South Africa. She shared that she and other trainees were made to run up a hill with heavy backpacks in a chilly weather to spend the night on top of the hill. She asserted that they slept through the cold with their backpacks as their pillows and were only told that everything they needed for the night were in their backpacks. She concluded by comparing the backpack to the untapped power people have in real life. Living in oppressive systems, where survival is the order of the day, sometimes distracts people from the power they have. For this very reason, it is important to recognize and respect the lived experiences of marginalized people before anything else. Practitioners of Soka Education need to recognize that it is their responsibility to foster humane environments for themselves and all human beings they come into contact with, not because of personal benefits but because that's the human thing to do. In Ghana, in the quest to support women, sexual minorities and gender non-conforming people, all collaborative efforts should actively and intentionally focus specifically on these groups. Although they are constantly dehumanized, oppressed minorities continue to display their resistance simply by providing safe spaces and taking the burden to educate the public about why their

humanity matters. It is salient, therefore, to acknowledge the resistance of oppressed groups and center their voices in all collaborative efforts.

While it may take a while for Ghana's so-called democratic system and traditions to be decolonized, Soka educators as global citizens can and should aim to collaborate with the oppressed minority to provide them with the support they need to make their lives a little less easier. Some ways to do that can be sharing fundamental resources; facilitating safe healthcare environments for marginalized women, sexual minorities and gender-expansive people; Spreading awareness and educating the public by participating in active campaigns both online and offline. Because democratic systems benefit the majority, allies can use their privilege to advocate for the rights of the oppressed. Global allies can be the bridge that links gender expansive people, sexual minorities and marginalized women to opportunities worldwide. Daily interventions, as little as creating safe spaces for members of the LGBTQI+ communities and marginalized women in public can go a long way to create change (Solodiuk, 2016). Active participation in campaigns and protests organized by minority-led leads can also be a way to advocate for the rights of minorities. Global allies can also help fight injustice by donating to LGBTQI+ communities and marginalized women. Soka education as a way of life means prioritizing the dignity of life in every given circumstance.

This paper has explored the paradoxes of democracy; particularly, how it promotes the exclusion and marginalization of women and the LGBTQI+ community in Ghana. It has also explained the democratization process of Ghana post-independence, which was heavily influenced by the British democratic system. The paper has identified two particular groups that are severely marginalized by Ghana's current democratic system; women and the LGBTQI+ community. Finally, this paper has discussed how Soka education as a social justice movement, through the principles of global citizenship and empowerment can help support marginalized women and the LGBTQI+ communities in Ghana.

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