**Women and Anti-Colonialism in Africa**

# – Module Lesson Plan

This module is part of the History for the 21st Century project (H/21). The primary mission of H/21 is to create resources that make the latest knowledge in world history topics accessible to a diverse student body at the introductory level and to support university and college teachers with best practices in inquiry-based learning. You can find out more about H/21 by visiting [www.history21.com](http://www.history21.com).

**Module Overview**

This module introduces students to the intersection of gender and resistance to settler colonialism in Africa in the decades after WWII. It focuses on three case studies from across the continent, one from North Africa, East Africa, and South Africa, and the roles of individual women who were instrumental in their nation’s anti-colonial movements during the 1950s and 1960s. These women are Zohra Drif of Algeria, Wambui Waiyaiki Otienno of Kenya, and Miriam Makeba of South Africa.

When people think about revolutionaries who led anti-colonial movements in Africa after WWII, they typically think of men like Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, and Nelson Mandela. However, as students will learn, women not only participated in anti-colonial resistance movements, they performed essential roles that men could not due to assumptions about their sex and gender. Across the module, students will explore the following key questions:

* How was settler colonialism in Africa shaped by ideas about gender and sex?
* How did women like Zohra Drif, Wambui Waiyaki Otieno, and Miriam Makeba use ideas about gender and sex to support anti-colonial movements in Africa?

Students will begin by examining ideas about sex and gender in European colonialism, followed by focused lessons that draw on memoirs and multimedia primary sources (film, video, and music) to examine the roles and strategies of Drif, Otieno, and Makeba. In doing so, they will consider how these rebel women exploited colonial stereotypes about sex and gender to advance their respective resistance movements.

**Learning Goals**

By the end of this module students should have gained both content knowledge and skill-building practice through engagement with textual readings and primary sources, as well as a range of multimedia visual sources and class activities. By the end of the module, students should be able to:

* Define settler colonialism as a concept and process and apply it to specific contexts, namely the three case studies highlighted in this module: Algeria, Kenya, and South Africa.
* Describe how European and African understandings of sex, gender, and culture informed the history of colonialism and anti-colonial resistance in Africa.
* Identify and analyze the ways the women featured in this module (Drif, Otieno, and Makeba) exploited colonial stereotypes about sex and gender to advance anti-colonial movements.
* Analyze primary sources—including texts, film, videos, and musical performances—for information about how women used ideas about sex, gender, and culture to participate in postwar anti-colonial resistance.

The module consists of five lessons, to be completed over two weeks. Included in each lesson are brief introductory readings, primary sources, suggested discussion activities, guides for leading discussions, starter slide decks with images for in-class presentations, and suggested final assessments to accompany this module.

Students should come to class each day having finished the introductory reading for that day’s lesson. The instructor may spend a few minutes at the start of class each day reviewing the introductory reading with the class. However, the majority of each class meeting will be devoted to doing a primary source analysis (reading, analyzing, and discussing selections of memoirs by women who fought against settler colonialism) and in-class exercises (analyzing videos related to the intersection of gender and resistance to settler colonialism in Africa). Instructors may have their students do this work in small groups, as a whole class, or in some combination. Feel free to adapt the materials to suit your needs. If you want to share an adaptation you found particularly successful, or have a suggestion for a revision or update, feel free to contact the folks at *History for the 21st Century* so they can share it with others.

**Module Map**

**Module Prelude**

Prior to starting the module, students are suggested to do a “free write” to help identify what ideas they have about resistance to colonialism in Africa, who they imagine participating, and how. This prelude provides an artifact for students to reflect back on, as they learn more in each of the module’s lessons.

**Lesson 1: Introduction**

The first lesson of this module begins by introducing students to European settler colonialism and ideas about sex and gender in the colonial context. Students closely analyze European advertisements to see how they represented the colonial project and ideas about sex and gender.

**Lesson 2: Algeria**

Lesson two covers resistance to colonialism in Algeria and examines the story of Zohra Drif, one of several women who participated in bombings in the city of Algiers. Students analyze her memoir to help them identify the stereotypes French colonists had of women, and the ways Drif used these to conduct her work for the resistance. In addition, students compare Drif’s memoir to the portrayal of her work through an analysis of the film *The Battle of Algiers.*

**Lesson 3: Kenya**

The next lesson focuses on Kenya and the Mau Mau resistance to British colonialism. Using a series of British newsreels and the memoir of Wambui Otieno, the lesson considers the stereotypes held by both the British and their African allies of Kenyan women and Mau Mau rebels. Students analyze the ways Otieno used these stereotypes to support resistance fighters, and compare these to the case of Algeria, covered in the prior lesson.

**Lesson 4: South Africa**

Lesson four turns to South Africa and famous singer Miriam Makeba. Students learn about her exile from South Africa and life abroad, and use her memoir and performances to consider how her race, sex, gender, and age intersected to shape the ways she was viewed in the “West.” The lesson explores how she leveraged these perceptions, and aspects of celebrity, artistry, and media to resist the Apartheid regime from abroad, and compare her work to the prior case-studies.

**Lesson 5: Conclusion**

Lesson five revisits the key ideas explored in the module, asking students to compare the stereotypes each of these three women were subjected to, how they used them in their work, and their contributions to anti-colonial resistance movements. In addition, students look back at their initial “free write” and reflect on how their understandings of resistance movements in Africa may have changed. The module concludes with two options for final assessments, that aim to encourage students to further reflect on what they’ve learned to date.