



# Women Political Leaders in Rwanda and South Africa: Narratives of Triumph and Loss

*Naleli Morojele*

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The book is an exploration of the complexities of women's leadership in post-conflict Rwanda and South Africa. Through interviews with women who held political leadership positions in these countries, the book examines their educational, professional, activist, and personal backgrounds. It weaves a link between the complicated relationship between personal stories and the history of the societies these women came from, and eventually led. Rwanda and South Africa have amongst the highest representation levels of women in national legislatures in the world. Consequently, the recent literature on women and politics in these countries mostly focuses on women parliamentarians only. However, there is a need to examine the nuances of women's political leadership, amongst and beyond parliamentarians. To this end, narratives were collected from eleven semi-structured interviews with women political leaders in Rwanda and South Africa. These narratives suggest new insights in the area of women and politics in these countries. Firstly, early life experiences influence their political priorities as leaders. Secondly, in relation to ordinary women, women political leaders are an educationally and professionally advantaged group of women. Thirdly, their experiences and positions within society and politics are still greatly influenced by their gender, and gender inequality. Lastly, their leadership is influenced by numerous factors, which ultimately affects the impact of their presence. In light of this, their experiences show that women political leaders are still affected by their gendered status within society, thus affecting the contributions that they are able to make in rebuilding their societies. [Subject: Gender Studies, African Studies, Politics, Sociology]

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