“Representation is a meaningful end in itself. But in the public sector context, women’s representation matters even more on essential issues such as child mortality, education, nutrition, and productivity.

That’s why I am committed to supporting women as agents of change, makers of peace, and drivers of progress.”

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
The Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Presidential Center for Women and Development

The Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Presidential Center for Women and Development was founded in 2018 to be a catalyst for political and social change across Africa by helping unleash its most abundant latent power — its women.

The EJS Center aims to amplify the voice of women and girls in all spheres of life by increasing the representation of women in public service leadership roles in Africa. Through a unique blend of programming, advocacy, archival research and museum exhibitions, the EJS Center seeks to become a premier institution dedicated to advancing and sustaining women’s political and social development on the continent.

Through its work, the EJS Center envisions more voices heard, talents unleashed, and leaders launched that prioritize the aspirations of women. Its mission is to champion women’s ascension to the highest levels of leadership and challenge systemic barriers to girls’ and women’s advancement.

As the first democratically elected woman president in Africa, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf led Liberia from 2006-2018. Having been recognized internationally for her leadership, she is passionate about supporting the next generation of women in public life across the continent.

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Amujae Initiative Activities

Leadership Development:
The EJS Center hosts the Amujae Leadership Forums, a yearly cycle of forums facilitating ongoing coaching and mentoring of leaders. Participants in the Leadership Forums are African women of proven talent already on a public leadership journey, with a track record of excellence and of supporting their fellow women.

Advocacy:
The EJS Center advocates for and helps to establish a sustainable environment for women in public leadership. This takes place through traditional and digital media campaigns, gender sensitivity training for journalists, and media training for Amujae Leaders.

Thought Leadership:
The EJS Center is a leading voice in challenging the state of women’s participation in public life in Africa.

To this end, the EJS Center produces and promotes evidence-based research on women in leadership and the challenges they face.

Storytelling:
The EJS Center documents the stories of the Amujae Leaders and other women in public life to improve the public’s awareness of the challenges faced by women in public leadership and highlight their successes.

Former Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, alongside EJS Center board member Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Amujae Leader and Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, and Amujae Leader Oley Dibba-Wadda (left), Amujae Leaders Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, Blen A. Sahilu, Dr. Zanetor Agyeeman-Rawlings, and Kula Fofana with EJS Center Director of Leadership Programs Rumbidzai Chisenga (center), and Amujae Leaders Hadiza Bala Usman and Dr. Jumoke Oduwole with EJS Center Director of Leadership Programs Rumbidzai Chisenga.

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The inaugural Amujae Leadership Forum held in March 2020 brought together the first cohort of Amujae Leaders, representing eight countries and four regions of the continent. Drawn from a diverse range of personal and professional backgrounds, the cohort has similar track records of demonstrable achievements in public life and a common drive to uplift African women and girls.

The forum was designed to equip the women with the tools and confidence required to unabashedly seek the highest levels of public leadership and empower the next generation of leaders to rise with them.

The Amujae Leaders were supported by coaches that included President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President Joyce Banda (former President of the Republic of Malawi), President Catherine Samba-Panza (former Interim President of Central African Republic), and Dr. Thelma Awori (Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Liberia to Uganda).

The forum took place just as African countries began to record their first cases of COVID-19. In response to the changing circumstances, the forum incorporated a focus on leadership in times of crisis.

Overall, the forum gave the Amujae Leaders an opportunity to reflect on their values and aspirations and build networks to enable the advancement of themselves and other women.

“I now have a sister in every corner of the continent.”

("We have been given the very special chance to meet, be connected, stay connected, and support each other."
Inaugural Cohort of Amujae Leaders (Class of 2020)

“My biggest takeaway or ‘aha moment’... was the moment I realized I was surrounded by the future leaders of my continent. And that we have a chance to build friendships that can change how things are done.”

- Amujae Leader reflecting on the inaugural forum

Get Involved

The EJS Center welcomes individual and institutional contributions to support the Amujae Initiative as well as the EJS Center’s other programs and activities. Donations to the EJS Center go directly towards running our programs to help increase the representation of women in leadership roles and public service across Africa.

If you would like to contribute or learn about other ways to support our work, please get in touch at info@ejscenter.org.

info@ejscenter.org