

**PATRIARCHY AND WOMEN UNDER-REPRESENTATION IN NIGERIA:
A CASE STUDY OF BUCHI EMECHETA'S *THE JOYS OF
MOTHERHOOD*, AND NGOZI CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE'S *PURPLE
HIBISCUS* AS LENS INTO THE LIVE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN**

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ABSTRACT

*Marginalization of one or another group is a pervasive reality in Nigeria. It is most pronounced now in the Niger Delta region where hitherto restive youths have resorted to militancy to claim what they believe the Nigerian state in collaboration with some multinational companies have denied them for the past six decades. Yet, a marginalization in the form of under-representation, which is the lot of the generality of women in Nigeria, is hardly ever mentioned, or at best glossed over. This paper aimed at exploring, through both historical and political analysis women's experience of marginalization in the form of under-representation in Nigeria. This analysis will be screened through the analytical presentation of the lens provided by the literary world of women in *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Purple Hibiscus*. As a way forward, the study recommended amidst others Appeal and lobbying for implementation of extant laws (local and international) which are favorable to women's objective as well as education of the female children.*

Keywords: *Marginalization, patriarchy, under-representation, motherhood*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has always experienced turmoil of one kind or the other. The struggle for independence (without much shedding of blood), the political turmoil caused by ethnocentricity that prevailed and which consequently led to the Civil War, the subsequent decadence of military rule with its concomitant declarations of state of emergencies; devaluation of the naira, which has affected the Nigerian economy in irreparable ways, and others too numerous to mention here. Like the turmoils mentioned here and those not mentioned, is the under-representation of women in Nigeria in terms of their numerical presence and acceptance by their male counterparts in active politics, religion, science, and even the arts, and other areas of human endeavor and relationship. A yet bigger problem faced by women is the sociological perception that determines the mode of relationship or exchange they can have with or from their male counterparts. Such perceptions can be summed up in a friend's assertion that, whatever certificate a woman earns is put to use only in the kitchen and in bearing and caring for children.

This paper aim is to see if there is a point of agreement among the three aspects - historical, political and literary represented in Nigeria.

NIGERIA: A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Nigeria (through the instrumentality of colonialism and the desire on the part of her previously self-imposed overseer, Britain, to divest itself of its developing economic and political responsibility in the North and South of Nigeria) became an independent nation of coerced incongruent entities in 1960. However, the incongruent nature of her diverse ethnic groups and peoples, which had not been properly studied, harnessed, and then encouraged into a union of the willing, quickly faced her litmus test of nationhood with the ensuing rigging of the inaugural election of 1965 (Minna Song), within barely five years as a nation. Following this were concurrent coups and counter coups, punctuated by the strenuous Second Republic under Shehu Shagari, through the economic-grinding, corruption-certifying, and longest military rule of Ibrahim Babangida, to the controversial Interim National Government under Ernest Shonekan, to the current scathing but hopeful Fourth Republic since 1999.

This Fourth Republic beginning with Olusegun Obasanjo has the record of the longest period of civil rule under democratic dispensations. An interesting fact is that throughout our history to date, just a handful of women have had any impact on Nigeria. The Fourth Republic of 1999 to 2008, which has had the highest number of women politicians and politically appointed women, still has less than one woman to fifteen men in the National Assembly. The state assemblies are not faring any better in terms of the ratio of women to men in the hallowed chambers. Currently, of the 109 senators at the Senate, only 8 are women; of 365 honorable members of the National House of Representatives, only 26 are women (National Assembly Online). It is note worthy that those women, in spite of their individual and collective role to bring about change for the better in Nigeria, are hardly represented by a favorable number in the political terrain.

In the pre-colonial times, women contributed to the development of the various ethnic groups that would later form Nigeria. Women did this not just as mothers and wives taking care of both husbands and children, but also as co-workers with their husbands and children on the farms, helping to ensure bumper harvest that the family could rely on especially in the periods of famine (Effah Attoe). Women were involved in fish drying in the coastal areas of Calabar, Oron, and other parts of pre-colonial Nigeria. They were also involved in the processing of cassava to make garri. As a result of their involvement in trade with other communities, either directly or through their children as was the case in most northern areas where women have been kept in purdah, they had access to income that they could use in procuring other items needed in the home or for personal use. They were also involved in providing medical aids for their families, especially their children, since there were hardly any centralized health centers at the time, apart from traditional medicine homes, which were resulted to where medical cases became critical. In terms of religion, women were involved in singing, dancing, and intercessions for their communities, as a number of the deities were immortal women, such as Idoto, Orunmilla, and other goddesses - particularly fertility goddesses, earth goddesses, and river goddesses such as those already mentioned.

Women's role in the politics of pre-colonial Nigeria was outstanding. A clear example is the founding of the modern city of Zaria in the 16th century by a woman, Queen Bakwa Turuku (Effah Attoe). She was succeeded by the renowned Amina, who built walls to protect the city of Zaria and then extended its influence and boundary beyond Bauchi, and commanded tributes from Kano and Katsina. We find such equally influential women in ancient Yoruba domain in the group of the ladies of the palace who assisted the oba in administration and making critical decisions which governed and protected the people. The story is the same with the influence of Emotan in the Empire of Benin. Women's influence in pre-colonial Nigerian politics was so effective that should a naked woman sit in the throne of the king in Onitsha, he would be dethroned (Aje-Ori Agbese). Collectives (associations formed on the basis of being members of the same religion, ethnic group, or family, which basically comprised of women) had political as well as religious influence in pre-colonial Nigeria. For Agbese, these collectives were the earliest forms of women's movement in Nigeria. The impact of collectives could be seen in cases where abusive husbands were prevented from physically harming their wives and were duly punished wherever they had succeeded in abusing their wives. In some areas of Nigeria, such domestic violence was punished by tying the culprit's hands and feet and causing him to roll down a rocky hill.

In the colonial times, collectives were instrumental to the famous Aba Women's Riot of 1929, where market women and house wives in especially Owerri and Calabar were uncomfortable with the likelihood that the head count in the eastern part of the country could result in heavy taxation of their palm produce and other goods. This riot caused the colonialists to rescind their plan (Marissa Evans). This feat would be replicated by Egba women in Abeokuta between 1941 and 1947, when they opposed the taxation policy on and all forms of discrimination against women. The baton of women's struggle would pass to Onitsha women who in 1950 rioted to protest the establishment of the Nsula Oil Mills because of its economic implication for their trade (Edith Osiruemu). Women would formalize their movement through the collective founding of the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies (FNWS) as a mouthpiece for the collective struggle of women.

Women of postcolonial Nigeria have not derailed from the laudable objective of ensuring favorable conditions for their communities, especially from the 1980s to the present. In 1984, Ogharefe Women's uprising attacked and seized control of a U.S. oil "corporation's production site, threw off their clothes and with this curse won their demands" of financial compensation for "pollution and alienation of land" (Terisa and Oshare). Two years later (1986), Ekpan Women's uprising would act similarly but exceed their predecessors by shutting down the core of the whole region's industry and demanding for compensation for the destruction of their land, and for jobs in the oil industry for their children. Ekpan women were less successful because their men aligned with the interest of the oil industry and they did not get the needed support from their youths as was the case with Ogharefe women. Other factors for

the less success recorded by Ekpan women were what Terisa and Oshare term the complexity of "women's peasant and proletarian demands" (1993). Nevertheless, these are all proofs that women continue to play significant - though in the background and not in key position - roles in Nigerian politics.

POLITICAL IMPLICATION OF WOMEN'S HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NIGERIAN POLITY

Women have never had it easy in any political sphere or establishment such as the nations of the world including Nigeria. Women's struggle for political and social recognition and equality began in the English-speaking world with the publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792. However, it would take over a century (1893) for women to enjoy suffrage on the national level in New Zealand. The much touted "democratic leaders" in the world, America, Britain, and Canada, would grant women suffrage toward the end of World War 1 (From Grolier). Women's peripheral or non-existent political roles have always been justified on the basis that they are the weaker sex and are therefore psychologically unsuitable for "momentous affairs such as litigation, ritual, or making decision about the allocation of resources" (Michael Obot).

In spite of women's political contribution in pre-colonial Nigerian societies, in traditional Igbo society for example, women were assigned "lesser role in directing political and ritual affairs," which opened the possibility of men's constant monitoring and intruding into the secondary role and spaces assigned to women. In traditional Idoma society in central Nigeria, women were denied membership in associations involved in taking relevant decisions in society, and they were also denied the right to own lands. Obot further argues that in traditional Nigerian societies, politics was considered a "form of male bonding" (2004), which explains why pronounced and influential political positions in particular have been considered male preserves even in the Nigeria of the 21st century. He equally indicts the instrumentality employed by the colonialist as contributing to the hesitancy in assigning relevant political roles to women in Nigeria. For the colonialists sustained their hold on the colonized through the means of "military dictatorship," which clearly gave no room for dissenting opinions or any democratic process that could guarantee the rights of each individual in any given society.

Therefore, colonialism, especially in its use of indirect rule, reaffirmed (where already present) and encouraged (where it was negligible or non-existent) the force of male dominance and women's relegation in the political terrain of Nigerian society. By logical implication and in Obot's words, "postcolonial government was founded on gender-biased structures" (2004). In addition, the over 28 years of military rule and dictatorship in Nigeria did not encourage any form of democratic process, which is the sure means of ensuring equality of all before the law and in all matters of human endeavor. Hence, the under-representation of women in Nigerian politics has continued, to the extent that (as has already been mentioned on page 1 herein),

of the 109 senators at the National Senate, only 8 are women while of 365 honorable members of the National House of Representatives, only 26 are women. This national political under-representation is replicated in the 36 states of Nigeria. In 1999, only 12 women were elected into the state assemblies in sharp contrast to 978 men (Chuks Okocha). Why, in spite of women, from historical antecedents in pre-colonial, colonial and even postcolonial Nigeria, realizing the potential they have in determining the form and trend of politics in Nigeria, do they still fail to succeed in the Nigerian political terrain?

In the interview conducted by Chuk Okocha, Hon. Patricia Udogu, member House of Representatives between 2003 and 2007, and the first woman Federal parliamentarian from Imo State, listed money politics, electoral violence, and sexual discrimination and harassment as the factors militating against women excelling at or at least participating en masse in national politics.

To develop on those points further, it is easily noticeable that men, to a large extent, control the source of financial resources in Nigeria. For Udogu, money is the bane of women participating in Nigerian politics. Although they could go to banks for loans, the reality on ground that conditions placed on women for repaying loans is different from that placed on men, and another fact that god fatherism is rampant in Nigeria cause women to shy off the political terrain. The second point, electoral violence, which comes in the form of political thuggery and other aggressive gestures from members of opposite political camps, is another reason for women steering clear of politics. For, in the words of Udogu, "it is on record that most women would prefer to stay out of election and electoral issues that [sic] faces that rigours involved in such violence" (Chuks Okocha). The third point, sexual discrimination and harassment, is wide spread in Nigerian politics, and Udogu feels it is "better understood than discussed as most women have fallen victim of such antics from men." These are some of the main reasons women keep away from politics.

Therefore, it all seems there is no hope for women ever moving from under-representation in Nigerian politics to sharing equal political power and opportunities with their male counterparts. This is an idea we will come to later after an analysis of the two texts to be addressed in this paper for appreciative understanding of women's experience in the Nigerian polity. For literary works, such as the two to be analyzed here, can have immediate effect on the reader through the cathartic impact caused by vicarious experience that what the protagonists or other characters go through in the text has been experienced by someone dear to us in our community. Literature can also achieve this cathartic impact on us and even move us to the point of acting to right the wrong through its ability to articulate the nuanced experience in our community, which we may take for granted and in most cases accept as the status quo.

ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL VIEWS AND GENERAL INSIGHTS INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF NIGERIAN WOMEN PRESENTED IN THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD AND PURPLE HIBISCUS

Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* presents us with the protagonist Nnu Ego who suffers hardship, humiliation, and even rejection by all as a result of her crave for motherhood, which society has set as the only means of measuring a woman's relevance and acceptance as a human being. She fails to bear children for her first husband and only true love, Amatokwu, and is rejected. She returns to her father's home and later is married off in an arranged marriage by a proxy to Nnaife, a laundry man for white residents Dr. and Mrs. Meers in Lagos. On getting to Lagos and meeting with Nnaife for the first time, she realizes he is not the man of her dreams, but she cannot do anything about it as she is compelled by custom to be his wife and remain faithful to him. However, she is happy at the fact that Nnaife, in spite of not being her ideal man, makes her "a woman" by getting her pregnant. She attempts taking her life when she loses her first pregnancy, but is prevented from doing so by a friend of Nnaife's. She is consoled by the number of children she has later. Yet, she is not treated as an equal for Nnaife soon brings home the wife of his late brother, Adaku, and begins to treat her as his second wife. He also has a third inherited wife whom he goes to see in the village.

Toward the end, Nnu Ego realizes that she has only been used as a tool in the hands of her husband to boost his ego and that she will be discarded after she has outlived her usefulness. She dies an unhappy woman. Even her chi, to which a shrine is dedicated at her death, is blamed for the failure of her daughters-in-law to bear children. Ngozi Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* presents the experience of a mother with her children under the heavy hands of an ultra conservative Christian man and an intransigent, self-absorbed father, Mr. Eugene. She is whipped and lashed along with her children whenever Mr. Eugene feels they have done something contrary to his Christian views and practices, or that they have slightly deviated from the ideals he has set for them. She miscarriages as a result of his constant physical abuse of her. The children receive their share of their father's abuse in various ways and at various times. Their father forbids them to eat any food served them by their grandfather, who, to him, is a "heathen" and is doomed to wind up in hell at the consummation of his life on earth unless he repents.

Mama loves her family and does everything to make the marriage work, especially in all her attempts to ease the tension in the home for her children, but Eugene continues his physical and verbal abuse of her and the children. At some point, Eugene's health continues to plummet until his death when Mama reveals to her children that she had been giving him poison in small quantities.

These two texts could be argued in some quarters to be pure feminist propaganda. That is beyond the goal of this paper and is a topic for some other paper and parallel seminars that address the controversial nature of the texts. The focus here is to see how these texts correlate with the lived experiences of Nigerian women.

Connected with that is how both the textual analysis and the actual experiences of Nigerian women can, on the one hand receive appreciative understanding from the Nigerian populace, and how, on the other hand, they can both point the way forward for Nigeria as a whole, especially in terms of addressing the under-representation of women in Nigerian life.

The Joys of Motherhood serves two purposes of, like other African novels, especially *Things Fall Apart*, refuting "imperialist portrayals of Africans, and [from the feminists point of view] of responding to the objectification and marginalization of women in anti-colonial texts written by African men" (Remy Oriaku). Through the second purpose of this novel, we are able to see and appreciate the enormity of maltreatment against women in Nigeria. Nnu Ego is objectified first, by her father, Nwokocha Agbadi. He sees her in terms of what honor she can bring to him if she is married off quickly to a second husband rather than allow her around his compound until she finds a man she loves. Therefore, he is quick to arrange a marriage through a proxy for her, and is glad when she is shipped off to Lagos to be the wife of a man she had never seen before then. Nnu Ego equally fails to see the implication of such an arranged marriage, because, in her own words, she cannot face her father "and tell him that I have failed" (31), for she has been taught that the primary function of a woman is to become a mother and have as many children as possible. Where a woman fails to perform this role, she is denied recognition as a member of any African community. So, the focus shifts from shared responsibility in the affairs of the house, work on the farm, and commitment to community to a female child being told that all she needs to become a bonafide member of society is to bear children and by implication respond positively to the whims and dictates of her husband.

However, when she bears enough children to make her husband proud and has in the process worn herself out, she must be ready to accept and even commend her husband's desire to take a second wife who will attend to his base desires. This is where African culture creates room for Adaku, the young wife of Nnaife's late brother, to come into the picture. Initially, she thinks because she meets Nnaife's base desires, she qualifies to have equal share of everything with Nnu Ego; but she is soon made to realize that, though Nnaife may find her attractive and desirable, she has failed to become a complete woman in society through her failure to have male children. Therefore, all through the process, women are made to realize that they cannot be given any other relevant role in society other than that for which their biological make up has prepared them, bearing children. If the children borne by a woman happen to be female children, the restricted role they have been assigned by society is reinforced through words, actions, and the employment of forceful means to make them realize their place in the scheme of things. This Adaku realizes after the quarrel with Nnu Ego. She therefore decides that she will go to the extreme of leaving her inherited husband's home to begin life on her own as a woman of easy virtue, and bring up her daughters in a way that society will not be able to force them to share her fate. Yet, Nnu Ego has no hope of redemption in any way, for she soon gives

birth to female twins and "felt more inadequate than ever" (186), for her daughters will face the same fate as hers, and theirs may be even worse, all because they are female and not male children. She then exclaims,

After all, I was born alone, and I shall die alone. What have I gained from all this? Yes, I have many children, but what do I have to feed them on? On my life. I have to work myself to the bone to look after them, I have to give them my all. And if I am lucky enough to die in peace, I even have to give them my soul (186).

Her life has been spent in just bearing and taking care of children and their father, and she has not been allowed any other space to grow or have a say in their affairs. Not too long after this incident, Nnaife begins to express his desire to marry off his daughters to the highest paying suitors, especially a fellow Igbo man like himself. He does not consider what the girls have to say in the matter but is dreaming of the financial benefit to be had from such an enterprise. Hence, he is shocked beyond imagination when Kehinde tells him that she plans to marry a Yoruba man with whom she is in love. In all, women are considered as property and as tools for achieving men's goal of having pride and respect through the children borne to them and through women's active participation in encouraging them to attain their goals. To ensure the efficiency of this policy, women are made to understand that their primary and only significant responsibility - which also qualifies them as bonafide members of any community - is bearing and taking care of children for their husbands. When any woman desires to aspire to political position or any sense of relevance in activities outside the bearing of children, she is tagged a loose woman who is not fit to be a role model for other women or any other person in society.

So a woman only becomes relevant in her relationship with a man, a relationship that causes her to only be relevant to "the man in terms of giving him sexual pleasure or bearing and nurturing his children" (Remy Oriaku). No self-growth or development other than the role assigned women by men is allowed. They remained barred from aspiring to political offices or positions. The case is worse in *Purple Hibiscus* for the fact that Eugene sees his wife with his children as having the same level of understanding and therefore the need for him to use the big stick to keep them in line and away from tarnishing the public image he has built in the Christian community and the secular world. They must all remain solemn and not dare to clap to accompany choruses in church as he does. They must be decorous to the extreme and practice all the disciplines encouraged by Christianity. They are to have nothing to do with non-Christians including his own father who gave him life, because he happens to be in Eugene's estimation a pagan whose final destination is hell.

Eugene is the proof of the efficacy of colonialism in stifling women's participation in politics. For through the use of indirect rule men were empowered to continue the process of ruling their various principalities to the exclusion of women who had been repressed by traditional cultures (Michael Obot). Eugene becomes an epitome of the colonial past, for in his intransigent stance on the backwardness of traditional religion and way of life, and in his insistence on strict, near-unimaginable

Christian practices, he replicates the colonialists desire to sell their cultures as superior to our African inferior cultures. By implication, he gives no room for dissent in his home (just like the colonialists did to African peoples and cultures), and he insists on his way or nothing else. He does not consult with his wife in anything but takes decisions on his own, a decision he imposes on his wife with their children. To ensure nothing contrary is done, he restricts the financial capability of his wife and through that he equally controls the financial capacity of his children. Where loud voicing of feeling or reference to the Christian way of life does not cause the expected result, he turns to violence, which, for Udogu (Chuks Okocha), is an experience that causes women to shy off politics in Nigeria, knowing they cannot match their male counterparts in the act of thuggery during elections.

Mama is so oppressed that Jaja, her son, has to come to her rescue by lying to their father about anything that might lead to his confronting Mama physically. All of Mama's life and activity revolve round the home and her children. She has to ask Eugene's permission to do anything. For Mama, "a husband crowns a woman's life" (83). She does not have a life of her own other than what Eugene apportions to her. For these reasons, she remains unhappy but keeps up a smile for the children just to present some sense of sanity at home and keep them going. However, it is towards the end she reveals the fact of her poisoning Eugene in small quantities until he finally dies. Yet, she has been so traumatized and denied any means of existence outside the control of a man that it is Jaja who is able to get her to tie her scarf when she and Kambili visit him in prison.

Both novels present the domesticity of women and denial of any role in the family's life outside the home to women. For a woman to be recognized by society, she has to keep off what is presumed male terrain and lead a life of service to her children and her husband at home. Conflicts occur when the man feels his wife is attempting to break free of the role society has assigned her. Unfortunately, women do not have the power to equally dictate to their men what should be the standard practice in their relationship but have to accept whatever they are given by their husbands as the way things should be. To argue or attempt to think for themselves in any manner that deviates from the assigned space and role is tantamount to being accorded a pariah status like Adaku in *The Joys of Motherhood* or Auntie Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus*. Auntie Ifeoma is on the border line of a pariah status because she dares to live a single mother's life after the death of her husband, and does not allow herself to be restricted by the norms of society which keep women in a subservient position.

ATTEMPT AT A SYNTHESIS: POINTS OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND TEXTUAL ANALYSES

Our historical exploration has revealed that women have always been an integral part of our cultural experiences and expressions. Women's essential role in religious rites, social gatherings such as marriages, and naming ceremonies cannot be denied. In fact, fertility, earth, and river deities are mainly female goddesses.

Women have also been involved in farming and trading in traditional African societies up to date. Women have taken up the responsibility of health care providers for their families from traditional times up to the present. On the political front, women have played significant roles in decision making such as the women who assisted the Yoruba obas in coming to crucial decisions, and female rulers such as Queen Amina who expanded the boundaries of their people to cover other areas. Women have been involved in various rebellion and riots from Southern Nigeria to Eastern Nigeria to protect the economic, social, and political interests of their people. We cannot forget the indomitable character, ineffable role, and huge contributions of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, the "Lioness of Lisabi" (Wekepedia) to political activism in Nigeria.

Yet, the political reality is that women are under-represented in the National Assembly, the State Assemblies, and other legitimate forms of political representation or appointment in Nigeria. This, from the two texts analyzed, is due to the objectification of women, a situation where women become means through which men realize their own goals without any consideration for the means (women) used to arrive at the set goal. A way to ensure that women continue to play subservient roles is by the reaffirmation in society of their only function being that of bringing into the world and taking care of children for their husbands.

They are made to equate motherhood with relevance in society. This now raises the question, what then is really responsible for the under-representation of women in Nigerian politics both on the national and state levels, and equally in the various parastatals? The answer lies in how women respond to ideals set for them by society. Do women just accept their roles as wives and mothers and end up seeing themselves as unsuitable for any other thing? Do women see fellow women who struggle to rub shoulders with their male counterparts in the political terrain as counterproductives who represent womanhood falsely? While not condoning Adaku's desire to become a prostitute, it is, however, commendable that she refuses to allow herself to "be turned into a mad woman" and that she decides to do everything possible to be happy with the state of life she is about to embark on.

She realizes that "women set impossible standards for (themselves). That (they) make life intolerable for one another" (169). In other words, fellow women become the enforcers of paradigms set by men for women to live up to. The above assertion does not deny the power of men to control and determine what women do. It simply implies that, despite the up hill battle for women in the political terrain, should they come together to support their own, they might have some leverage in beginning to change the status quo. This is what women such as Udogu, Ita Giwa and others have done in the Second through the Fourth Republic, and they have thereby set an example for other women to emulate.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the history of under-representation of women in Nigerian politics, in spite of their laudable contributions toward making Nigeria a country where we can all live, the following, if properly adhered to, might serve as the way forward in salvaging the situation.

Women's United Front: Women need to come together, irrespective of their religious, economic, social, or political commitment, and work toward a united front from which they can demand a change in their being under-represented in Nigerian polity. Women have been doing this since colonial times: Aba Women's Riot and Ogharefe's Women Riot are the best examples of this. Those were epochal times when women formed a united front against unjust policies or practices and succeeded in bringing about change for the betterment of their respective communities. There is hardly any force that can counteract a united front, especially when all members of that front are resolved to see their agenda through, come sun or rain. It might definitely pay off in the end.

Appeal and Lobby for Implementation of Extant Laws: There is the most recent international extant law passed in women's favor in the Beijing Women Conference of 1995 (Beijing Platform for Action [BPFA]) where it was agreed that thirty percent ration should be reserved for women as a quota to be filled in all elective offices, particularly into parliaments (Chuks Okocha). This is a development on The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted by the United Nations on December 18, 1979. Nigeria signed the treaty in 1985, went ahead to sign the Optional Protocol in 2000, and ratified it in 2004 (Oby Nwankwo). The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria prohibits discrimination on the ground of gender. These and other extant laws are authorities that women groups can appeal to in their desire to have a sizeable number of women represented in the Nigerian polity. Nigeria has signed and ratified so many treaties that have not been mentioned here. It is up to interest groups to dust those extant laws off the shelves and appeal for their implementation, so that women can indeed begin to enjoy the benefit of the democratic dispensation in Nigeria.

Education of the Female Child: Education of the female child should be encouraged by all stakeholders in all the parts of Nigeria, especially in the North. For nothing can really be achieved in terms of women's representation in the Nigerian polity if there are not enough qualified women to take up such important positions in the land.

Reorientation of both Men and Women's Perception: Men get worried about an educated woman in terms of how they can relate to her and how she may respond to them. A number of women also make the mistake of thinking that being educated gives them the right to laud it over their male counterparts, or, worse still, to begin to denigrate the marriage institution as an enslavement of women folk. Both groups should be reoriented to realize that Western feminism represented by the men-hating writers such as Julia Kristeva does not really serve the interest of either men or women in Africa. Both men and women should be made to realize that what Africans should strive for is their own authentic form of feminism called woman, which holds that the needs of a black woman are not the same as those of the white woman, while equally affirming that the African woman has passed through a chain of oppression under the system of patriarchy (Elizabeth Ogini).

This brand of feminism does not reject men outright, but recognizes men's weakness, and sees the need for men and women to work together by making "harmony their mutual concern," harmony in both the home and in society. This way, men would not see women as the enemy but be made to realize where they have erred and the need for them to contribute towards making the necessary change that would engender the representation of women in the Nigerian polity. It is through all of the above, especially the last point, that Nigeria men and women may come together to do all in their power to change the under-representation of women in politics, and thereby make Nigeria an ideal country for the rest of the world to emulate.

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