

## The Nigerian Feminist Movement: Lessons from "Women in Nigeria (WIN).

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### ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, as in other countries, there is, as there always has been, a women's movement or more correctly women's movements. These existed before, during, and after colonialism. Many of them probably do not fit the conventional definition of a movement. Various forms of interest groups see themselves as movements. Although all of them serve interests that attempt to address inequalities between women and men in society, and although this is an acceptable criterion for minimizing disagreements in the characterization of women-based organizations, I admit that there are still substantial differences in the forms of movements that call themselves women's movements. Some movements may not have clear objectives, missions, or visions and exist as ad hoc bodies, useful when the need arises but with little or no coordination, continuity, or sustainability. Some may be limited to specific local struggles.

Keywords: African, Woman, Feminist and Movement.

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### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and it has huge diversity along ethnic, religious and economic lines [1]. The country's National Population Commission estimated the 2011 population to be about 168 million<sup>1</sup> with women representing about 49% of the total population [2]. This represents an annual growth of 5.6million people since 2006 when the last official census was undertaken. Within Nigeria, there are about 250 different ethnic groups that speak nearly 400 native dialects [3]. The prominent religions in Nigeria are Islam and Christianity. The country operates Federal System of Government with 36 states and the Federal Capital in Abuja. Nigeria gained independence from Britain after been colonized for more than five decades [4]. Following the independence from the British Colonial Masters in 1960, the country was ruled by the military for almost 30 years before the return of

democratic rule in 1999. The political anarchy that operated in Nigeria led to civil war between 1967 and 1970. Series of military coups d'etat occurred that resulted in economic and political instability [5]. The fifty-one years of Nigeria's post-colonial history have been a series of interchange between the military and the civilian government leading to a political climate and gender relations influenced by a strong military presence with minimal civilian rules [6]. In spite of the oil boom in the 1960s, poverty is still pervasive in the country and human development, statistics are not encouraging. According to the 2010 UNDP Human Development Report<sup>3</sup>, life expectancy at birth is 48.4 years. The Nigeria Millennium Development Report 2010 shows infant mortality of 75 deaths per 100 births; maternal [7].

### DOES CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN FEMINISM REFLECT NIGERIAN WOMEN'S REALITIES?

I grew up in 1980s Lagos, in a chaotic but exciting city in a country which I love, but which struggles with a deeply ingrained male supremacist culture. Already as a child, I took notice and issue, that men had all the so-called "head" positions in our society; they were heads of state,

heads of companies, heads of the army and heads of families [4]. In school when we learnt about Nigerian history, we did not learn about notable people such as Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Margaret Ekpo, Charlotte Obasa, Oyinkan Abayomi or Queen Amina of Zazzau, or the many

notable Nigerian women who played vital roles in shaping our nation. We learnt about great men like Herbert Macauley and Sir Tafawa Balewa. We also learnt about westerners such as the Scottish explorer Mungo Park, who was falsely attributed with discovering The Niger, the river which had sustained bustling kingdoms long before Mungo Park was even born. In 1985, when I was seven years old, Ibrahim Babangida, a man who was then chief of army staff, staged a coup against Muhammadu Buhari who himself had taken power in a military coup. Babangida managed to ruin the socio-political infrastructure in Nigeria; he destroyed labour- and student unions, and implemented debilitating World Bank- and IMF-led Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), which set strict rules for gaining loans. All together these policy changes created a culture of demise in an already fragile system. Thanks to Babangida's regime, by the early 1990s, large numbers of Nigerians - those who were privileged to have had foreign passports or permits - left the country. In 1990, as life got politically and financially unstable, my mother and I have also decided to temporarily relocate, leaving my father, who would not leave Nigeria no matter what, behind [3]. Although our heritage is Finnish, we headed to Sweden because we had family there. My mother had eventually returned to Lagos, and I continued to visit home frequently, but it is only in the past three years, twenty-five years after being uprooted from my hometown, that I gradually began to end my exile. I share all this because people who know that I lived in Sweden sometimes ask whether I would be a feminist had I not moved to Sweden from Nigeria. The answer to this question is an unhesitating yes. As far as countries shape our politics, it is not Sweden but Nigeria that made me feminist. In fact, I was barely aware of the strong feminist movement in Sweden as a young woman living there. Not only was I dealing with the complexities of early adulthood, I was also grappling with, at times violent, racial attacks that I

suddenly faced on a regular basis [1]. Feminism was not at the forefront of my mind in those years. By contrast, it was during my formative years in Nigeria that my feminist consciousness developed. It was predominantly planted in me by my mother and her close friends; however, also by women from underprivileged backgrounds such as our house help, Margaret, who was a second mother of sorts to me. Margaret taught me so much of what I know about surviving in this world as a woman. She was vulnerable to the harsh realities she had faced and yet she was also sharp, tough and empowered in ways that few middle-to-upper-class Nigerian women were. The society I grew up in makes the foundation of my feminist work today [5]. Does Nigerian feminism today speak for women like Margaret, who work in an industry with no regulation and few rights? Or is feminism in Nigeria a middle class movement? Does it include the voices and struggles of the masses of women who do not have economic freedom? Does contemporary Nigerian feminism reflect the realities of all Nigerian women? I will attempt to answer these questions in this article [2]. However, I must immediately add that the answers to these questions are hardly straightforward. First of all, because the Nigerian feminist movement is not easily definable. The majority of Nigerian feminists have contributed to the movement as African and/or black feminists rather than as Nigerian feminists per se. Consequently, their contributions have had a continent/diaspora/global perspective rather than a specifically Nigerian one. While this is an approach that benefits the pan-African agenda, it means that there is no clear-cut Nigerian feminism in the way that there is a US- or German feminism, for example [5]. Another reason that Nigerian feminism is challenging to define is because there is an inseparable overlap between the feminist movement and what is nowadays referred to as 'Women Empowerment' in Nigeria. An organisation such as D'Angels, to give an example, an all-female Nigerian biker group providing

poor women with free breast cancer screenings, does not explicitly term itself as feminist. However, I would argue that D'Angels are part of the feminist movement, not because the relationship between feminism and women empowerment is always harmonious, but rather because the shapers of women's rights have tended to be involved in both movements, employing the same

#### A BRIEF HISTORY OF NIGERIAN FEMINISM

Women's liberation - the ultimate goal of feminism - has always been part of the narrative of Nigeria. The very same year that Nigeria was formed in 1914, women staged a significant protest, which the scholar Nwando Achebe has referred to as the "Ogidi Palaver", against both indigenous and British men who had jointly side-lined them in decision-making. In 1925, the "Nwaobiala Movement" saw women forcefully rejecting colonial values culminating in 1929 into what is known as the "Women's War", where 10,000 women participated and dozens lost their lives fighting back against a drop in female authority [3]. However, the explicitly feminist movement in Nigeria finds its roots in WIN (Women in Nigeria), an organisation, which was founded in 1983 with a clear agenda to establish an "ideologically feminist movement" in the country. WIN has since been replaced by the Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF) in 2008 [5]. Today, organisations such as Stand To End Rape, Afri-Dev Info, The Nigerian Women's Trust Fund, Coloured Africa and As Equals Africa are emerging as pronouncedly feminist platforms. Besides, the African feminist movement at large insists that creative expression such as plays, poetry, art and fiction are sites where women can challenge male-dominance as a form of political and intellectual intervention. This stance is a direct critique of Eurocentric and male-centric notions of intellectual work. In this vein, arts and culture play a significant role in shaping the

#### IS CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN FEMINISM INCLUSIVE?

Nevertheless, is Nigerian feminism - to the extent, it can be named as such - inclusive? Or are feminists in Nigeria

ideological lexicon. There are countless examples of such overlapping agendas in the Nigerian women's movement. Bearing these two factors in mind, I will attempt to provide a brief background of Nigerian feminism: An essential task, which is part of the naming process of a Nigerian feminism that is simultaneously pan-African [5].

contemporary Nigerian feminist agenda. Artists such as Peju Alatise, Nike Ogundaike Davies or Otobong Nkanga who use art, sculpture, textile production and performance art pieces to raise issues about tradition, polygamy, and the oppression of the female body are some of the key shapers of Nigerian feminism. Theatrical interventions such as Christine Oshuniyi's "The Cut" or Bikiya Graham Douglas's "WAIT" are also shaping conversations about female genital cutting and a lack of education of girls respectively. Books from authors such as Chimamanda Adichie, Molara Wood and Ayobami Adebayo have similarly had a significant influence on the Nigerian feminist narrative [4]. These are just a few examples of art and culture crafting a feminist voice. Moreover, like everywhere in the world, new technologies play a significant role in contemporary Nigerian feminism. Thanks to the internet; blogs and social media, Nigerian feminists have been able to propagate an unprecedented feminist awareness revolutionising social relations in our times. The Me Too hashtag aside, there have been strong hashtag movements such as Female In Nigeria, which encouraged women to give voice to the harsh realities facing women in the country; Bring Back Our Girls, a campaign to rescue hundreds of girls kidnapped by the terror group Boko Haram; and most recently No More, a hashtag movement founded by Nigerian activist, Ireti Bakare-Yusuf, calling to end sexual abuse and impunity [1].

championing issues of middle class or elite women, and neglecting the concerns of less privileged women? The notion of a

middle class has become a popular metric in a Nigerian context only recently, arguably thanks to a first of its kind study in 2014 entitled [2]. The Rise of the African Middle Class” by the Standard Bank Group. Furthermore, unlike in the West, where the depoliticised middle class tends to shun tradition, middle class values in Nigeria are reversed. On the one hand, they are more conservative than in Western societies [3]. Gender roles are pronounced among the Nigerian middle class, and although Western cultures influence them, traditional customs and religious ideals play a significant role, too. While modernisation and economic growth tend to go hand in hand with secularisation in most parts of the world, religious commitment in Nigeria has not waned with modernity. According to Renaissance Capital, 96% of Nigerian middle class regularly attend a place of worship or religious service. On the other hand, Nigeria’s middle class is more socially conscious than the middle class in the West. It is perhaps no surprise that in a country marked by poverty, ethnic tension, insurgency and corruption, the middle class is politicised in ways that the middle class in other parts of the world is not. For example, in recent years, the middle class has been at the fore of struggles such as Occupy Nigeria and Enough is Enough, both campaigns fighting for the rights of the less privileged. Therefore, insofar that Nigerian feminism is a middle class movement, the complexities of the notion ‘middle class’ in Nigeria should not be ignored. That said, the best way to answer the question of whether Nigerian feminism reflects Nigerian women’s realities, is by looking at the types of issues that feminists are concerned with in the country. Moreover to do this, I find it useful to think of issues as either political or personal, albeit with the understanding that the personal is political! When it comes to “the political”, some of the critical issues that Nigerian feminists are involved with include law reform. For instance, feminists lobbied for the ratification of the Maputo Protocol,

an African feminist charter of women’s rights adopted by the African Union in Maputo in 2005. It is in my view one of the most radical feminist charters, not only in Africa but in the world at large. Nigerian feminists also drafted the Violence Against Women Bill and the Gender Equality Bill, of which the latter was unfortunately not ratified. because it was seen as too provocative by male politicians [5]. The bill tackles questions of domestic violence, girls’ education, child marriage and sexual violence. It became especially contentious because of the reproductive rights it granted women. In a country where only 27 out of 469 legislative seats are filled with women, feminists have also pushed for affirmative action alongside issues such as agricultural reform, maternal health and women’s access to financial loans. Since its launch in 2008, the Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF) has made strides in ending policies that enabled discriminatory practices such as HIV and virginity testing in universities, and state impositions of dress codes for women. In the cultural sector, films, books, plays, songs and art by Nigerian women tend to tackle social issues such as female genital cutting, witchcraft, ethnic conflict, poverty, war, motherhood, widowhood and marriage. Nigerian feminists have only recently begun to strongly advocate for liberation in “the personal” space [6]. The culture of challenging domestic roles and marriage, for example, is especially vigorous among modern feminists who use the internet as a main tool of resistance and consciousness-raising. Outspoken and unapologetic feminists such as Ozzy Etomi and Olutimehin Adegbeye are using online platforms to send a powerful and personalised message to young women about the need to question the status quo, not only in political life but also in the personal space. One of our current leading feminists, Chimamanda Adichie, has played a seminal role in spreading feminism in Nigeria. She has been accused of focusing only on middle class feminist issues such as chivalry and

sexual objectification [4]. These accusations ignore the multiple issues that she has tackled. For example, her most famous book is told from the point of view of a house help. In a similar vein, the blog that I founded, MsAfropolitan, which has contributed to popularising African feminism, is a space where the political and personal overlap. Yet as I wrote in 2012 in the Guardian article "African women can blog": "When people ask me what I do, and I respond that I'm a blogger and that I blog about topics that primarily concern African women, quite often they proceed to either tell me about an humanitarian or developmental cause they are involved with or have read about. Sometimes they ask me how my blog reaches women in African villages. [3] I'm tired of people immediately assuming that to blog about African women is to blog about charity work," I wrote, "I'm tired of this idea that African women can

#### CLASS, SEXUALITY & SEX WORK

That said, while I hope that this article has shown that especially for a young movement, Nigerian feminism, - to the extent it can be named as such - is inclusive and complex in the manner of issues it addresses, and although I do not believe that focusing on sexual objectification or chivalry, is somehow "less" feminist than focusing on female genital cutting (FGC) or agricultural reform; I do believe it is important to stress that poverty is the most pressing issue facing not only Nigerian women but all of humanity. Anyone who truly desires women's liberation would therefore automatically understand the gravitas of an anti-poverty approach. In addition, there are three crucial issues the Nigerian feminist movement has somewhat neglected. A survey led by The Initiative for Equal Rights in 2017 found that support for the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) remains at 90%. This means that only 10% of Nigerian civil society opposes what is a profoundly dehumanising policy. Additionally, the survey has found that only 39% of Nigerians agree that "homosexuals should have equal access to healthcare, housing

only be objects of pity. I'm tired of the notion that African women can or should only interact on select topics." The truth is that African feminists are in the damning position of having to fight back against the effects of patriarchy in our societies on the one hand, and one-dimensional stereotypes and exploitation of African women by Westerners on the other hand. I explored this theme at a later point in a TEDx talk titled "To change the world, change your illusions". Ultimately, as I argued in an article titled "Seven key issues in African feminist thought", the primary matters of concern for feminists in Africa are 1) patriarchy, 2) race, 3) tradition, 4) underdevelopment, 5) sexuality, 6) global feminism and 7) love. It is incredibly rare for an African feminist not to have such an intersectional feminist approach, which considers multiple factors affecting African women's lives [2].

and other public goods." Lesbians and trans women, in particular, face discrimination both on the grounds of being women as well as for being part of a sexual minority community. A new book, *She Called Me Woman* (2018), has paved the way to include voices of queer women from a wide range of class, religion and educational backgrounds. Secondly, wherever possible feminists should lobby for sex worker rights in Nigeria. Sex work is challenging work everywhere in the world. There is no country where sex workers do not face harassment, violence and torment by men. But a number of countries have decriminalised it, giving sex workers rights such as pensions, healthcare and protection from violence. To be a sex worker in these countries is therefore a professional choice that increasing numbers of women are making. To be a sex worker in Nigeria, however, is a different story. Following what an activist of the Nigerian Sex Workers Association (NSWA) said in an interview: "Sex workers in my organisation face a lot of harassment from the police and other law enforcement agencies. The health care workers are not friendly with the sex



workers too.” These are stories that feminists can ensure to be heard and transformed. Last but not least, the Nigerian feminist movement will achieve greater successes if it continues to tear down divisions between Nigerian women; they can be of class, sexuality, religion, profession or ethnic group. I started with saying that it was growing up in Nigeria that made me the feminist I am today. My upbringing taught me that women who had access to privilege were not necessarily happier or worthier than

those who didn’t. It made me appreciate that women of poor backgrounds would often be my feminist teachers. It showed me that in an imperialist and patriarchal world, African female knowledge systems were always a multiple-way learning stream. We are all teachers and students of one another. The more we appreciate each other’s voices and struggles, the stronger our movement. So long as one group of women is not free, none of us are free [6].

#### WOMEN’S MOVEMENTS TODAY

Since Nigeria became a democratic nation, the promise of equal participation in politics for women by way of percentage has not been realized; international instruments that Nigeria is signatory to have not been domesticated, the laws that are made to protect and promote the rights of women are not adhered to and

injustices against women, whether cultural or religious, are still the order of the day. There has not been the need for riots and protests as such in the past few years, so women’s movements have been more of documentation, lobbying, advocacy and media relations etc [3].

#### Women in Nigeria (WIN)

Women in Nigeria (WIN) was developed by the founding members to be a radical organization that will focus on the initiation and implementation of research to emphasize women’s full social, political and economic rights in the country. The aims and objectives of the organization stress the pledge of the socialist ideology-oriented organization to change. WIN has recorded a lot of achievement since its conception however, in the 90s, the organization faced fundamental challenges that crippled it.

Regardless of these challenges, WIN still operates in some states in the country. Certain inequalities and segregations, which have been established over the ages and reinforced through the male-dominated structures, still persist, in spite of the various instruments of the United Nations, and the concerted efforts of the Federal Government and a number of non-governmental organizations on alleviating women’s discrimination [2].

#### CONTRIBUTIONS OF FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS / MOVEMENTS TO WOMEN’S RIGHTS IN NIGERIA.

Flowing from above, and having itemized some feminists organizations based on their programme of activities and sphere of influence, from a collective perspective,

women’s and feminist organizations have influenced the following contributions in Nigeria [4].

#### POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Right from the early 1950s, the concept of affirmative action in Nigeria started with the late Mrs. Funmilayo Ransom-Kuti and Madam Magareth Ekpo together with some other prominent Nigerian women who fought their way into politics. Also during the Nationalist struggle, the demands for democracy and equal participation were also deliberated by these classes of women. These women on their own

wisdom believed that women must be given equal treatment and be involved in the political affairs of the country. In the same vein, women today are still agitating for the 35% affirmative action in line with the Beijing Platform for Action 1995. Presently in Nigeria, we commend the government for 33% of women in political appointment and this is as a result of the continuous lobby and influence of

government's political will in the country

[6].

#### JUSTICE FOR WOMEN IN NIGERIA

Nigerian women organizing had been very helpful in demanding justice for some female victims nationwide. With the introduction the Shari'a legal system in some States in Northern Nigeria, women were discriminated against and oppressed as a result of misinterpretation of religious texts. Some feminist organizations, WRAPA and WLUMI-AME, to name a few, embarked on both national and international advocacy to save the lives of women in these Northern States. As fall out to this out-cry, a moratorium was placed to save the lives of citizens especially women from lapidation. In addition to situation in Northern Nigeria, the Nigerian Feminists have awakened the Government over its responsibility of human security as a

result of the persistence violence against women in the country. An incident which occurred a few years ago when a young woman on National Assignment was gang raped and this led to her death, with the perpetrators of the act unpunished. Several Nigerian Feminist Movements and Individuals organized series of rallies and instigated the prosecution of the offenders. The case is presently in court. Although other cases exist where different feminist organization have instituted court actions on behalf of women and girls, this case was of a national significance because the young woman was on a one year mandatory National Assignment and the Government has a responsibility to protect its citizens [4].

#### GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF FEMINIST INSTITUTIONS AND LEADERSHIP

Women in Nigeria dating back to the 1950s had started mobilizing to be involved in politics and strategically influenced the nationalist struggles. Women such as Madam Magareth Ekpo and Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti just to sight a few examples were very strategic to the political development and orientation of women in the country. Till date, Nigerian women are still in the business of politics and have greatly influenced the democratic processes in Nigeria since 1999. From a broad perspective, feminists in recent times have been able to influence the political process by challenging the political process and projecting feminist agenda which promotes an egalitarian and human society. For instance, the Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF) believe women must be integrated into the processes and

women's issues are very significant to be on the front burner of national discourse. According to the NFF, "We define and name ourselves publicly as Feminists because we celebrate our feminist identities and politics. We recognize that the work of fighting for women's rights is deeply political, and the process of naming is political too. Choosing to name ourselves Feminist places us in a clear ideological position. By naming ourselves as Feminists we politicize the struggle for women's rights, we question the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated, and we develop tools for transformatory analysis and action." The stand point of the NFF is a very important political ideology because women must speak continuously with a collective voice for any meaningful societal transformation [6].

#### GIRL CHILD EDUCATION

Several Feminist Organizations in Nigeria have found that to change the future of women in this country, as well as in the whole world, we have to start by empowering girls and women by educating them. This goes a long way especially when they know their rights and have a proper sense of self-worth. Therefore numerous groups organize

educational and training programmes with this view in mind. BAOBAB, for starters, engages in outreach activities like public awareness, paralegal training, and so on<sup>13</sup>. GPI, also, focuses on empowering young women through their Internship Programme, "which assists interns to learn and contribute to the planning, implementation, monitoring and

evaluation of comprehensive adolescent sexuality education programs.” One of their objectives is to enlighten and

educate more adolescent girls on gender, sexuality issues and personal empowerment [3].

#### ADULT LITERACY CLASSES FOR WOMEN

Also tackling women's issues from the other angle, Feminist organizations have tried to make women more empowered by running programme for adult women. WRAPA, for example, has a total of 22 adult literacy centers in 12 states, 10 legal aid centres in 10 states, and 11 vocational training centers in 9 states. They also enjoy the support government agencies in

the operations of its centres especially the National Commission for Mass Literacy Education, the National Directorate for Employment (NDE) and the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), the National Human Rights Commission, the Nigeria Legal Aid Council Corporate bodies in the finance and media sectors [5].

#### OVERALL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The Gender Development Institute is one of the tools created by GPI to increase public awareness and promote gender equality discussions among several sectors of stakeholders including NGO functionaries, technocrats, teachers, government functionaries, media practitioners, private sector and

politicians, both female and male.<sup>14</sup> The GDI has proved to be an important opportunity for creating understanding of the concepts of gender, gender equality and gender mainstreaming which have been largely misunderstood [6].

#### PROMOTING THE VISION ON GENDER EQUALITY

All of the Feminist Organizations have the underlying goal of Gender Equality. Programmes geared this include, but are not limited to: The Gender Development Institute is one of the tools created by GPI to increase public awareness and promote gender equality discussions among several sectors of stakeholders including NGO functionaries, technocrats, teachers, government functionaries, media practitioners, private sector and politicians, both female and male. The GDI has proved to be an important opportunity for creating understanding of the concepts of gender, gender equality and gender mainstreaming which have been largely misunderstood. This is in line with the objective of increasing the number of girls who would in turn impact on their peers and communities to meet the long term social goal of gender

equality. GADA has been in the forefront of the struggle for gender-equity and equality in politics and development in Nigeria. Over the years, the organization has developed cutting - edge expertise working with a wide range of local and international partners to implement actions around women's social, economic, cultural and political rights. Centre For Women's Research And Development, located in Lagos, Nigeria; in the forefront for the propagation for the upliftment of the status of women, fighting against harmful traditional practices against women, and also have vocational training centres for the less privileged women were skill are acquired after which micro credit facilities are given to establish small businesses [4].

#### TRAININGS IN BEST PRACTICES

Some Organizations focus on trainings for women at the community levels in Best Practices. IWEL, for example, ran a programme which was meant to train Traditional Birth Attendants on safe motherhood practises, management of normal delivery, timely detection and

referral of women with obstetric complications, importance of breast feeding methods and family planning/spacing and hygiene.<sup>15</sup> 26 women participated in the 4-day programme, facilitated by two staff members of the Ministry of Health, Kano



using the States training program. As majority of the Participants were illiterate, teaching methods used were verbal repetitions, the use of songs, pictorial

leaflets and so on. Other Projects are Basic Literacy Programme, Reproductive Health, Health and Nutrition as well as the Children's Club [3].

#### CHALLENGES FACING FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS IN NIGERIA

While feminists have a common target for the emancipation of women and deconstruction of patriarchy in the polity, challenges faced by feminists can be classified as both external to the movement and within the feminist's

collectives. Some examples of external challenges mainly stem from the societal perceptions about feminism on the one hand, and the broad governmental policies and laws towards women on the other hand [2].

##### Poor Recognition of Feminist Issues by Government

Nigerian feminists and some women's organizations, have collective views on demanding for an egalitarian society. With the male dominated structure of government, the approach of feminists in the advocacy on broad human rights is

yet to be politicized and institutionalized. Nigerian government's interventions on women's issues have not yet attained a front burner issue in the national debate and this is a concern of feminists that the government needs to address [1].

##### Gross Misconception on the Feminist Agenda

From an objective perspective, feminism in Nigeria does not exist to disrupt the status quo of the society but merely challenges the misrepresentation of religious text and the unjust use of culture to further subjugate women. Feminists believe that religion and culture are good for the growth of the society but

must not be a tool for discriminatory and unfair treatment towards a particular gender. Due to the desire to arrest and remedy these anomalies which adversely affect women, feminists are construed as mercenaries to disturb the assumed peace and fabrics of the society [3].

##### Negative Press

The feminist's movement after taking the initiative to become a recognized body in Nigeria, there are still concerns about the negative press and societal orientation against feminists. Based on the traditional and cultural stereotypes on the roles of women, women especially those who identify as feminists are considered rebels and dissident due to the feminist ideologies that challenge the patriarchal status quo. In Nigeria we have different categories of feminists. There are groups who term themselves as feminists but are

constrained by cultural and religious ideologies, while there are those who although they have a culture and religious orientation yet propound that some aspects of religious and cultural trend reduces the status of women in comparison to their male counterpart. Based on this difference in thinking, there seem to exist an artificial barrier between feminists sisters and this tends to prevent a united stance on issues affecting women [5].

##### Double Standards within and outside the movement

Most Nigerian feminists are caught in the web of practicing double standards due to the negative press and societal consciousness about feminists concerns. It is observed that when within the movement, it is easy to discuss and advocate on feminist issues without restrictions but within the domestic sphere due to the public opinions on the

family structure and gender division of labor, it becomes difficult to fully introduce the feminist belief system in such instances as it is seen to disrespect the family structure. This is a very serious issue that calls for continuous societal sensitization on the benefits of feminism [4].

#### CONCLUSION

The contributions from this group is a pointer to the fact that feminism is a world-wide movement and Nigerian Feminists have been part of the country's history, right from pre-colonial times. In concluding, this paper described the various era of feminists intervention in Nigeria and based on the historical overview, we can rightly assert that feminism in Nigeria is not a new concept. Nigerian women are visible in the traditional society before colonization and this is evident from their heroic acts, political and religious activities. Although the recognition as feminists is still an emerging idea, the women with exemplary lives in the historical context though not addressed as feminists demonstrated what feminism entailed. Today, Nigerian

feminist are all over the country, demanding for a common cause, which is the emancipation of women and an egalitarian society. These feminists are represented individually or through organizations and have been critical in influencing the direction of National issues especially on how it affects women. A plethora of contributions have and are being recorded on these feminists' initiatives as stated in the body of this presentation. Feminism is now an ideology that is here to stay in Nigeria under the auspices of the Nigerian Feminist Forum, (NFF), however there are challenges the movement need to tackle collectively to retain its relevance in the polity [1].

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