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RECLAIMING THE DIGNITY OF THE AFRICAN WOMEN FOR THE 21ST
CENTURY DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND: THE STUDY OF NIGERIAN
WOMEN

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Abstract

For the long time women have not been accorded the pride of place and respect in Africa and indeed Nigeria. Women were seen and regarded as being inferior to men. They were not allowed to hold positions of responsibilities and treated only as mills for the production of children. Only very insignificant numbers were allowed to have access to formal education. They were treated and regarded as second class citizens. Today it would appear the tide is gradually changing, what men can do women are equally capable of doing especially in those areas that need their role. Men and women are partners in development. Women therefore be given more chances in the development strides through unwavering access to quality education, free health services, entrusted with positions of responsibilities in public and private services. Women would claim their dignity if they are allowed to compete favourably with their male counterparts in the development strides of this country and beyond.

Introduction

In the beginning man and woman were equal and partners in the development of societies whether in Africa or elsewhere (Genesis 1: 26-28). The important thing and emphasis is 'in the beginning'. Although there were and still are some roles men have comparative advantage over women and vice-versa. These roles were to complement one another in the entire process of man's progress in the system. It is difficult to say when man assumed superior status than woman. The inequality had remained so for many centuries until different communities developed peculiar cultures by which they are known. The 'new' culture further punctuated the equality

by way preferences were attached to man and woman's functions. Before the 20th century AD this cultural polarization subjected women and placed them as inferior species before men – showcasing men as superior women inferior.

However, violation of women's rights such as violence against them, denial of responsibilities in governance whether at local, national or international levels is not a recent phenomenon, it had been there for many centuries. Hence, curtailing of women rights was not peculiar to Africa but it was experienced in many parts of the world. In spite of these polarization and sidelining of African women, they were still fighting hard and raising their heads high and often took up the so-called men's responsibilities. For instance Queen Amina ruled over ancient Kano between 1536 and 1573 and in ancient Dahomey kingdom or Empire, women were enlisted in army-called Amazons (Adeleye, 1976; Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997).

In other parts of the world, the rights of women were equally undermined and buried in cultural swamp. The movement towards gender equality began between 1688 and 1914 when Europe experienced political and industrial revolutions. The revolution stressed individualism. On the other hand French Revolution did not achieve legal equality between the genders, but it did encourage feminism—a word coined by the French merchant and philosopher Charles Fourier (1772-1837) to denote efforts towards gender equality. In 1808, Fourier urged reform, and argued that:

The best nations are always those that accord women the greatest amount of liberty ... social progress and historic changes occur by virtue of the progress of women toward liberty, and decadence of the social order occurs as the result of a decrease in the liberty of women ... In summary, the extension of women's privileges is the general principle for all social progress (Spodek, 1998).

The above quotation is an indication that some people had fine ideas about women condition in some societies.

Conceptualising Women Dignity

The uncalm attitude in which one person or group of persons meted to others or where others suffer some form of deprivations from their kind through show of dishonour and/or lack of respect in the conduct of activities or functions in a competitive environment. If dignity is taken or accepted to be deprivations, oppression, show of superiority, women in our societies have been variously unfairly treated and their dignity undermined through men's uncoordinated actions and

inactions. Women for a long period were denied access to education in some societies, some were kept permanently against their will in "Purdah"; in some societies women were only to be seen and not heard and therefore cannot contribute ideas to the development of their communities; some husbands often times turned their wives into punching instruments at the slightest provocation. Widows in many societies were (are) made to go through unnecessary and ugly ordeals and are deprived of their husbands inheritance at their death. In most instances, women were (are) deprived of recruitment into some jobs with the mentality that often times such women would be on maternity offs among other things. Very many men do not show respect for women, they regard them as inferior species and can only be useful on their demand and need.

Conceptualising Development

One word that is often used without drawing out its meaning is development. In the past, development was seen as the growth in volume or quality of goods and services or simply an increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country. But this increase did not work for developing countries because human conditions of the people did not change in spite of the change in GDP. Today, development is defined qualitatively to mean a general sustainable improvement in the welfare of the entire society. Meaning that social indicators such as levels of employment, housing, education, poverty, nutrition, infant and maternal mortality, life expectancy improved (Akpakpan, 1987, Tordoff, 1997). It is increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being (Rodney, 1972). It is one's ability to have good and affordable food to eat, access to safe drinking water, good shelter, access to good and affordable medical facilities, being able to communicate, have access to good education, have access to use decent and sustained infrastructural facilities (Akpan, 2011).

Indeed, this paper is concentrating mainly on Nigerian women, hence it is divided into epochs –traditional, colonial and post colonial Nigeria. At various times women dignity were undermined by men. Women were suffocated and cruelly fixed in the hands of cultural injustice.

Traditional: This period is considered from earliest times to the beginning of colonialism. Within the period considered here there were ups and downs in terms of the way societies were run. This is so because certain occurrences or events had to be recalled to create history. Hence gender relations as part of the lives of the people in societies needed recalling for keeps before the advent of colonialism.

Social socialisation processes take place in the society among members of the society. Women were curtailed from some of the interactions. For example before the advent of the missionaries in the 19th century, women who gave birth to twins were not allowed to associate with other members and banished from the society and taken to the 'evil forest' to die with their children. The question is why were the men who were responsible for these twin children not gone with their wives to the evil forest? The undignified manner these women were seen off to the so called evil forest was very dehumanising. When the abolition of this act came to an end through the activities of missionaries such as Mary Slessor, women who gave birth to twins afterwards were still being treated as lepers – in some societies they were not to fetch water in streams, buy in market places or associate with other women in the villages freely. Today, the story is different, many families would go on fasting praying to God for twins and even triplets.

Besides, in the era of Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, women along side with their men folk were captured, sold into slavery in the Americas and Europe. The manner in which they were captured, treated as criminals undermined their dignity and clearly showed unhuman treatment a fellow human meted out to its kind. So far slavery was abolished in 1833. Towards the middle of the 20th century this trade resurfaced given the new name women trafficking, girls trafficking. Whatever name that is given today women are still being sold today. However, the only difference is that the number is insignificant and the manner of kidnapping when compared with the ugly scenario of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade era (Williams, 1964; Curtin, 1979; Uya, 1992).

On the issue of marriage, it all depended on the culture, in most cultures such as Ibibio, women did not decide or had a say whom to marry. Marriage arrangement was made by families involved. At the end, the woman would be invited by the parents and handed over the suitor. The woman involved has no say and would not dare to resent such decisions. Besides, after marriage, in an unfortunate situation where the husband died, the widow was forced to stay behind and remarry the brother of the deceased. Before then, according to tradition, women used to go for specified days without bathing or changing of clothes-as a sign of mourning to the late husband. Where there was doubt in a case of sudden death of the husband, a woman was made to go through ugly ordeals-oath taking any others. However, today there has been a change and that has been as a result of western education. Women to a large extent determine who to marry except in some cultures that are not proactive to change. This is common in some Muslim dominated areas. Again, there are some pockets of societies that still allow widows to go through unnecessary ordeals at the death of their husbands. The issue of a woman staying behind to remarry the next of kin to her husband at death is dying in many societies today.

Politically, in some Nigerian Societies women were only to be seen and not heard-meaning that only very few could contribute in the making of laws and or allowed to be members of decision making bodies in families or communities. Besides, women were treated as mills for the production of children and satisfying their husbands sexually on demand. They were also to produce food for the families. On the other hand, in some societies in Nigeria women towered above their men counterparts. Some of them were Queen Amina (or Aminatu) of Kano. She is said to have commanded an army of about 20,000 men, and annexed the surrounding states as far as Nupe kingdom in the South and Katsina in the north. During her time Kano grew in prominence-a centre of Islamic learning and trade centre linking with North Africa through Trans-Sahara trade routes. She ruled over Kano for more than thirty years (Adeleye, 1976).

Between 1563-1570 Queen Disa Kili Ngirmaramma, the deceased daughter of the Kanuri king was able to hold fort and ensured royal continuity until the famous Idriss Alooma was able to take power. She was celebrated woman but the Arab historians, who apparently lacked interest in recognising a preeminent female head of state dumped her story in the dust-bin of history (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997).

In another corollary, religion was and still a factor in defiling the dignity of woman. There are three religions in Nigeria-Islam and Christianity, African Traditional Religion. Islam preceded Christianity in Nigeria for more than five centuries. Islam rated women as lower specie to men, and would keep them away from certain roles within the society and thus separated them in socialization processes except as husbands and wives. Women do not worship in the mosque with men; when men are discussing either public or private issues women do not share in such discussions. Women are also enslaved through covering of their bodies. Islam also restricted married women to remain in Purdah and her needs catered for by their husbands at all times in public even when the weather condition are inimical to their wellbeing as it is in this our humid climatic conditions. Initially Islamic women did not share public schools, and other gatherings together with men (Abdul, 1973).

Besides, Islam encourages, just like traditional religion, for a man to marry up to four or more wives and can keep as many concubines as possible (Lewis, 1970; Abdul, 1973). Anthropologically, it is known that when a man marries more than one wife, others are no longer serving the function of wives, rather those additional wives are commodities or articles of trade that could be purchased or disposed off (Lewis, 1978). This is so because in the beginning it was one man one wife.

However, when Christianity came, women according to Paulian teachings were to be seen in the church and not heard – meaning they were not to become teachers, pastors etc (I Corth. 14: 34). Again their rights and dignity trampled upon. It is difficult to say whether Islamic women who cover themselves are comfortable

doing so. It would appear they are being compelled and enslaved by religion. Today, the situation has change a little, those Muslim women who are educated and taken up posts of responsibilities either in government or private businesses are seen in public, and their bodies covering reduced minimally. But more than 90 percent adhere strictly to their tenets. Among Christians today, women have regained their rights. Some women in nearly all churches enlist as choristers, some appointed as deaconesses, teachers, nuns, some are renounce pastors such as Rev. Angela Ashong, Bishop Josephine Gideon Egha of New Birth Bible Church; Bishop Margaret Benson Idahosa of Church of God Mission Incorporated etc are making waves. The list is long.

Among the Western Igbo groups, the Omu or Queen of the village or group of the villages had a position similar to that of Obi or king. She possessed female equivalent of male power in the community. She directed the women's association, the Ikporo-ani. Like the king she wore a headdress denoting her power, in some areas a white felt hat or a red cap. She chose her own aides and counselors and gave them titles similar to those of their male counterparts (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997).

Indeed, market women, active in business, ruled the market places, set rates, settled disputes, imposed fines. They performed rituals necessary for the well-functioning of the markets and also were responsible to the widows welfare. With the arrival of the British rule, they gave some women a certain opportunity to increase their influence. For instance Okwei d' Onitsha, otherwise known as Omu Okwei (1872-1943), used her business relationships with foreign companies, in this way and assisted her husband to be named a member of the native court. She became an envoy or a kind of foreign affairs minister for her people to European businessmen and colonial officers. Another women political group that was relevant among the Ibos was the Otu Umuada. According to Nwaorgu the Umuanda was very powerful group, they often intervened whenever the village constitution was violated and they imposed sanctions on offenders. The village elders did all they could to avoid, confrontation with the Umuada. Those were women who function within a seeming male dominated political system (Nwaorgu, 1998).

Among the Yorubas, power revolve around the Alafin whose administration was a complex hierarchy of lineage heads, military chiefs, and judges. Their complexities in administration was run by his many wives – supervision. Those palace ladies also functioned as spies using their business opportunities. Within the kingdom also existed eight women priests and eight women dignitaries. Meaning that women were represented in the administration of the Alafin-the overall head of the Yoruba kingdom (Couqueory-Vidrovitch, 1997).

Economically, men and women were partners in development. They were mainly farmers who made sure there was food and food security. The different kinds of food crops produced depended on the environment. Nigerian peoples of northern

extraction specialised in grain crops production and were able to exchange it for other crops they have less comparative advantage. Only few specialised in skill demanding jobs such as mat making, dyeing pottery making among the Hausa dwellers of Kano. Some women remained in Purdah. With time, there was need for exchange of products because there sprang up artisans who exchange their goods for food crops. The market then served as a place where farmers, traders or artisans could satisfy their needs. With the gradual expansion of agricultural production and the inability of the local markets to consume all the products, farmers began to send their products outside the production district (Fafunwa, 1977: 34). In the beginning the Purdah system was not there until the advent of Islam between the 9th and 13th centuries.

Education is a universal social phenomenon which exists in some form or another in every society. In Nigerian traditional education, every person was introduced to Community Based Education. Women were inducted to learn how to fit into the society. Traditional education drew its inspiration from the people. It was organised to translate the collective will and aspirations of the people, by the people themselves, for the benefit of the society. Thus women learned from their mothers and siblings and responded to their roles in the community. Women were taught mainly home economics. The girls were taught on how to cook foods, nursing of children, body care and care during pregnancy. Other things taught include hair dressing and mat making (plaiting) agriculture. They were taught to care for their husbands (Fafunwa, 1977, Okon & Anderson, 1982).

However, the stop-gap when women's functions were directed, monitored and placed permanently in the kitchen and only to function as a mills for the production of children and satisfying the demand of men is obscured. From then on, one opportunity or another eluded women and women were placed as second class citizens which even extended to the colonial period.

Colonialism and Nigerian Women

The colonial period here is taken from 1900, though Nigeria came as a nation in 1914 after the amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates. Even before 1900 colonialism had taken firm root and the British had equally intervened on the politics of the people. The advent of colonialism did very little to unburden the women from the cultural pressure they found themselves. Between 1900 and 1960 when colonialism was fully entrenched in Africa and indeed Nigeria, only very few women had access to a formal school. By 1930s and the end of the second world war (few men and women) actually attended school. Formal education was reserved for slaves and culturally segregated people- 'OSU'. Education, because of its organisation and alien to our culture was seen as punishment and only the slaves and outcast deserved it, they thought. On the other culture Islamic or Koranic education was the

pillar. When the importance of Western education became familiar, cultural polarization was entrenched – male preference over females.

Indeed, many reasons were advanced for male preferences attending formal school in place of females. That women would not be heir to the families, hence would be a waste of resources on them only to be given in marriage to other families. Besides, then, because of “explosion and unwanted pregnancies” and the high death toll through illegal abortions associated with girls who attended formal school, sending women to school was seen as a wasted investment; that, perhaps to a large extent explains why women had early marriages and men attended school.

It would appear the British colonial policy did not favour women education and as such political and administratively women were not relevant. No, this is not to say that women did not know their rights. Some of them were aware, but in a male dominated environment, they simply allow fate to orbit them. The British government forgot too soon the immense contributions women made in their societies before their advent. As Nwaorgu put it, ‘the women greatly resented this and saw it not only as aberration, but as an infringement on the established traditional order that needed to be resisted’ (Nwaorgu, 1998:84). Having punctuated the advancement of women both politically and administratively by the British, women resorted to resistance. The first resistance was riot organised by women in Ikot Abasi, which spread through Aba, Owerri provinces popularly then referred to as Aba Women riot of 1929 led by Mrs. Udo Udoma (Udoma 1987).

In 1948, Ademola II of Egbaland had joined the colonial administration to exploit the local population just as it happened in Ikot Abasi in 1929. The women rejected this and went on protest which later saw the dethronement of Ademola and subsequent exiled. It took about twenty thousand women led by Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome Kuti to accomplish that task. Moreover, as Nwaorgu (1998), quoted Halkin (1976), noted that ‘African and indeed Nigerian women lost political as well as economic status under colonial rule’. The British were blinded, thus failed to see that Nigerian women had political roles and institutions in their societies. The protests were showcasing the need to incorporate women both in the administration and politics in spite of the fewness in the acquisition of western education and by extension the pendulum that rules the world. Women protest, perhaps was responsible for the creation of the women’s wing in the political parties that took over government from the British at independence in 1960. The parties were National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), Northern Peoples’ Congress (NPC) and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) among others (Coleman, 1986).

It is observed that Western education gave those few women power and also threw them up against the British colonial rulers. The number of women attending formal school system has appreciably changed today-men and women are competing

favourably in the formal education pursuits except in most families where the hydra (poverty) limits such pursuits. Again, in some communities in Nigeria women do not still have access to formal education because of religion and or culture. It is this group that this forum should target for “cultural deliverance” (Akpan, 2008).

Post Colonialism and Women Dignity

Nigerian women dignity is restored through education and the law. In the post colonial Nigeria especially after independence, ‘whoever can afford the tuition and maintain sufficiently high grades’. Acquisition of sufficient and utilisation of formal education adds potency to ones dignity. In 1957 Obefemi Awolowo then premier of Western Region of Nigeria introduced free and compulsory education in Western Nigeria; in Eastern Nigeria poverty and school fees restricted enrolment in schools. Where families could afford school fees in Eastern Nigeria males were preferred. In Northern region women education was much restricted than any other part of Nigeria. Both in the North and Eastern Nigeria only very few women compared to Western region had access to formal education.

However, after the Nigerian civil war in 1970, there was explosion in the enrolment of pupils in primary, secondary schools and few made it to Universities, Polytechnics and allied institutions. It is perhaps from these group and those who embraced formal education the early 1960s that female engineers, lawyers, teachers, politicians, medical doctors, administrators emerged. Some of those females who have brought to themselves respect and dignity included.

Education:

Prof. (Mrs.) Grace Alele Williams, a renounce Mathematician and first female vice chancellor of the University of Benin, Mrs. Ore-Oluwa Salau, first woman instructor of the Nigeria Civil Aviation, Mrs. Flora Nwapa, first female novelist. Today the story of women who have excelled and restored dignity to womanhood is exciting. Women professors are many and excelling in different fields. Such as the current Vice Chancellor, University of Uyo, Nigeria Professor Mrs. Comfort Ekpo, Professor Mrs. Eno Urua, Professor Mrs. Ini Uko, Professor Mrs. Queen Obinaju, etc.

Captains of Industry:

Mrs. Cecilia Ibru who until recently was the Chief Executive of Oceanic Bank Nigeria Plc; Dr. Okonji Iweala of the World Bank, etc.

Politics:	Mrs. Latifat Okunu, first female Deputy Governor, in Lagos State, Mrs. Wuraola Esan, first female senator; Mrs. Patricia Etteh – first female speaker in the Federal House of Representative. There are many female Senators and House of Representatives members than pre 1983. Women are sizing up with men in politics.
Administration:	Prof. Dora Akunyili former Minister for Information Communication, Mrs. Dezaini Allison Maducke – Minister of Petroleum, Prof. Raqayattu Ahmed Rufai – Minister for Education.
Medicine:	Dr. Grace A. Guobadia became the first Dental Surgeon in Nigeria; Prof. Elfrida Adebo, first woman professor of Nursing in Nigeria.
Engineering:	Dr. (Mrs.) Olu Maduka, first female Engineer in Nigeria, Dr. Engineer Taiwo Adeife O., first Pioneer Rector, Federal Polytechnic, Offa.
Force and Security:	Major General Rogke Kale – first woman to be decorated a Star General in the Nigerian Army; Navy Captain Mary Kentebe – first woman to be enlisted in the Nigerian Navy, Mrs. Bisi Ugowe, first woman Deputy Inspector General of Police.
Judiciary:	Justice Rose M. Ukeje – first female Judge in Nigeria, Mrs. Folake Solanke – first female Senior Advocate (SAN) in Nigeria.

International business was the sole preserved for men before 1989, recently women are connecting themselves in Dubai, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Tokyo etc (Ajawara, 2011). The above examples are indication that women have arrived and are taking their rightful places in the scheme of Nigerian Development. There is hardly any human endeavour in which women are not found competing with their male counterparts in propelling Nigeria economy today.

The Road to Building Women Dignity

Apart from Education, Nigerian law and constitution, for the women to achieve dignity today did not come easy. Women oppression and enslavement had been there in history – from Europe to Africa etc.

Thus between 1790 and 1928 a lot have been advocated for women's freedom and dignity –

- 1790 Olympe de Gouges writes the polemical Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the citizen.
- 1992 Mary Wollstonecraft writes A vindication of the rights of women, regarded as the first manifesto of the women's movement in Britain.
- 1994 Condorcet writes of desirability of establishing equality of civil and political rights for men and women in Progres de l'esprit.
- 1829 Sali (ritual suicide by Hindu widows) banned in India.
- 1848 Elizabeth Lady Stanton (1815-1902) and Lucretia Mott (1793-1880) organise first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls, New York.
- 1850 Beginning in Britain of national agitation for women's suffrage.
- 1857-71 Married Women's Property Acts allow British Women to keep their own possessions on marriage.
- 1886 Mott founds American Equal Rights Association.
- 1868 First public meeting of women's suffrage movement held in Manchester, England.
- 1869 In Britain women rate-payers may vote in municipal elections; Lady Stanton is first president of US National Woman Suffrage Association.
- 1890 Footbinding beginning to die out in China.
- 1903 Emmeline Pankhurst founds Women's Social and Political Union.
- 1906 Pankhurst and her daughters launch militant campaign in Bristian.
- 1913 Suffragettes protest in Washington, D.C., International Women's Peace Conference held in the Netherlands.
- 1914-1918 Women assume responsibilities outside the home during World War I
- 1919 Constance de Markiewicz the first woman elected to parliament in Britain.
- 1920 19th amendment to the constitution gives US women the vote
- 1918 British women householders over 30 years granted the vote.
- 1928 British women over 21 years granted the vote (Spodek 1998; Lapidus, Martin, Luthra, 2009).

However, between 1928 and 1945, women were still struggling for justice and dignity. It was in 1945 that the United Nations Charter spelt out the rights of people the world over and was adopted by National Governments in their constitutions. It was still a dark colon for women. Women were still mounting pressure for justice, recognition, social and political gear had to be changed. Thus the United Nations declared 1975 as International Women's Year. Moreover, 1976-1985 were declared as the United Nations Decades for Women. The UN also organised series of conferences on women in 1975 (Mexico City), 1980 (Copenhagen, Denmark), 1985 (Nairobi, Kenya) and 1996 (Beijing, China), United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cooperation UNESCO 2000 (Adiele & Mbacku, 2011).

In African continent, similar conferences were also held. These included the Five African Regional Conferences on women in 1977, 1979, 1984 and 1994 and the convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women in 1981 among others (Adiele & Mabchu, 2011:177). It would appear that Beijing Conference was one of the conferences that ginger and lit the flame of women's freedom in Nigeria. Women have now rode on the back of Beijing and achieved that much and partnering with men to achieve development for Nigeria since then.

Women Dignity the Other Side

Now, men have been able to allow women have justice and dignity, but society and materialism as a result of capitalist tendencies, many women have thrown their dignity to the winds. For instance a lot of Nigerian women are engaged in illegal drug trade within and outside Nigeria. They would ingest hard drugs, some placed it in their private parts, thus giving room for these officials to have access to where it should be "private". Thus have humiliated themselves in the hands of security officials - police, immigration, customs, etc. Dignity goes with integrity. Very many women enter into this trade either because they are lazy to use their hands and brains - thus offered themselves to be abused in the name of earning a living. Some practiced this trade outside the shores of Nigeria in countries such as Italy, USA (Akpan, 2005; Ekefre, 2011).

Some house wives subject themselves to abuse for mean men because of materialism - they want to belong to a particular group or class. Some entered into the trade because they want to augment for their meager income in order to cater for the family upkeep. Others forced themselves on men as wives when in actual fact they are not legally married at all (Akpan, 2005: 68). These are some of the ways in which modern women are pushing themselves into an undignified manner.

However, most of the violence associated with women are caused by women themselves. Some women have no respect for their husbands. The disrespect may be verbal insults, and other bad attributes. Other forms of indignity on women are caused

by bad governance resulting in crisis where women are largely affected e.g. the recent Jos crisis (Akpan, 2011).

Recommendation

Women in spite of the negative attitude men showed are still pushing forward in the development of the society. The paper recommends that women should be allowed to have access to free and quality education from the primary school to the University level. Violence against women as exhibited by some cruel men, stiffer punishment such as imprisonment be meted to these men. Women should be allowed to inherit their husbands' estates in case of the death of their husbands. Because in some societies in Nigeria women are not allowed to inherit her death husband's estate, this is bad and exposes such women to unnecessary difficulties.

Besides, the thirty percent positions needed by them in political positions or appointments be granted them. In all women should be encouraged to develop in all aspects of human endeavour with minimum stress.

Conclusion

In most African societies and indeed Nigeria women are still being looked down upon as lower species than men. That perhaps explain the state of widowhood among Nigerian women. Some societies maltreat and ostracise widows variously. Others still see woman in spite of their academic achievement as people whose functions are still in the kitchen, mills for the production of children, and instruments of happiness to their husbands on demand. However, there are jobs that are male dominated and perhaps exclusively for them, that cannot really be taken as one of the indices for men's superiority over women. There are equally functions that are better performed by women, and therefore have an edge over men. Indeed, from the beginning men and women were meant to be partners in development-in the home, resource or wealth creation centres, and if for any reason this arrangement was dislocated, men should not undermine the potentials of women and treat them with "kid groves". Man and woman are siamestic species and indeed partners in development-woman dignity need to be respected.

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