

Rights of Women and Political Office in Nigeria

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The article examined that in the light of the 3rd millennium the Nigerian woman is still debased by some practices that invariably hinder her attainment to the highest political office in Nigeria. The practices include but not limited to the setting up of different laws for men and women under the Sharia Penal Code, the requirement of a written consent from the husband of a woman to obtain her international passport, the illicit trade in women as abound in most parts of Nigeria, the *Igbo* customary law of inheritance based on the principle of primogeniture as in other parts of Nigeria, and lack of access to courts by the rural women majority. Books, articles in journals, newspapers, unpublished materials and relevant internet materials have been utilized. The Nigerian environment is fraught with cultural, institutional and legal constraints that limit the potencies of the Nigerian Women. This is in spite of the fact that her contributions to the Social, economic, cultural and political sphere of Nigeria has been enormous, amidst her negatively prevailing environment against the backdrop of changes taking place in the global world. Reservations of certain elective post and affirmative action as is been done in certain parts of the globe remains a viable option for the enhancement of the political aspirations of the Nigerian Women.

Keywords: women, human rights, impediments, political office, negative environment

Introduction

Women the world over are marking their 'first'; Michelle Bachelet, Chile's first ever, Woman President; Angele Merkel, first ever, Chancellor of Germany, Liberian President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, First ever African's female or woman President. The world has recorded eleven women Heads of State or Government in countries in every continent (Olong, 2006, p. 43). The world over, more than half of the countries that hold elections, use affirmative action or woman representation in office that takes the form of gender quotas and reservations which have more or less been proved to be effective tools in women empowerment.

In Honduras, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Support for the National policy of equal opportunities paved the way for two landmark pieces of legislation; a law on equal opportunities and an electoral law reserving thirty percent seats for woman. Honduras now joins a growing number of countries in developing mechanisms to ensure that at least a certain percentage of women take part in decision-making rather than engage in the fight for the passage of the nudity bill, as is in Nigeria today. Aside, a few Nigerian women, like Princess Sorah Susan, the Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Kofo Akerele Bucknor, the then Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Remi oyo first female Presidential Spokesperson in

Nigeria, Managing Director with the World Bank, Ngozi Okonjo- Iweale, Akunyili, Minister for Information and Communication, Ezekwesili, Officer of the World Bank, making the most positive impact in the Nigeria economic, political and social sphere and giving women in other spheres and countries the affronting to move on, Nigeria in the 3rd millennium seems randomly oblivious of the fact that women are marching on to unimaginable heights in other parts of the globe (Oluduro & Durojaye, 2006, p. 31). Why would Nigeria be an exception having being besieged with discriminatory laws, policies and practices that remain laughable but annoying in the sands of the 3rd Millennium (Mamashella, 1993, p. 153). In this write-up, the writer would unveil the struggles of the Nigerian women to aspire to any political office vis-à-vis various discriminatory laws, practices and polices against women that have characterized Nigeria in the 3rd milieu.

Women's Score Card in Nigeria

Among the big women of the past were Queen Daurama of Daura, Queen Amina of Zaria who led a predominantly male army on war of conquest before establishing an expansive Empire, and Magira, the powerful Queen mother in Kanem Bornu Empire. There was also Princess Ozolua of Benin, Princess Inikpi of Igala land, Princess Moremi of Ife, Queen Kambasa of Ijawand and Queen Owawri of Ilesha (Ali, 1996, p. 23).

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In Yoruba land, the first daughter of the deceased monarch often became the regent on whose shoulder rests the responsibility for township administration before the installation of a new ruler (Oladesu, 2009, p. 14). Education and exposure strengthened the women to put off the cultural burden of silence in the midst of obvious oppression.

The Aba women riot broke out in 1929 to protest the exclusion of women from decision-making and excessive taxation. In 1946, women protest led by Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti landed the Egba monarch in exile. During the colonial era, some protests were also organized by women between 1927 and 1941 (Kamel, 2006, p. 65). Oyinkan Abayomi blazed the trail in 1944 by establishing the Women's party. Then, only few women were educated. It was at a time parents preferred to keep their daughters at home preparatory to marriage while reluctantly sending their male children to the missionary schools. Abayomi's organization represented an expression of concern and wish. It did not command a large following. Whilst, the party was trying to organise women, the strong political associations led by the nationalists were engrossed with freedom battles against the colonial masters (Ihuoma, 2006, p. 69).

However, the Women Party sustained the clamour for franchise for women. In later years, while limited franchise was accorded the women in the South-West and East, the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) led by Alhaji Ahmadu Bello opposed the enfranchisement of women in the region. The lot fell on the women leaders of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), Hajiya Gambo Sawaba to challenge the NPC's discriminatory practice. For several years, she campaigned widely for women's right to vote and be voted for women nationalists were few. During the negotiation for independence with the British, only three women; Margaret Ekpo, Ekpo Young and Ransome-Kuti participated as advisers in the Constitutional Conferences that preceded Independence in 1960. As from 1951, women played a role in cheering politicians at political rallies, for example, in the West, Action Group (AG) Women Association was formed. Prominent leaders were Olayinka Rosiji, Alhaja Abibat Mogaji, Dideolu Awolowo and notable wealthy women traders.

However, the first regional government was male dominated. The House of Senate had 36 members. Only one woman, Wuraola Esan, Iyabode of Ibadan, was a member. Out of 312 members of House of Representatives, there was no woman. Hence, there was no woman minister in the First Republic. Similarly, there was no female member of the Regional Executive Councils in the three Regions. In mid West and East, four women legislators emerged. They were Margaret Ekpo,

Janet Mokelu, Ekpo Young and Beatrise Kerry who joined the Senate from the Midwest in 1964.

The Military displaced the legitimate authorities in 1966 in a coup. In the 13 years of military rule, no women emerged as Federal Commissioner, although few women were appointed as State Commissioners. An example was Bolanle Awe, a Professor of African Studies who was Commissioner in Old Oyo State.

During the phased transition to civilian rule programme, which started in 1975, women were also marginalised. The Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) was made up of 50 male members. Women activists who criticised the composition referred to them as "the fifty wise men" to draw attention to the denial of women participation. The protest paved the way for the inclusion of five women in the 250-member Constituent Assembly that reviewed the draft. It was to the credit of the Constituent Assembly that universal franchise was adopted during the 1979 elections. For the first time, Northern women exercised the right to vote in the country.

The Upper Chamber, the Senate, had 45 Senators, in 1979. None of them was a woman. Out of 450 members of House of Representatives, only three women were elected. In the 19 State House of Assembly, only five women were legislators. President Shehu Shagari appointed two female ministers, Ebun Oyagola and Janet Akinrinade during his first term. In the second term, he appointed two more ministers, the late Chief Samuel Akintola Premier of old Western Region, the other one was Jimi Johnson. In the 1984 election, Franca Afegbua was the only woman who made it to the Senate.

The Head of State, Gen. Mohammadu Buhari made no attempt to organize a democratic election; the policy of appointing at least one female commissioner was sustained in many states. His successor tended to focus attention more on women empowerment through the activities of his wife, first Maryam Babangida who set up the "Better Life Programme". Babangida conducted governorship election which did not produce any female governor. But, more women emerged as councilors, sub-members of House of Representatives. Alhaja Laifat okunu also became deputy governor of Lagos State. In the Local Councils, out of 1,297 positions, women secured 206. A woman was elected into the Senate and 12 went to the Lower Chamber. Under Abacha and Shonekan regimes, Nike Akande and Kuforiji Olubi became ministers (Oladesu, 2009, p. 14).

During Obasanjo's administration, for the first time in the nation's history it recorded eight women ministers and out of the eight, five occupied cabinet ranks. About twenty-five to twenty-six percent of women acted as Federal Permanent Secretaries and Chief Executives of

Federal Parastatals and Agencies. At the judicial arm of Government, there were many female Senior Advocates of Nigeria and High Court Judges. A woman was raised to the post of a Judge of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. There were three women Deputy Governors in Ogun, Osun and Ekiti States of Nigeria. Ogun and Kwara States had women as Speaker and Deputy Speaker respectively. In Yobe State alone, there were female Commissioners, three female Permanent Secretaries, three female deputy Permanent Secretaries, two female Special Advisers, two female Special Assistants and many more female Directors.

In 2007, there was a meagre improvement, although, it was still abysmal compared to the leap achieved by women in other countries, including India, Norway, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and South-Africa as in 1999, there were only three female Senators in the National Assembly out of 109. In 2003, the number increased to four. In 2007, it rose to nine, representing 8.20 percent. In the House of Representative, women occupied 12 seats, out of 360 in 1999. In 2003, it increased to 21. In 2007, the number rose to 26, representing 7.2 percent.

Today, in the 36 State House of Assembly, women occupy 55 seats out of 990, representing 5.5 percent. There are six deputy governors. But, the governorship is still a dream. The CEDAW Bill is still before the President.

Political Women Map of Nigeria

In Nigerian chequered political history, the 1st Republic from 1960-65 saw only three women; one Senator and two Members of the House of Assembly. Whilst, in the 2nd Republic 1979-1983, Nigeria had only one woman Senator out of 57 and 11 women members out of 445 House of Representatives. From 1985 – 93 Nigeria had only two women out of 19 members in the political bureau 3 members out of 591. In the local government elections in 1960, whilst there were only 27 women out of the 1,172 in the House of Assembly, with no women elected in 14 states but in 2007, women acquired more strength. Now, there are nine Federal Senators, 28 Representatives, 42 Female State Legislators, 54 deputy Governors, and eight Female Ministers. One Senator of 91 members elected in 1991, 8 women out of 21 presidential aspirants with none was successful but in 1994 Nigeria had only one presidential aspirant (Olujimi, 2000, p. 164).

In the 4th Republic out of the two seats for presidential and vice presidency no woman was elected. While out of 109 seats in the senate 5 women contested and two women won. Out of 360 seats in the governorship election out of the 72 seats women contested only one won as Deputy

Governor in the State House of Assembly out of the 990 seats, 39 contested and 12 women won (Onyegu, 1999, p. 19). The utmost sorry political state of the women in Nigeria was not different at the Local Government level. Thus out of 774 seats available 46 women contested and only 9 women won. Whilst out of 8,800 councillorship seats 510 women contested and only 143 won (Ezeilo, 1998, p. 131).

The author agrees with Olujemi when she posited that women are still not well represented in our government as there is need to look at the socio-cultural aspects of women's dilemma for the immense and crucial role they play in all spheres in the society; but not acknowledged. Civil society coordinating committee on Electoral Reforms, lamented that not all the geo-political zones have woken up. In particular, the North-western zone has the least number of women in politics because the socio-cultural factors impact heavily on socialisation and women's opportunities for advancement in life.

Even in strategic appointments which are ad hoc in nature, women have not fared better. For example, when the Political Reforming Conference, was set in Abuja by former president Obasanjo, women were still consigned to the minority. The state governors were expected to nominate six delegates each. Only two governors out of 36 nominated a woman each in their respective states. Obasanjo however, lived by example, by nominating 10 women out of the 50 federal nominees. The Uwais Electoral Reform Panel had 40 members. Only five were women. Across the political parties women are also marginalized. They are under-represented. Politics in Nigeria is dirty. There are certain unruly behaviours which are ignored as part of politics but women cannot engage in because of the desire to keep their reputation. They do not usually emerge as delegates and many husbands discourage their wives from active participation because of sexual abuse. Besides, the use of abusive language undermined the female opponents. During intraparty squabbles, female politicians were subjected to whisper campaigns and innuendos about their alleged loose sexual and moral standard (Ezeilo, 1998, p. 132)

Political campaigns were often built around the true marital status of female candidates as a means of questioning their moral standard. Higher standards were set for female politicians and the rules about morality and responsibility were relaxed in favour of their male counterparts. Women candidates needed to prove that they are good housewives and mothers to be acceptable to the man. No wonder why Hon Ajoke Adegeye, a member of the Lagos State House of Assembly advised women to rise against the odds and seek elective posts (Olong, 2009, p. 341).

Practices That Impede Their Political Aspirations

It is apposite to succinctly point out reports of discriminatory practices against women in the implementation of Sharia Criminal Law in Nigeria: Bariya, a 13 year old teenage mother was found guilty of fornication under the Zamfara Sharia Law; even though she accused three men of sexually violating her, the court set those men free for lack of evidence as required under the Sharia Law Code. Bariya was found guilty and received 100 strokes of the cane 40 days after delivery of her baby. Another saga runs thus that both Safiya and Amina were accused of adultery and having a child out of wedlock and sentenced to death by stoning. In both cases, the men involved were set free because of the provision of the law that a man who is alleged to have committed adultery can only be punished upon the evidence of four witnesses. Since no man can even be caught in the act by four witnesses, the man will be set free while the woman will be punished, may even be stoned to death. Fortunately, for Safiya, the trial judge failed to observe all the procedural provisions of the law and the Sokoto Sharia Court of Appeal quashed the conviction of Amina for miscarriage of justice, also the Katsina Sharia Court quashed the conviction of Amina for miscarriage of justice (Ihuama, 2009, p. 680).

A traditional ruler in Jigawa State was given 40 strokes of the cane for keeping at home a housewife who was not his legal wife. While in Bauchi State, a pregnant woman was given 100 strokes of the cane for allegedly committing fornication. Ihuoma like the author would ask: why the discrepancies in the punishment for the same sin?

Why would a married Nigerian woman require the written consent of her husband to obtain an international passport before the Nigerian Immigration Service can grant her passport? She could as well obtain the written permission of her husband before venturing for any political office. However, this ugly and illegal trend was successfully challenged recently by Priye Iyalla-Amadi in the unreported case of *Priye Iyalla-Amadi v. Comptroller-General of Nigeria Immigration Service* (2009). This case was instituted by this woman when she applied to renew her expired International Passport in the Port Harcourt office of Nigeria Immigration Service. She was requested by the immigration office to present a written consent of her husband permitting her to be issued with an international passport. The woman objected and challenged this long standing and notorious practice in the Federal High Court, Port Harcourt. The court ruled in her favour by stating that such a policy was discriminatory against married women as their husbands are not required to produce written consent of their wives

before being issued international passports. The court ruled that the policy contravenes Section 17(1), 21 and 42 of the Constitution (Nigerian Constitution, 1999).

No modern evil practice is as debasing to women as the illicit trade in women trafficking. The average age of trafficked girls remain 15 years and the statistics of Nigerian girls in the European sex trade can be compartmentalised as 60% to 80% of girls in sex trade in Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands. The common trafficking routes remain west coast to Mali, Morocco and by boat to Spain to west coast to Libya or Saudi Arabia. 95% of those trafficked travel by road across the Sahara Desert, others through airports, seaports and bush paths. Most of our trafficked women are often used as prostitutes, scavengers, car washers, bus conductors, drug peddlers and farmers.

Simply put, trafficking, is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of person by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion or abduction, or deception of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments of or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

The Nigerian woman has the cud-de-sac of this modern day slavery from Abia State to Cross Rivers to Rivers to Imo States liter the story of gruesome facts of victims of the obnoxious evil trade. In Abia State, there is the case of a 40 year old woman, Zek, who came to Ntingha near Aba, took one 13 year old girl, Beauty, from her mother on the pretext that she wanted her to leave the mother and come to Port Harcourt. From Port Harcourt, Zek took the girl to Lagos and sold her to a customs officer for #100,000. Following the maltreatment she received from the customs officer's wife, Beauty ran away from the house. The "cheated" customs officer was said to have reported Zek in Port Harcourt that Beauty was missing. He demanded for a refund of his #100,000. After four months in transit, Beauty found a "Good Samaritan" in Lagos who provided money for her to travel back to Aba.

In Akwa Ibom State, one Chioma Ogbonna who hails from Abia State was nabbed by the police for attempting to sell off one girl Chiamaka Chima, resident of Akwa Ibom State to human traffickers from Gabon Republic. Chioma said she later changed her earlier plan to personally take Chiamaka to Gabon. She was accosted by the police and taken to the Ministry of Women Affairs Uyo, for further interrogation and prosecution. A 25 year old deaf and dumb woman was lured out of her residence in November 2005 by one of her female friends to a market ostensibly to plait her (deaf and dumb woman) hair, as at December 2005, the whereabouts of the ladies remained

unknown. Is it possible for such trafficked women to have the zest and zeal for any political office?

The Igbo customary law of inheritance which is a reflection of what happens to women in most other parts of Nigeria. This is evident in the fact that inheritance is based on the principle of primogeniture; succession by the eldest son known as "Okpala" or "Diokpa. The years 1963 and 1989 saw a reaffirmation of the monstrous discriminatory practices against women taken to the height of judicial pronouncement. In 1997 judicial activism coupled with the belief in the equality of man and woman made Justice Niki Tobi to assert the oneness of man and woman. 2003 could be rightly seen as the footprint in the gradual demise of this discrimination. The development and improvement in the rights of women in other parts of Africa should be encouraging to the Nigerian women (Rebecca, 2005, p. 169).

Ewelukwa (2005:141) sums it all by positing that fear, lack of resources, lack of support from family and discouragement from traditional leaders are some of the factors that prevent poor uneducated women from utilizing the legal system and advancing a right's claim.

Charlesworth (1994, p. 102) added further that because access to law courts and the utilization of the rights discourse is presently determined by social and power relations the rights discourse remains relevant only to elite women in the cities, the norms and mechanisms of human rights are still largely incomprehensible to the poor, rural women.

The Mandate

The first World Conference on Women (WCW) was held in Mexico city, Mexico in 1995 and the fourth held in Beijing, China 1995, cumulatively this increased the decision making powers of women all over the world. The Beijing platform for action specifically set the goal of thirty percent for women participation in every aspect of national decision making positions, as a precursor towards the ultimate objective of 50 percent affirmative action of women involvement in national decision making process. The mandate therefore cannot be unconnected with the United Nation's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which Nigeria is a signatory. Recently Nigeria ratified CEDAW though five countries out of the West African Sub-region have not ratified the Convention in spite of the fact that it was since adopted by Africa as CEDAW optional protocol in 1999.

The Need to Domesticate the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women

Nigeria has over time ratified most international human rights instruments to include: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention on Suppression and Punishment of Crime of Apartheid, the International Convention against Apartheid in Sports, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and particularly the Protocol to the African Charter of the Human and Peoples Rights on the Right of Women in Africa ratified by Nigeria on the 18th February 2005.

Ratification of treaties by Nigeria cannot be said to be enough. Nigeria must take a step further by domesticating such laws as it is only when such treaties are domesticated that they are transformed into Nigerian law. Apart from the African Charter and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which have been transformed into Nigerian law, none of the other ratified instruments have been so transformed (Babajo, 1990, p. 23).

In spite of the loftiness of the maxim *pactum sunt servande*, which in essence sums that treaties ratified by States become binding on such States at the international arena, the Nigerian experience seems different. The Nigerian Supreme Court in the case of *African Reinsurance Corporation v. Fantaye* (1986) held that treaties do not constitute part of the law of the land merely by virtue of their conclusion by the country. Justice Aguda, in *AG Botswana v. Unity Dow* (2001) posited that in all these circumstances, a courting this country faced with the difficulty of interpretation as to whether or not some legislation breached any of the provisions entrenched in Chapter II of our Constitution which deals with fundamental rights is entitled to look at the international agreement, treaties and obligation entered into before or after the legislation was enacted to ensure that such domestic legislation does not breach any of the International Conventions, agreements, treaties and obligation binding upon this country save upon clear and unambiguous language. In my view, this must be so whether or not such international conventions agreements, treaties, protocols or obligatory laws have been specifically incorporated into our domestic law. It could be argued that an international treaty which has been ratified but not domesticated is not all together devoid of any benefit. Nigeria is not amongst the countries whose constitution or legal system makes treaties self-executing. None self-executing treaties require legislative action before their municipal

application. The law is trite that where international human rights instruments has not only been ratified by Nigeria but has been domesticated; it becomes enforceable in Nigeria courts. It is actually not yet *Uhuru* for the Nigeria woman as the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Right of Women in Africa by Nigeria is not enough. Nigeria must go two steps further to domesticate it.

What Hope for the Nigerian Women?

Ten years after civilian rule was restored, women have continued to protest their poor representation. In 2003, the late Jadesola Akande, legal scholar and former Vice-Chancellor of Lagos State University, Ojo, decried the level of representation which she put at two percent in politics and five percent in total governance.

Writing a foreword to a book titled: "Gender Audit 2007 Election and Issues in Women Political Participation in Nigeria (II)", Chioma Agomo of the University of Lagos attributed the low performance to the lack of level playing field. She explained that the lack of improvement as a springboard for a historical exploration of the various gender issues in public administration, and other challenges bothering on social and cultural exclusion which women face.

In Nigeria, the commitment to the affirmative action has been in conflict with the more entrenched and politically expedient concepts of "quota", "federal character" and "geographical spread". These have been elevated above the gains of women struggle. Women in Nigeria carry the burden of nature which, in the perception of men, should predispose them to an outline of cultural rules earmarked for the weak sex (Oladesu, 2009, p. 16).

Besides, the Civil Society Coordinating Committee on Electoral Reform (CSCC) noted that women are still largely responsible to their husbands. Most women have to get permission from their spouses to attend political meetings or be involved in other activities outside home. In some cases, they have less bargaining power, which may be dependent on their ability to earn income. It further, noted that women are still largely responsible for household labour and childcare and they have little time for serious political engagement.

Other hindrances are religious and cultural traditions which compel women to accept the status quo, even if it is repressive. Compared to men, women have less access to crucial resources such as information, education, skills, cash income and credit, all of which are necessary for survival within the current stifling economic depression.

Women are a huge population; almost constitute 64 percent of voters, if not more. A

politician in Lagos State, Chief Oyeniyi Raheem, said the numerical strength could not translate into improve representation because, apart from sex weakness, men deliberately block women from attaining power. At rallies, women constitute the singing train. Their functional relevance is reduced to their mobilization for campaigns and voting during elections.

Women are not united, as they prefer to vote for men instead of women. Naturally, they have fear and some of them refuse to exploit a meaningful political advantage. A research conducted by the Women's Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) confirmed the apathy of women towards their sex. It stated that "Over 70 percent of female aspirants attributed their poor showing to the low level of support they enjoyed from women in their constituencies".

Violence and zoning system also aborts the aspirations of many women. Women shunned political involvement because of the fear of physical harm, intimidation, molestation and sexual abuse.

In 2007, Senator Iyabo Anisulowo from Ogun State said that she left the PDP for ANPP because he resisted such an abuse in the high places. On zoning, the report said: "Some female aspirants suffered the defeat or were edged out through the unconstitutional formula of zoning posts in the name of balance and rotational conventions".

Again, financial constraints are often cited for the failure of women in politics. Over 90 percent of female aspirants in 2003 elections complained about lack of money to pay their registration fees, establish campaign offices in their constituencies, fund campaign structures and provide logistics such as buses and money for mobilizing supporters.

Tax declaration is also another party requirement that proves to be a challenge for some women aspirants. Many women are not employed in the formal sector, and hence, have nothing to declare over the years. For those who are even successful in primaries, many are unable to pay for delegates to vote for them because it involves competing with other wealthier opponents.

More worrisome is the fact that, even at the grassroots, the ambition of women suffers because aspirants lacked the time and money to cultivate voters. The peculiar case in the North is the low educational qualifications of women. The requirement for secondary school certificate was a significant constraint for nearly 50 percent of the aspirants for State Houses of Assembly, especially in the North. But, WRAPA lamented that "many had primary school certificates or were dropouts from secondary school".

Yet, common to all is the obvious lack of political capacity. Women have not learned the ropes enough to rub shoulders with men in the fine and dirty games of politics. In Lagos State, there

was a conspiracy by the PDP leadership and other male aspirants to edge out Remi Adiukwu-Bakare, a leading governorship aspirant, in 2003. At a short notice, she was asked to proceed to Akure, Ondo State, for clearance before the primaries. The primary was fixed for the next day when she left. Before she returned, the exercise was completed. In bitterness, she defected to AD (Olong M, 2009, p. 34)

Over the years, many women groups have also protested the wrong application of indigeneity. More often than not, female aspirants are told that, by marrying outside their local governments of birth, they have lost their indigeneity. Women who are also married to non-indigenes of the local governments where they live and work suffer systematic discrimination in their husband's constituency. They are told that they do not really belong because indigeneity is based on consanguinity. In 1999, when Tokunbo Dosunmu, daughter of the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo was named an ambassador, a Senator from Lagos, Wahab Dosunmu, objected to it, saying that she hailed from Ogun State.

In its review of the 2003 poll, an Owerri, Imo State based association, the Centre for Development, Constitutionalism and Peace Advocacy observed that the marginalization of women was deliberate. In a report titled: "Women and Politics in Nigeria Today", the group stated that "many well qualified women who indicated interest in contest for certain elective posts under their parties were brutally intimidated out, and some were asked to withdraw. Many of those who contested were officially rigged out in preference for male contestant". Over 60 percent of the aspirants sampled indicated intensive and regular campaigns. Majority, however, relied on unorganized support groups, with little or no capacity for strategy, advocacy and local standing, to bring legitimacy to their candidature. Where women emerged as candidates without prolonged stress they benefited from consensus method.

Conclusion and Recommendation

When the then Director-General of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control, (NAFDAC), Dora Akunyili (OFR) came into limelight, she confronted the pharmaceutical quacks who were her kinsmen, earning accolades from far and near. Under the late Gen. Sani Abacha, former Military Head of State, she was the South-East Zonal Secretary of the Petroleum Trust Fund. Many Nigerian actually called for her elevation into a minister, which President Umaru Yar'Adua later did. In the saddle as Information Minister, she has preoccupied herself with the "Rebranding Project". Sources said she eyed the governorship of Anambra State, on the platform of PDP but had to jettison the ambition when it was obvious that the

power brokers were backing her colleague in the academia, Charles Soludo, former Central Bank of Nigeria, governor.

Chikwe is a former Minister of Transport and Aviation. She was very close to former President Olusegun Obasanjo under whose leadership she served as member of Federal Executive Council. Currently, she is an ambassador. Lynda Chuba-Ikpeazu, a lawyer-daughter of an eminent jurist. She served in the House of Representatives. Ikpeazu is an advocate of women rights. She did not return to the lower chamber in 2007.

Virgy Etiaba, a teacher before venturing into politics. Virgy Etiaba is the Deputy Governor of Anambra State. She held forth as "governor" when Governor Peter Obi was wrongly impeached. She fought for the right of pensioners, women and children.

Obiageli Ezekwesili, was the Special Assistant on Budget to President Obasanjo. In that capacity, she headed the Due Process Unit. She served briefly as Minister of Education and Solid Mineral Development. She is now an official of the World Bank. Ita Giwa, in the Third Republic, she was a member of House of Representatives. In 1994, she was a delegate to the Constitution Conference. In 1999, she became a Senator on the platform of ANPP, representing the oil rich Bakassi. Later, she was appointed as Special Adviser to the President on National Assembly Matters.

Hajia Aishatu Ismail was the first Minister of Women Affairs in the Fourth Republic. Before then, she was a woman activist. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a World Bank official, she became the minister of Finance in 2003. An alumna of Harvard University, she holds a doctorate degree in Regional Economics and Development from the Massachusetts Institute of technology. Later, she was redeployed to the Foreign Affairs Ministry. She is now Managing Director with the World Bank.

Kofo Akerele Bucknor, the Third Republic Senator was Deputy Governor of Lagos State between 1999 and 2003. She left AD for PDP following her resignation. Remi Oyo, the veteran journalist is the first Female Presidential Spokesperson in the country. She is now the Managing Director of News Agency of Nigeria (NAN).

A teacher, Princess Sosan became the Deputy Governor of Lagos on the platform of AC in 2007. She also doubles as Education Commissioner in the State. Erelu Olusola Obada, an astute politician became the deputy governor on Osun State in 2003, like her Ogun State counterpart Badru. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, a broadcaster, became a member of House of Representatives in 2003, re-elected in 2007. The list tomorrow may be endless if the Nigerian women as amazons, get up to be counted. The inroads into political offices in Nigeria have been chronicled but they can only at best be described as near misses. No women in spite of her

aspirations has attained the highest political post of the land, be it governor or the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Fear, lack of resources, lack of support discouragement from traditional rulers remains the lot of the Nigerian women.

The 3rd millennium has witnessed monumental political aspirations of women all over the globe. Africa and indeed Nigeria remains party to that globe. Whilst not alluring to the sordid fact that things are somewhat different, the author subscribes to the opinion that only in the reservation of certain elective post to the women folk and an entrenchment of an affirmative action, the enhancement of the political aspirations of women in Nigeria will for a long time remain unattainable.

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