OJO NRO: AN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF NIGERIAN WOMEN'S NATIONALISM IN AN UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION, 1947-1967

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ABSTRACT

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Gender analysis must be further developed in histories of African nationalism and also African intellectual histories. *Ojo Nro* is an intellectual history that speaks to Nigerian women's ideological and practical contributions to the theory and practice of nationalism. It contends that Nigerian women articulated nationalism in a way that was distinct from the mainstream politically elite male forms. This assertion is assessed through an analysis of unrecognized tenets of their activism, especially their non-political ideology and agenda. These elements, the non-political ideology and agenda, are discussed in great detail because they were the most striking of Nigerian women's expressions of nationalism and, as such, they constitute a large part of their theoretical and practical contributions to Nigerian nationalism.

This dissertation is dedicated to My mother, father, brother Yusuf, grandmother, TVA Church in Nigeria, and all of the Nigerian people that allowed me to come into their homes and interview them. Thank you all for supporting my scholarly pursuits

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Introduction

In sort, nationalism represents a constellation of ideas, ideologies, imaginaries, practices, activities, movements, and organizations, in which collective consciousness and action are mobilized to construct and promote national identity, historical agency, and cultural difference for the invented or imagined community….that may, and often does entail acquiring and defending state power. *Clearly, the vocabularies and manifestations of nationalism exhibit enormous variations from one place to another and from one period to another* [emphasis added].

-Paul Tiyambe Zeleza
Power and Nationalism in Modern Africa

It is time to put African Women in their proper place. On August 14, 1964 Constance Cummings-John, a female nationalist leader of Sierra Leone, penned a letter to Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti (Mrs. Kuti), a Nigerian nationalist, calling her "My dear Funmi" and saying "You have done so much for African womanhood, you have labored to lift our heads up but you have done so unobtrusively and without any honor or recognition. Someday Nigeria will feel your worth when the History of Nigeria is properly written and publicized."[1] Cummings-John expressed the sentiment that women like Mrs. Kuti, at that time, had not yet received the acknowledgement that they deserved for their activism in African nations. She spoke to three important topics in this portion of the letter: African women's activism, the worth of women to the nation, and a proper retelling of national history. Citing these themes, her statement supports the ideas that 1) African women's work toward gender equality constituted a pivotal part of and had noteworthy implications to the holistic development of the nation 2) African history can never be whole without women's stories and that 3) a revisionist history of African nations, in

*The title is a Yoruba expression wherein *ojo* means rain and *nro* is a compound word where the –n represents the present active participle (-ing) while *ro* is fall. All Yoruba verbs are in past tense and are made present by adding –n. Infinitives are made by placing *–lati* (to) in front of a verb (ex. lati ro means to rain). *Ojo Nro* means rain is falling or it is raining. It is a play on the word umbrella and is meant to amplify the focus on women's collective activism in umbrella organizations. It also represents the symbolic quality of rain and water as refreshing in many African cultures and has been used to signify that this research is bringing newness or refreshment to perceptions of women and nationalist enterprise.

[1] Constance Cummings-John, *Letter to Funmilayo Ransome Kuti*, (Monrovia, Liberia 1964)

this case Nigeria, must be written in order to actually highlight the contributions of women to the growth and stability of new African nations. As they say in Nigeria, *O ga ooo*, it's no small thing to do this work. Even so, this dissertation joins the conversation on women in nationalism and serves as a step towards crafting that "proper" history of nationalism in Nigeria that centers women as autonomous contributors to nationalist theory and practice. *Ojo Nro* is an intellectual history (a history of thinkers and the development of ideas)[2] that speaks to women's ideological and practical contributions to the theory and practice of nationalism. It contends that Nigerian women articulated nationalism in a way that was distinct from the mainstream politically elite male forms. This assertion is assessed through an analysis of unrecognized tenets of their activism, especially their non-political ideology and agenda. These latter elements, the non-political ideology and agenda, are discussed in great detail because they were the most striking of Nigerian women's expressions of nationalism and, as such, they constitute a large part of their theoretical and practical contributions to Nigerian nationalism.

Background

Gender analysis must be further developed in histories of African nationalism and also African intellectual histories. According to Anne McClintock, in *No Longer in a Future Heaven,* women in histories of African nationalism have been conceptualized in specific ways that do not allow for more diverse conceptions of women's activism in nationalist movements. One of the most prevalent and enduring of these is in the role of supporter. Safia Aidid, in *Haweenku Wa Garab (Women Are a Force),* agrees that women have been treated as a micro narrative to the movements, ideals, and nationalist articulations of politically elite males. I argue that the larger bibliography on African nationalism lacks more substantively nuanced assessments of women's

[2] According to *Towards an Intellectual History of Black Women*, intellectual history encompasses the evolution of ideas and thinkers as well as retrieving ideas and foregrounding them in historical contexts and situations to trace their development as a result of challenges to the mind, body, and women (and I would add, the nation).

contributions because women have been portrayed as followers and as a subtext to men's actions in histories of African independence movements. The historiographies of women in African nationalism and women in Nigerian nationalism both exhibit the same deficiency in terms of analyzing women's contributions to nationalism.[3] For example, foundational texts on women in African nationalism such as Signe Arnfred, in her article *Women in Mozambique: Gender Struggle and Gender Politics* (1988) and Gay W. Siedman, in "*No Freedom Without the Women:" Mobilization and Freedom in South Africa* (1993) portray women as supporters of politically elite male nationalist movements. The seminal texts of Nigerian nationalism, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent Nation* by Richard Sklar and *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* by James S. Coleman, do not speak to women's autonomous development of nationalist ideology and how that impacted the movement as a whole.

African intellectual history, much like the narrative of African nationalism, was rooted in largely male-centric scholarship. In the earlier works of the 1950s until the early 2000s African intellectual histories spoke of women tangentially if at all. This can be seen in works such as *African Glory: The Story of Vanished Negro Civilizations* (1954) by J.C. DeGraft-Johnson, *Image of Africa* (1964) by Philip Curtin, and *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and the Movement, 1776-1963* (1982) by P. Olisanwuche Esedebe. Scholars of African intellectual history have begun to address the lack of engagement with women and gender although there is much to be done. Even more contemporary African intellectual histories such as *Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood, Labor, and Social Development in Colonial Lagos* (2003) by Abosede A. George that do fully address issues of gender do not focus on the ways in which African women have created autonomous intellectual narratives.

[3] See chapter two for an extensive review of key literature that supports this assertion.

In order to diversify these trends in African intellectual and Nigerian nationalist histories, this study centers intellectual stances and nationalist agendas of Yoruba women in the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations (FNWO). The group grew to prominence in southwestern Nigeria, home to the Yoruba people. What would later be known as the FNWO began as a small radical organization in 1947 under the name of the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU). The AWU, led by Mrs. Kuti, used a series of sit-ins, protests, media campaigns, songs, and civil disobedience to wage a successful "Women's War" on the British colonial administration. Later the group became the Nigerian Women's Union in 1949 and served as an umbrella organization for women's groups throughout Nigeria. In 1953 this group became the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations (FNWO) and continued to support gender equality and self government for Nigeria while allying with women throughout Africa, even reaching out to Black women in the U.S. and Caribbean. During the period of the mid 1950s to1967 the FNWO opposed the Biafran War, championed healthcare, entrepreneurship, and voting rights for women, and fought for education for women and girls. These efforts served as a part of their plan to build a better infrastructure through community development that would support a self-sustaining, woman empowering, and independent Nigeria. Their nationalist philosophy centered gender relations and community building in addition to Black consciousness, transnational outreach, music radicalism[4], and especially the ideology of non-politicism. These elements are collectively unique to Nigerian women's collective activism during African decolonization.

[4] Radical can be defined as a rejection of established norms in an effort to change the fundamental nature of institutions. Music radicalism is defined in this work as the use of music for a radical purpose. When Nigerian women used music as a weapon of protest to contest gender inequality and colonialism, they were refusing to adhere to certain norms established by the colonial administration as well as disrespectful behaviors by indigenous men who may or may not have been allied with the colonials. This, I assert, was a radical act. This definition draws from Jacqueline Rhodes' *Radical Feminism, Writing, and Critical Agency: From Manifesto to Modern* (2005).

Statement of the Problem

Ojo Nro asserts that African women's intellectual history and unique collective articulation of nationalism has been overlooked in African nationalist narratives due to the ways in which women have been represented historically since late 1970s. There is a lack in the substantive assessment of women's intellectualism and organizing, in umbrella organizations, because they have been treated as followers of male nationalist ideologies which left very little room for them to be seen as creators of their own independent nationalist movement. Nira Yuval Davis and Flora Anthias, cited by McClintock, suggested that women have been portrayed in nationalist narratives in five major ways:

1. As biological reproducers of national groups
2. As symbols and signifiers of national difference in male discourse
3. As transmitters of cultural narratives
4. As reproducers of the boundaries of the nation (through accepting or refusing sex or marriage with certain groups of men)
5. As active participants in national movements (in armies, congresses, trade union activism, community organizations)[5]

Nationalist narratives, however, must be pushed beyond such constricted gendered constructions in order to situate women as autonomous actors in the development of nationalist theory and practice so that their work in developing and fueling the nationalist movements may be fully recognized. There must be a move from viewing women as *supporters in* to *creators of* nationalist movements. In *Ojo Nro* I argue that historians must begin to view women not only as conscious supporters but independent leaders of nationalist movements complete with their own philosophies and agendas. The recognition of these intellectual trends in women's nationalism can help historians to discover new articulations of African nationalism that can be used to challenge assumptions and develop new paradigms and perspectives of the existing narrative.

[5] Anne M. McClintock, *"No Longer in a Future Heaven Women and Nationalism in South Africa,"* Transition 51 (1991), 105

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to add depth and complexity to the ways in which historians have treated women's actions intellectually and practically by analyzing the nationalist ideologies, non-political philosophies, agendas, and practices of the FNWO to uncover the distinctiveness and contributions of women to nationalism and self-government in Nigeria. In essence, this study champions a move toward *women's nationalism* instead of a continuance of histories of *women in nationalism*. There is a clear difference between the two. In the latter, women are characterized as supporters of politically elite male led movements while the former suggests that women were autonomous leaders of nationalist movements in their own right. Furthermore, *women's nationalism* inherently identifies women's ideals and agendas toward self determination for women and the nation as distinct from the mainstream nationalist movements which were focused more on politics. In order to understand these intricacies, women's actions must be examined as expressions of their unique philosophies and agendas toward national development including, but not limited to, feminist emancipation.

Furthermore, it is not enough to label these African women nationalists as feminists without a thorough interrogation of the cosmological beliefs and gender ideologies which shaped their agendas for national liberation. Importantly, while supporting women's rights, the FNWO taught that women should not fight against men but garner a concerted effort with men for the good of the nation. *Ojo Nro* theorizes about their unique feminist expression by developing an original concept of African gender, *Legbeism*. The brand of feminism exhibited in the FNWO, hinges off of Yoruba cosmology which states that two opposite forces must work in cooperation and respect to create a harmonious environment. This is a central principle of *Legbeism* (discussed in greater detail in chapter three).

In order to address these issues, existing research, theory, and scholarship should be more inclusive of the ways in which independent African women's organizations and their intellectual narratives have shaped and contributed to the theory and practice of African nationalism during the decolonization era. According to Geiger, "The history of studies of women's involvement in African nationalist struggle, mobilization, and party politics can be traced along intellectual and political paths that initially followed, later paralleled, but have seldom deviated from or led the course of Africanist historiography."[6] African women's nationalism has been treated as tangential to the broader narrative of African nationalism that has been, and continues to be, overwhelmingly male-centric. Some of Geiger's critiques, writing in the late 1980s at the helm of the creation of women's studies, described the goal of first wave women's studies research: to provide a corrective and struggle against andocentric bias by interjecting women into the narrative. I assert that contemporary women's studies scholarship needs to move from a focus on correcting andocentric bias to be more concerned with the depth and complexity with which we treat women's actions historically, intellectually, and theoretically. This will lead to a more in-depth understanding of women's actions than can obtained by simply interjecting women into a narrative. As a result *Ojo Nro* engages specific themes surrounding Nigerian women's collective activism such as: 1) the intellectual currents of women's activism, 2) organizational dynamics (growth, principles, and agendas of a women's collective), 3) the relationship between nationalist consciousness and gender awareness, and 4) the intersections of cosmology, gender ideology, and women's framing of nationalism.

Questions

There are three questions that serve as the foundation of this research. The overarching question of this dissertation is *what is women's nationalism?* The answer to this question will

[6] Susan Geiger, "*Women and African Nationalism,"* Journal of Women's History Vol. 2 No. 1 (Spring 1990), 227

help to define parameters of women's nationalism in Nigeria and support a substantial assessment of whether it is, in fact, distinct from women in nationalism. In order to investigate the primary question I ask *how did women articulate nationalism in Nigeria?* This helps to define ideological foundations for Nigerian women's brand of nationalism in and its resulting methods of implementation. The final question is *does Nigerian women's articulation of nationalism diversify understandings of nationalist theory and practice in Nigeria?* Answering this question mandates a philosophical analysis of their agendas and ideas that will ultimately tell whether or not women's activism in umbrella organizations was distinct from mainstream (male led) forms. With these questions *Ojo Nro* encourages a holistic perception of African nationalism as a return to a deeply rooted historical social traditions and gendered practices.

Significance

The significance of *Ojo Nro* lies in its ability to center women as intellectual theorists of and autonomous actors in the shaping of Nigerian nationalism. It asserts that there is an independent intellectual tradition among African women nationalists by drawing an important distinction between *women in nationalism* and *women's nationalism*. The latter is realized by uncovering the less recognized tenets of women's activist philosophies and agendas, namely gender awareness, non-politicism, Black consciousness, music radicalism, and transnationalism, during the nationalist movement. The ideology and methods that represent *women's nationalism* were cultivated inside of women's rights organizations. In light of this *Ojo Nro* focuses on collective women, instead of singular women. This is unique in that most studies on women nationalists focus on single female leaders. In addition other works, while they do cite historical trajectories that lend to women's anti-colonialism, do not readily take into account the influence of culture specific cosmology on women's articulations of nationalism. The women of the

FNWO self identified as non-political which is a term that other works do not directly address. This non-political declaration was a manifestation of their historical cosmological beliefs. This project identifies and interrogates non-political thought as an important feature of women's nationalism and one that originates from notions of gender derived from Yoruba worldviews. It is the contention of this dissertation that African women's experiences must be analyzed with context specific constructions of gender in order to recognize and fully understand the underlying principles of their activism. As a result, *Legbeism*, which is an original gender theory rooted in the Yoruba cosmology, has been developed as part of the analytical frame of this dissertation. It serves as a means of identifying and evaluating Nigerian women's nationalist philosophies and agendas in umbrella organizations. With these distinctive properties *Ojo Nro* expands the philosophical boundaries of African nationalism by considering women's intellectual traditions as well as broader culture, cosmology, and gender ideology to highlight a distinct expression of nationalism. This is done in accord with Susan Geiger who, in 1990, wrote:

> At a time when the force of human agency and multi-faceted nationalisms vis-a -vis supposedly all-powerful states in the countries of eastern Europe and the republics of the Soviet Union have confounded the assumptions of theorists and historians of all stripes, it seems important for Africanist historians interested in women's political actions—nationalist history included—to continue to attend to our direct engagements with African people, especially women people, and the work of reconstructing their complex historical processes and products.[7]

Ojo Nro does the work of "reconstructing their complete historical processes and products" in several ways. It places women's nationalist thought as the central focus and does not portray them as a micro narrative to men's nationalist endeavors. It also provides a more balanced view of Nigerian women's nationalism through its focus on Yoruba women because Igbo women have been largely studied in the sources on women's anti-colonialism. This

[7] Susan Geiger, "*Women and African Nationalism,"* Journal of Women's History Vol. 2 No. 1 (Spring 1990), 237

dissertation nuances understandings of women's political philosophy and challenges the assumption that all women's activism was political. Lastly, there are virtually no intellectual histories of African women and this research is a step toward resolving that issue in the historiography of African intellectualism.

Periodization: Scope of the Study

Ojo Nro covers a period from the early 1947-1967 in order to highlight the development of a unique brand of nationalism by an official Nigerian women's umbrella organization from the colonial to post-colonial era. In a broader context, this period saw many changes to the status of women globally in terms of challenging gender norms, strengthening feminist awareness, and mobilizing women internationally. World War II (WWII) was a defining moment in global women's history. In the west and Europe especially, gender conventions were contested as large numbers of men went off to war. Women replaced men in many industries and constituted a new workforce and also joined the armed forces in many nations. Moreover, they did the jobs that were traditionally seen as men's work or too rigorous for women, thereby, challenging their relegation to the domestic sphere.[8] As the war raged in Europe and staggering losses affected colonial relations with African countries. According to Judith Byfield, "The colonial state had to transform established practices as it lost European officials to the war front at the same time that it had to reach deeper into the social and economic fabric of African societies to meet the demands for food, manpower, and other resources in multiple theaters."[9] When Nigerians heard

[8] Leila J. Rupp. *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978 analyzes women's changing roles in the WWII economy and Andi Zeisler, *Feminism and Pop Culture: Seal Studies* (Berkeley, California: Seal Press, 2008), 27-29 discusses the realization of sexism and resulting contesting of gender beliefs in the WWII era U.S. where she cites President Roosevelt's Columbus Day speech denouncing gender and race prejudices for the sake of wartime industry in 1942.

[9] Judith A. Byfield, Carolyn A. Brown, Timothy Parsons, and Ahmad Alawad Sikainga, *Africa and WWII* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 148

about the French attack on Ethiopia they banded together meeting in churches and schools and signed petitions as well as gathered funds to send aid to the Ethiopians.[10] Nigerian women organized in different parts of the country to fight against British control of food prices and the commandeering of food, to give to European soldiers, which would usually be sold at market. This circumstance gave rise to women's tax revolt in Abeokuta under Mrs. Kuti which demanded an end to indirect rule and abolition of taxes on women as well as the removal of the traditional ruler.[11]

The changing global gender dynamic affected Africans in their pursuit of nationalism as well. In the post WWII era, when nationalism flourished throughout the continent, Africans made it a point to support both democracy and women's autonomy as a means of proving that they were progressive and capable of self rule. Some African nationalists, such as Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso and the leaders of the Frente Libertacao Mocambique (FRELIMO), did earnestly address women's issues in their countries.[12] However, there were others that only invoked women's liberation as a medium through which to show progress or enlightenment which gave African women an opportunity to speak to their issues.[13]

In the post WWII period African women fought valiantly in almost every movement during independence struggles in Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, Guinea, Nigeria, and South Africa.[14] They used their position as soldiers and supporters of nationalist armies and political parties to build gender awareness within these movements. The women's wings of the nationalist parties helped to create a dialogue about women's rights and

[10] Ibid, 147
[11] Ibid, 148
[12] Thomas Sankara, *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle* speaks to the importance of and the innate connections between national independence and women's empowerment as articulated by Thomas Sankara while Stephanie Urdang, in *And The Still Dance,* analyzes women's empowerment in the agenda and nationalist platform of FRELIMO.
[13]Susan Geiger, "*Women and African Nationalism,"* Journal of Women's History, Vol. 2 No. 1 (Spring 1990), 228
[14] Susan Geiger, "*Women and African Nationalism,"* Journal of Women's History, Vol. 2 No. 1 (Spring 1990), 227

needs as a part of the popular narrative of contemporary nationalism. Even so, women still had to fight for political representation and voting rights in African nations. This was particularly difficult in some locales, especially in northern Nigeria where Islamic groups denied women the right to vote until the Federal Military Government of Nigeria decried it a right for them in 1976. Nonetheless, many women supported anti-colonial struggles as a way of removing the obstacles to their collective progress and traditional autonomy.[15] Therefore, analyzing the struggles of African countries from the 1940s through 1960s allows historians to gather information with which to write about women's activities, goals, influences, sacrifices, and experiences.

By the start of the Cold War, globalization for self preservation was a practice adopted by many nations. It was a means of embracing humanitarianism and developing congenial and open communications thereby ensuring peace and stability under the threat of atomic bombs. With globalization came the establishment and growth of many international women's collectives. Women mobilized in organizations globally to help their nations achieve and maintain peace by pressuring their respective governments to support certain agendas that included the sanctioning of equal rights for women. In light of their common struggle, women throughout the world began to form regional coalitions with one another and come under the unified banner of umbrella organizations. In Nigeria the FNWO served this function.[16] These groups had international ties to other umbrella organizations that maintained similar objectives. For example, in the 1950s the FNWO partnered with the Women's International Democratic

[15] Ibid, 228

[16] There are no comprehensive histories of the FNWO but a brief history is contained in Cheryl Johnson-Odim. *'For Their Freedoms': The Anti-Imperialist and International Feminist Activity of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria.* Women's Studies International Forum 32 (2009):51-59 and Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997.

Federation founded in Paris in 1945 and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1915.[17]

The advent of African decolonization in the 1940s and 1950s was another major event that influenced Nigerian women's collective activism. As African countries were beginning the process of becoming independent nations, women saw an opportunity to have a stronger voice in their respective nations by becoming pivotal actors in the fight for self government. In the early nationalist movements, African women formed auxiliary groups that existed within male led mainstream nationalist parties.[18] These women's wings primarily supported the agendas of the larger group. Even so, there was also at this time the formation of prominent groups of women who defined nationalism for themselves operating independently and not under the auspices of male leadership. Within this period of 1947-1967 feminist awareness was strengthened globally, women mobilized into large umbrella organizations, and the advent of decolonization saw the rise of not only nationalism but the unique articulation of a woman centered nationalism. These characteristics make this era essential to any historical study of women's nationalism.

Definition of Terms

Since nationalism and non-politicism are central to this dissertation they should be clearly defined as they are envisioned within the study. Nationalism has been referred to as "a social and political movement on behalf of the nation" by Anthony D. Smith.[19] I argue that it is also an intellectual movement and does not need to be dependent upon political motives. Craig J.

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[17] Leila J. Rupp's book *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997 speaks to the pivotal role of the WIDF and WILPF in building transnational connections between women of different countries and cultures to form a humanitarian and woman centered effort for peace.

[18] Examples of histories that focus on women's roles in male led nationalist campaigns include Susan Geiger, *Tanu Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1997; Stephanie Urdang, *And They Still Dance*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989; Cora Presley, *Kikuyu Women, The Mau Mau Rebellion, and Social Change in Kenya*. Westeview Press, 1992.

[19] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 5

Calhoun said that nationalism is "not only a matter of politics, but of culture and personal identity."[20] In this study I envision nationalism as a cultural expression of Yoruba women that tied principles of gender solidarity and a shared responsibility among men and women to build society with the fight for independence. I also briefly discuss Black consciousness as a part of their cultural expression.[21] According to Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, Malawian historian and literary critic, "Nationalism is one of the great intellectual and ideological forces of modern African history…Over the last two centuries nationalism has been one of the world's most important political ideas and instruments of political leverage and legitimacy."[22] He goes on to say "Clearly nationalism has never simply been an idea, a representational discourse or pastime of the elites; it has also entailed conditions of material dispensation, concrete struggles over resources and livelihoods that are of utmost concern to the so-called masses."[23] Nationalism is both an intellectual and practical enterprise. The theory and practice of nationalism are both of great importance to understanding the development of African statehood. In light of these insights nationalism in this study is defined as the endeavor to build a stable self governed/self determined territory through intellectual thought (theoretical) and physical (practical) movements that lend to the establishment of a collective awareness among, and allocation of resources to, the masses. In accordance with the parameters of this study and, with its focus on women, this definition is not only rooted in the shared, vested interest of citizens in self rule but also gender equality.

[20] Crag J. Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 3
[21]Black consciousness in this work refers to 1) the awareness of racism and its use as a tool to subjugate groups and 2) a sense of solidarity with people of the same ethnic origin or heritage according to the words of Steven Biko Bantu in a 1971 paper for the South African Students Association, which defined the term.
[22]Toyin Falola and Salah M. Hassan, *Power and Nationalism in Modern Africa: Essays in Honor of Don Ohadike* (North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2008), 37
[23] Ibid, 38

One of the central components to Nigerian women's nationalism was their ideology of non-politicism. It is imperative to define this term briefly here while a more in depth conversation on how this study theorizes the concept is located in chapter three. Yoruba women's intellectual development of non-politicism was shaped by the zeitgeist of their surroundings. It was meant to help them disengage from the contentious language of politics (that divided men's groups in their quest for formal political control) in order to keep focus on the more important issues at hand. Non-politicism among these women refers not only to action (separating themselves as independent from political parties) but to an ideology that supports the construction of congenial non-coercive spaces for women to develop a political consciousness and an agenda for gender awareness and social welfare. Women characterized their movement as non-political in order to work across class, ethnic, and political lines thereby creating and maintaining solidarity and connectivity among women's organizations which helped to mobilize them around common agendas.[24] The term has been used by mainstream male nationalists, such as Chief Obafemu Awolowo, to signify non-alignment to political parties but women developed specific principles of non-politicism and were very intentional about employing them in their organizations. This work presents the principles of non-political ideology, derived from Nigerian women's words and actions in the FNWO (gathered from archival documents) as well as their cultural principles, as follows:

1. Non-conformity or a non-controlling means of promoting awareness and analysis of social, economic, and political issues in a safe space
2. A shared responsibility, connected to their cosmology of gender, to be committed to social welfare, gender equality, and community development
3. A method of maintaining solidarity across ethnic, political, religious, and class lines
4. Not seeking the power to control the nation or government
5. Not seeking influence through support or endorsement of any political party
6. Not having loyalty to any one political party but a mutual friendship with each one

[24] F.A. Ogunsheye, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. March 2015)

Nigerian women's collectives used non-politicism as a tool to enhance their philosophy of gender equity as well as their agendas and campaigns for self determination. Indeed, it is important to note that one can be politically conscious while being non-political, as many women did, just as an atheist can have religious awareness but not believe in God.

The Importance of Politics

Since many scholars have investigated politics as a part of nationalist struggles and *Ojo Nro* investigates non-political thought of Nigerian female nationalists, it is imperative to first discuss the meaning(s) of political to quell any misinterpretation or assertions that women's non-political stances are, in fact, always political stances.[25] Political has been defined as the right to use physical force as the state permits (Max Webber), an authoritative allocation of values (David Easton), and power exercised by influence to affect policies "with the help of (real or threatened) deprivations for non-conformity with policies intended (Lasswell and Kaplan)."[26] It has also been said to have formal and informal qualities. According to Painter and Jeffery formal politics deals with the control of a constitutional government system which includes

[25] It is true that some have used non-political ideology to support political motives. For example, Robin Judd in *Contested Rituals: Circumcision, Kosher Butchering, and Jewish Political Life in Germany 1843*-1933 speaks to the commonplace ways in which German groups used apoliticism as a political tool. Those organizations who wanted to gain the support of people that did not agree with the principles and radicalism of the national parties would distance themselves from the political parties in order to draw adherents to their own political agendas. This use of apoliticism is not equivalent to what Nigerian women were doing. The FNWO did not seek to support their agendas by feigning non-alignment with the political parties. They did not need to validate their goals by creating a contentious narrative between themselves and the political parties so that people would see their organization as an alternative to the parties. After all, women of the FNWO were free to be affiliated with any political party in their private lives while the FNWO as a whole never did align with any party. Their apoliticism was for protection from divisiveness and preservation of the integrity of the women's movement (primarily) which was focused on implementing agendas that would aid in self determination for the nation through the building of infrastructure. There were points at which women's groups took up political stances for issues that they felt were dire and could not be served by non-political methods. However, this in no way means that women's groups can be considered political. If a vegetarian will eat meat in the threat of starvation (an emergency situation) but they eat vegetables all other times, does that abnormal, inconsistent, and rare meat eating completely override the fact that they self identify vegetarian? I would argue no. Their vision of self matters as does the philosophy they adhere to for all non-emergency situations. Also, to add more nuance to women's non-politicism, individual women could be involved in politics although they were in non-political women's organizations. The rules that governed the collective did not extend to individual dealings outside of the group.

[26] J.C. Johari, *Comparative Politics* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1982), 63

political parties. Informal politics are those daily negotiations of power relationships to form alliances, exercise power, protect, and advance particular goals and ideas.[27] None of these definitions fully encompass Nigerian women's underlying reasons for their intellectual development of non-politicism and its application. This is very important to note. Each of these definitions deals with enforcement, coercion, the struggle for power, and control. This is not what Nigerian women were working towards. In the case of Nigerian female nationalists the words of Beer and Ulam are applicable, "We want a definition that is useful-useful in the sense that it gives us promise of leading us towards a growing body of explanatory theory about human behavior and useful also in the sense that the behavior it identifies is not trivial, but important to enduring human concerns."[28] There must be some theorizing about Nigerian women's philosophy in regards to politics that identifies behavior and ideologies that had implications as to the issues of Nigerians of the early nationalist era. According to several notable political theorists such as Easton, Almond, Deutsch, and Kaplan courts, there are conventions that are useful for understanding "the realities of some countries" but "are hopelessly unrealistic as guides to the political realms of other countries."[29] Likewise, Nigerian women's ideology of non-politicism cannot be confined by understandings of political relationships per the terms set in other countries as well as other periods. Any discussion of Nigerian women's politics must be contextual and center an understanding of Nigerian politics, culture, and history as well as women's concerns and how these have impacted their thought in regard to politics.

Another means of defining Nigerian female nationalists' behavior, in ways that are non-trivial and that do not rely on a narrative of solely political motives, is necessary. Apolitical

[27] Joe Painter and Alex Jeffrey, *Political Geography* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2009), chapter one
[28] J.C. Johari, *Comparative Politics* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1982),62
[29] Ibid, 61

(non-political) has been defined as a political strategy by historian Robin Judd.[30] It has also been explained as a sense of apathy for all political affiliations by Jack Rabin and James S. Bowman.[31] These are markedly different definitions. One says that apolitical is political while the other says that it is a complete aversion from politics. If anything this highlights the fact that apolitical stances are complex. None of these definitions pinpoint Nigerian women nationalists' use of non-political ideology as derived from their interviews and archives. In order to truly define their non-political ideology, a more deeply contextualized assessment of their non-political stance must be employed. Interestingly, apoliticism has also been envisioned as a cultural intellectual development shaped by highly politically charged atmospheres in a nation's development by Giles Scott-Smith.[32]

Nina Emma Mba, an Australian historian based out of Nigeria, wrote extensively on women's political action in Nigeria and highlighted the different constructions of politicism among these women. I argue that her conceptions can be used to theorize non-politicism in a gendered Nigerian context. Her groundbreaking book, *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Nigeria, 1900-1965* was the first comprehensive history of women's contribution to Nigerian politics. In the preface, she asserted that politics broadly defined is, "the process by which resources and values (human, material, and spiritual) are allocated within a social unit (nation, region, town, or village) for the purpose of meeting the needs and desires of its members."[33] She goes on to define a political system as "organized patterns of interaction among people of a social unit for achieving the allocation of resources……The political system

[30] Robin Judd, *Contested Rituals: Circumcision, Kosher Butchering, and Jewish Political Life in Germany 1843-1933* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), 120
[31] James S. Bowman and Jack Rabin, *Politics and Administration: Woodrow Wilson and American Public Administration* (New York: Marcel Dekker Inc., 1984), 51

[32] Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA, and Post-War American Hegemony* (New York: Routledge, 2002), introduction
[33] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), vii

includes many forms of political activity that take place outside of the formal structures of government but which influence government policy, such as political parties, interest groups, and pressure groups, and social movements."[34] It is interesting to note that her definition of political differs from the European males such as Webber, Easton, Laswell, and Kaplan in that she has offered a definition that centers the negotiation between social groups instead of the domination and subjection of one group by another. She has a different conception of politics as a female historian based in the Nigerian context. If there is such a notable difference in the ways that European men, based outside of Africa, and an Australian woman, based in Nigeria, define political then what of indigenous Nigerian women? The difference in their conceptions does beg the question of how much more nuance could be added to perceptions and definitions of political when one considers *indigenous Nigerian women's concepts of politics* and the attendant fight for collectively defined and supported objectives for empowerment.

There was more than one means by which Nigerian women exercised influence. One was a coercive model of political influence. Mba goes on to say that, per her definition, the political activity of Nigerian women can be understood to refer to their

> efforts to influence the allocation of resources and values in their communities by appeals to the leadership and their own participation in that leadership…..Because women have been only marginally involved in formal government-that is, they have not occupied positions of political authority-their political activity has consisted mainly of attempts to obtain influence over those who have held such authority. Political influence can be a form of political power; indeed power has been defined by one social philosopher as a special case of 'coercive influence.'[35]

She stated that women did negotiate with and were active within governing bodies but, even so, their attempts to influence through appeals to leadership *can be a form* of political power. Her wording, *political influence is a form of political power*, suggests that there are other forms of

[34] Ibid, vii
[35] Ibid, vii

political power but that political influence is *a form*, one form. The phrase *a form* is not definitive enough to exclude the possibility that there are other forms of political power. This is very instrumental in that it alludes to the fact that there was likely more than one iteration of political power in regards to Nigerian women's activism. It is also interesting that Mba positions coercive influence relative to political power by saying *indeed power has been defined…as a special case of 'coercive influence*. If *political influence is a form of political power* and political power can be seen *as a special case of 'coercive influence* then political influence can potentially be coercive. In essence political influence is one form of political power which can be coercive. Indeed Mba points out that there was a coercive model of political influence: "Women in the political system of southern Nigeria have possessed potential or actual sanctions, which, on various occasions have made their influence coercive on the decision makers."[36] According to the words of Mba in the longer quote in the beginning of the paragraph above (*political influence…*can be seen *…as a special case of 'coercive influence*) it is likely that the coercive model or approach was only *a form* (or *one* form; the use of *-a* makes her statements less absolute) of political influence that women utilized. But what might the other model look like? Is the other model of influence even political? This latter question is instrumental in that it allows for a broader construction of women's activism that would make it possible to consider more than their political influence only. Additionally, some of the interviewees from this study were Nigerian female activists from the colonial era who defined *their* pressure groups as non-political and so one must also question Mba's subjectivity in referring to pressure groups as a political iteration of Nigerian women's activism, with no addressing of the non-political nature of pressure groups, when the women themselves have said, in their papers and interviews, that they were in *non-political* pressure groups.

[36] Ibid, viii

Since Mba established that Nigerian women were politically active and living Nigerian women from the colonial era note another form of influence through non-political pressure groups, it is prudent to inquire as to the different models of influence that women used. One is coercive but there is another, the pressure model. This second method of influence is "a voluntary association of individuals that band together for the defense of an interest."[37] The coercive and pressure models are not mutually exclusive. A group can utilize both. According to Mba:

> A number of organizations have been formed by women in Nigeria, independent of any men's group or influence, whose membership has been exclusively female. These associations have included social, philanthropic, ethnic, cultural, religious, trade union, and professional bodies. In the pursuit of their interests, some of these organizations have been on occasion presented with problems which are political in nature and whose resolution has involved them in short term political activity……There have also been several Nigerian women's organizations which were explicitly political interest groups and pressure groups.[38]

Two things are important to note here. First women constructed distinctly articulated agendas, formal organizations (built around those agendas), and methods of activism that were in no way influenced by men's groups and ideals. Second, the women could be in a pressure group but take *short term* political action at times. If some organizations performed *short term* political activity, it is expedient to ask what type of activity did they have for the long term. The element of coercion is not a fixed part of the pressure model though it can be enacted at times. The pressure model, in its affinity towards non-coercive measures, privileges the language of mutual cooperation, shared responsibility, and necessity as a means of appealing to the leadership. With this conversation in mind, and also taking into account archival and interview data from elderly Nigerian female activists themselves, Nigerian women's ideology of non-politicism can fill the

[37] Ibid, 165
[38] Ibid, 165

gap presented by the question as to the other iteration of women's influence in pressure groups. Non-politicism can be seen as a function of the non-coercive pressure model.

With the terms political and non-political having been explored, it is also imperative to highlight that there is some overlap between my definition of non-political and historian Nina Mba's definition of political. In *Nigerian Women Mobilized* Mba says that Nigerian women often acted outside of the formal corridors of power. She argues that women's influence upon political authorities constituted *political* acts.[39] However, both the papers of the FNWO and also elder Nigerian female nationalists interviewed for this research vehemently stated that they were non-political during the period under study. This presents a major discrepancy between Mba's depiction of Nigerian women's activism and influence as *political* and how the women actually defined themselves, as *non-political*. Mba failed to investigate this non-political ideology in her work because she focused only on women in the political parties which inherently cast their methods and intent of mobilizing as political. She could only see them as political actors because she was looking at what they were doing for political parties. A concentration on women's groups would have brought about another conversation. Mba only discussed women's organizations as a historical reference point within the broader context of women's mobilizing. In her focus on women in political parties, she neglected a deeper interrogation of women's organizations and therefore missed the opportunity to nuance women's political mobilizing by investigating their non-political thought. For this reason, whereas Mba has characterized women's activism and influence a political, I have chosen to complicate the notion that women were solely political actors by using women's own self definition as non-political as a means of describing women's activism and influence. I assert that their activism and influence upon political authorities can also be seen from a non-political lens, although the latter has been

[39] Nina Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), vii

overlooked in histories of Nigerian women's activism, because it is true that Nigerian women engaged in political *and* non-political action.

Organization of the Study

The following study investigates the intellectual thought in Nigerian women's collective activism during the nationalist movement and post independence in the country. It highlights their initiatives toward gender awareness, Black consciousness, community development, their use of music radicalism, and especially their ideology of non-politicism. Each chapter addresses the theoretical (intellectual thought; ideas) and/or practical (physical movements and actions) expressions of nationalism as articulated by women. Their intellectual trends are highlighted through a focus on the theorizing of women towards self determination, peace, and freedom in the colonial and post colonial eras. This research espouses an African (woman) centered approach and, as such, it draws from and reflects Yoruba culture. As a result each of the titles of the chapters are comprised of phrases that come from either Yoruba language or pidgin (a combination of Yoruba and English).

Chapter one presents a discussion of certain trends in the literature on women in African nationalism throughout the continent and women in Nigerian nationalism specifically to point to the ways in which women's contributions have been shaped by certain prevailing conceptions among scholars. *Ojo Nro* is informed by emancipatory research which asserts that theory and methods must be relevant to the context of the people centered in the study. Therefore, prior to any conversation on the activist philosophies and ideologies of African women there must be an explanation of the theory and methods used to construct this research. Chapter two details data collection procedures as well as important theoretical considerations that have aided in the interpretation of findings; thus an explanation of *Legbeism*, my original analytical frame, is

included here. Chapter three gives a historical and ideological setting for the study. It begins with a conversation on Yoruba history and culture and also covers Yoruba cosmology and dualism to explain the nexus of central principles of women's activism in Nigeria which are gender solidarity and collective activism. This chapter goes on to discuss Nigerian women's activism, with examples from pre-colonial to colonial times, as a means of exemplifying the long founded ideas behind and historical trajectory of Nigerian women's collective activism. Their pre-colonial social solidarity informed their activism and later led to the establishment of formal and highly structured women's nationalist organizations like the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations and the prominence of women such as their leader Mrs. Kuti. In light of this, chapter four speaks to the historical growth as well as the most pervasive ideological stances of the FNWO. Both chapters five and six are arranged by themes and not chronologically. The timeline in chapters five and six reference events happening between the 1950s and 1970s, in no temporal order, for the sake of supporting the argument presented by this dissertation, that women developed a theory and practice of nationalism that was distinct. Chapter five focuses on the political climate in colonial Nigeria, during the height of FNWO activity, through a discussion of the mainstream nationalist leaders and parties as well as their opinions on and interactions with women and their issues. It also offers an analysis of the political climate of Nigeria in the1940s and 1950s and the ways in which the relationship between the major political parties and women (both individual women and collectives of women) caused the FNWO, and other women's organizations, to develop their non-political philosophy. Chapter six concentrates on the intellectual history of Nigerian women in the FNWO umbrella organization through an investigation of their non-political agenda and philosophy of self determination for women and the nation. It investigates the manifestations of non-political ideology through the

agenda that the FNWO developed to address women's issues and those of the broader society. Chapter six essentially investigates their challenges to and stances on important issues, from the late 1950s to 1960s, such as voting rights, economic autonomy, and health care for women as well as the Biafran War. The conclusion draws out the most salient themes, assertions, and evidence to assess what women's nationalism is, the distinctiveness of women's articulation of nationalism, and the implications that women's nationalism has for the narrative and historiography of African nationalism.

Chapter One:

Where Are the Women?: Situating the Study

This study engages with several areas of scholarship within the historiography of intellectual history, gender, and nationalism in Africa. The themes that are central to this literature review are: 1) women in African intellectual histories, 2) women in African nationalism, and 3) women in Nigerian nationalist history. These areas have been identified to situate this study within scholarly conversations on women and African intellectual thought and nationalism that encompass both the broader continent as well as Nigeria. In this way, the important trends in the scholarship that have contributed to the shaping of this study will be made clear. The following chapter consists of a thematic overview of the scholarship that is most pertinent to the discussion on African women in politics and nationalism, and their organizing, both throughout the continent and in Nigeria. Works are discussed chronologically in each theme. This review of key literature supports the assertion of this study that historians of Africa must conduct a deeper analysis of women's distinct contributions to African nationalism by taking into account their collective ideologies and agendas. In order to investigate women's articulations of nationalism and their resulting impact, historians must realize that certain trends have blockaded further theoretical development in regards to the subject of women in African nationalism. Therefore this chapter highlights three overarching trends that have contributed to the lack of more diverse theorizing about women's collective involvement in the narrative of African nationalism. These include: 1) viewing women as supporters of politically elite male led nationalist movements, 2) focussing on women's politics instead of explicit analysis of their intellectual thought, 3) portraying women nationalist leaders as isolated actors, and 4) situating women as a micro narrative of nationalist history. There are three main sections in this chapter

which correlate to each one of the areas of scholarship outlined above. Each section will highlight the above mentioned trends in the literature and also address the ways in which this study seeks to develop a different perspective in the historiography of women in African nationalism.

In order to further contextualize the growth of the scholarship on women in African nationalism it is imperative to note a major historical event that influenced the production of scholarship in these areas, namely the United Nations Decade for Women. The advent of the Decade for Women supported the growth of women's studies as an academic field which inspired a shift toward using gender as a useful category of analysis within African historiography. In 1975 the United Nations World Conference on Women, held in Mexico City, ushered in a new era in the development of global Women's Studies. The Decade for Women was set to cover the time span from 1976-1985. During this time, agencies were established in different locales for the study of women. Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize Winner Wangari Maathai said that it was no coincidence that here Greenbelt Movement grew exponentially during the Decade for Women.[40] In Nigeria this era saw the founding of organizations such as Women in Nigeria (WIN) and Women's Research and Documentation Center (WORDOC). The latter organization was established in 1986 by Bolanle Awe, a woman who specialized in political histories of Nigeria and produced one of the foundational texts on the subject. The Decade for Women created a congenial space for programs, such as WORDOC, to thrive and be supported in their efforts to lead a multifaceted and in depth interrogation of the holistic importance of women's activities to African nations. In this way, the Decade for Women had a large impact on

[40] Iris Berger, *Decolonizing Women's Activism: Africa in the Transformation of the International Women's Movement* in *Women in Social Movements* eds. Tom Dublin and Katherine Kish Sklar (Alexandria, Virginia: Alexandria Street Press, 2012)

the development of global gender awareness.[41] This period also informed more scholars of Africa as to the value of gendered perspectives (which highlight and cross analyze the experiences of both men and women) and encouraged the growth of women's and gender studies within African historiography.

Scholars Perspectives on Mrs. Kuti and Her Activism

The Decade for Women helped to produced more works on female nationalists, especially Mrs. Kuti. The only book length biography on her, *For Women and the Nation*, by Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Mba their work was a very thorough recounting of Mrs. Kuti's rise to political activism on behalf of women and the nation. She was a teacher who became an activist when she recognized the severity with which colonialism had disenfranchised market women. She was also an internationally known figure who allied with many women's groups throughout Africa and abroad from China to Black America and the Caribbean. She mobilized women against the colonial regime and fought for Nigerian independence as well as women's empowerment in the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations which she founded in 1953. This source offers a deeply nuanced perspective on women's activism in Nigeria. Even so, it unintentionally confines the narrative of women in nationalist endeavor to, what appear to be, only elite women's actions. In addition the biography centers politics more so than the ideological developments and self-described non-political stance of many women in the colonial era. The focus on singular women and politics, especially Mrs. Kuti, instead of women's organizations and intellectual narratives, has continued in more contemporary works by Raisa Simola, Odim, Stephanie Shonekan, Judith Byfield.

[41] Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 84-85

Raisa Simola published, *"The Construction of a Nigerian Nationalist and Feminist, Funmilayo Ransome Kuti*, in 1999. In this article, she examined the ways in which Mrs. Kuti was portrayed in the biography by Odim and Mba as well as another work, *Fela: This Bitch of a Life*, which was about the life of her son Fela. She aimed to analyze the resistance and worldview of Mrs. Kuti. Simola speaks to Mrs. Kuti's influence on the development of her son Fela using his interviews from the book on his life. Fela critiqued Nigerian leaders, especially General Olusegun Obasanjo whose soldiers threw Mrs. Kuti from a window in Fela's home causing injuries that later led to her death. Fela recounted how his mother treated the corrupt politicians of her era: "she wouldn't have anything to do with them. None of them."[42] He portrayed his mother as a bold woman who stood for what was right in the face of powerful and malfeasant political leaders. Simola also speaks to values that Mrs. Kuti held. She was a Christian and therefore her marriage was not polygamous like her father's, she was strong willed so people said she was like a man, and she detested the way that "women were victimized by their social conditioning, which led them to internalize a negative self-image and to be passive and apathetic."[43] Simola gave a deeper view into the personality of Mrs. Kuti as a mother and also as a confident person as well as a fierce proponent for women. Although Simola does write about the character of Mrs. Kuti the article does not, however, speak to the ideals that influenced her or those novel ideologies that were propounded by Mrs. Kuti or her organization.

Cheryl Odim also wrote about an interesting aspect of Mrs. Kuti's life that has received less attention, her internationalism. Her article, *'For Their Freedoms': The Anti-Imperialist and International Feminist Activity of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria*, analyzes the international travels that Mrs. Kuti embarked upon. Odim references a newspaper that reported Mrs. Kuti's

[42] Raisa Simola, *"The Construction of a Nigerian Nationalist and Feminist, Funmilayo Ransome Kuti"* Nordic Journal of African Studies 8:1 (1999): 102
[43] Ibid, 105

death saying that she was "an anit-imperialist and Pan-African visionary" as a means of characterizing her political philosophy.[44] Mrs. Kuti was a forerunner in travelling to countries that the west did not have a positive relationship with and were deemed communist. Odim says that Mrs. Kuti stated "All our big men and women now travel to China and Russia. I suffered for their freedoms." Mrs. Kuti,

> "was active in anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anti-sexist struggles for most of her life. Even though she dedicated herself, at local, national and international levels, to issues such as woman suffrage and representation in government, and on at least one occasion used the term "women's liberation" as one thing she hoped to accomplish, she considered herself primarily an advocate for human rights, not solely women's rights."[45]

She developed her own stance on political issues as well as women's status in society and in doing so developed a legacy. Odim described her legacy as being a part of in "the international anti-imperialist and transnational feminist activity of African women."[46] The article situates her activism in the context of global or international feminism. Interestingly, Odim does speak to the philosophy of Mrs. Kuti but not the intellectual developments that resulted from that rich political philosophy although the two are indelibly connected. This article focuses on the politics of Mrs. Kuti but not does not investigate the organization that she led.

In 2009 Shonekan published an article, *Fela's Foundation: Examining the Revolutionary Songs of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and the Abeokuta Market Women's Movement in 1940s Western Nigeria*. This article was actually about Mrs. Kuti's son Fela and his musical development, however it did cite her activism as a major influence on Fela's musical political philosophy. Shonekan gives an interpretation of lyrics to show the defiance and radicalism of the women, led by Mrs. Kuti, towards the traditional rulers. She does mention that, "Scholars

[44] Cheryl Johnson-Odim. *'For Their Freedoms': The Anti-Imperialist and International Feminist Activity of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria.* Women's Studies International Forum 32 (2009), 51
[45] Ibid, 51
[46] Ibid, 51

have been comfortable acknowledging the African woman as traditional bearer, nurturer, and mother but seldom as an engineer of thoughtful and necessary social change."[47] Even so, she misses the opportunity to speak to women's collective intellectual thought through a deeper interrogation of their philosophy of anti-colonial activism which would highlight them as engineers "of thoughtful and necessary social change".

In 2015 Judith Byfield published a book chapter *From Ladies to Women: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and Women's Political Activism in Post-World War Two Nigeria* in an anthology on Black women's intellectual history. In this chapter Byfield does the first analysis of Mrs. Kuti's ideals in regards to "gender, activism, and politics."[48] She speaks to Mrs. Kuti's ideals on the status of women while giving a historical context for those ideas. Mrs. Kuti was wanted to free women from the social-cultural limitations placed on them. To evidence this, Byfield cites Mrs. Kuti when she says, "How beautiful it would be if our women could have the same opportunity with men."[49] Mrs. Kuti's activism ushered in a new means of engaging women in politics through bringing women together across ethnic, religious, and class lines. Mrs. Kuti believed in the idea that the people are not obligated to support malfeasant leaders, "Our first duty as good citizens who desire the progress of our country is to endeavor to obey the orders of the state and those in authority….when their power is being used for selfish ends the claim of ready acquiescence on the part of the people must be forfeited."[50] This article concludes that the ideas and activism of Mrs. Kuti shaped the agenda that continues to influence contemporary political discourse in Nigeria. With this work, Byfield says that she wanted to "move beyond a

[47] Stephanie Shonekan, "*Fela's Foundation: Examining the Revolutionary Songs of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and the Abeokuta Market Women's Movement in 1940s Western Nigeria*" Black Music Research Journal, vol. 29, no. 1, (2009): 130
[48] Judith Byfield, "*From Ladies to Women: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and Women's Political Activism in Post-World War Two Nigeria*" Towards An Intellectual History of Black Women edited by Mia Bay, Farah J. Griffin, Martha S. Jones, and Barbara D. Savage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 198
[49] Ibid, 198
[50] Ibid, 205

descriptive history of her political activism and toward an intellectual history of her activism…."[51] However, the chapter is very much centered on Kuti and not the works and ideology of the collective or the organization that she led which developed strong ideas and stances under her leadership. In addition, the chapter does not address the non-political stance of the FNWO or Mrs. Kuti. *Ojo Nro* builds upon Odim and Mba, Simola, Shonekan, and Byfield's work by focusing on women's organizations instead of singular women through situating Mrs. Kuti as a part of the collective of women nationalists, examining and defining the intellectual development of the FNWO philosophy of non-political activism (in conversation with the non-political philosophy of another women's organizations of the era), and gives a cultural, cosmological, historical context for the novel invention of non-political nationalism as envisioned and enacted by the FNWO.

Women in African Intellectual Histories

The development of the field of African intellectual history predated the decade for women and has been developing since the 1950s. Although the field has only been in existence since the late 1950s, this does not preclude the fact that there has been a rich tradition of intellectualism among African people since pre-colonial times. This has been established by scholars such as Cheikh Anta Diop, Ivan Van Sertima, and Yosef Ben-Jochannan. African intellectual history has been referred to as scholarship that highlights "how in autobiographies, historical writing, fiction, and other literary genres, African writers intervened creatively in their political world."[52] The non-political stances of African thinkers should also be a part of this definition but have been overlooked due to a tendency to center intellectual narratives on men's activities.

[51] Ibid, 199
[52] A. Bangura, *Toyin Falola and African Epistemologies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), introduction

African intellectual history of the late 1950s-1970s has been represented by works falling under three categories. The first comprises of the ways in which Africa was envisioned in the European mind. James Duffy's *Portuguese Africa* (1959), Leonard Thompson's *Africaner Nationailsm and the Policy of Apartheid* (1962), and Philip Curtin's *Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-7850* (1964) all dealt with the prevailing ideals of European colonials towards Africa and Africans during European imperial expansion in Africa. This first category of scholarship is problematic because it was based on the thoughts of colonials about Africa and not on the intellectual traditions of Africans themselves. African people were not given agency in these histories, much less African women.

The second includes works that were written by Africans during the rise of nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s. These sources were referred to as defensive history due to their focus on African instead of European ideas. This category includes Ghanaian J.C. de Graft-Johnson's *African Glories: The Story of Vanished Negro Civilizations* (1954) and Cheikh Anta Diop's *L'Afrique noire precoloniale* (1960) and *Nations negres et culture* (1979). These types of works were those that centered African ideas and were a strong contestation of the assertion that "Africans have had no history…[and] are primitive, barbarous, and lacking creativity."[53] Africanist historian Leo Spitzer said, in his article *Interpreting African Intellectual History: A Critical Review of the past Decade, 1960-1970* (1972), that African Americans also joined this second category of writing on African intellectual history. He cited an early example coming from Earl Sweeting and his work *African History: An Illustrated Handbook* (1960) to support this assertion. Sweeting's work depicted Africans teaching the Greeks the alphabet, mathematics, and shorthand and he later sued Newsweek for ridiculing his artwork in an article

[53] Ibid

that read "Surprise!...If You Have No History, Invent One"[54] Another example of African American writing on Africa is that of the prolific scholar John Henrike Clarke who wrote *Africans at the Crossroads: Notes for an African World Revolution* (1991) and *African People in World History* (1994). Both of these sources recount the history of Africa and African leaders to show the true value of Africa to the development of global society. The second category of African intellectual history did expand its boundaries to include a focus on African thought, but women were still neglected.

The third category is that of biographies of western educated Africans. Historians wrote about leaders of African nations and societies in order to trace the ideas behind movements for freedom in Africa. Some of the sources in this category are *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism 1850-1928* (1963) by David Kimble which chronicles certain leaders in the nationalist movement, *Edward Wilmont Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (1967) by Hollis Ralph Lynch, and *The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its Development in West Africa During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (1967). These sources do center Africans and also begin to deal with intellectual trends as related to nationalism but they do not address African women's activist thought in any comprehensive way.

In the 1980s Pan-Africanism grew to be a subject of inquiry for Africanist scholars although Immanuel Geiss did interrogate Pan-Africanism in his book *The Pan-African Movement* (1968). Geiss looked at the Atlantic Slave Trade as a circumstance that organically produced proto Pan-Africanism. In 1982 Olisanwuche Esedebe published *Pan-Africanism, The Idea and the Movement, 1776-1983* which gave a broader and more detailed study of the subject from multiple archives on both sides of the Atlantic. Following Esedebe, Opoku Agyeman also wrote on Pan-Africanism in his work *Pan-Africanist Worldview* (1985) wherein he assesses ideas

[54] Author unknown, "Says Newsweek Ridiculed His Art, Asks for 250,000" Jet Magazine: 5 Jan. 1961, 46

such as Pan-Africanism versus miscegenation and the core principles of Pan-Africanism. Through their focus on Pan-Africanism, these works go towards a more global and transnational approach to writing African intellectual history but they still do not investigate women's ideals towards solidarity and Black consciousness.

Recently there has been an attempt to include a gendered perspective of African intellectual history. This can be seen in works such as Abosede A. George's book *Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood, Labor, and Social Development in Colonial Lagos* (2014) which investigates Nigerian cultural ideas of childhood. Saheed Aderinto published *When Sex Threatened the State: Illicit Sexuality, Nationalism, and Politics in Colonial Nigeria, 1900-1958* (2016) which also interrogated the ideas that colonials and native peoples held about sex and sexuality and how these clashed. These works are a valuable and refreshing step forward in African intellectual history towards developing a gendered perspective. Aderinto combines nationalism and gender in an innovative way. Even so, both of these works do not speak to the collective ideologies of Nigerian women and their activism in groups or organizations. This is an area that is in need of much development in the bibliography of African intellectual history. *Ojo Nro* seeks to fill this void by speaking to intellectual development of non-political thought and attendant agendas in Nigerian women's organizations.

Women in African Nationalism

In 1975, at the helm of the International Decade for Women, Shirley Ardener published a book chapter entitled *Sexual Assault and Female Militancy.* It chronicled long founded traditions of militancy exhibited by women in three Cameroonian ethnic groups. The women in these groups reacted to insults about women or mistreatment at the hands of husbands by going to the man's home, beating on his dwelling, and singing insulting songs. Women from other

villages would also heed the call to help defend womanhood in a neighboring town because they understood that any disrespect of womanhood can have implications for all women in the area. If the man did not come out and apologize and make amends the women would tear his house down and shame him further with specific dances and nudity. He would be fined and would have to make a payment to women collectively in addition to paying the woman he insulted. In Ardener's examples the women formed bonds based on shared concern for maintaining female authority and the respect of womanhood which guarded against an imbalance in gender relations. This research was important in that it substantiated the fact that transnational solidarity has long been a central tenet of African women's historical cultural activism and that African women have historically had socially sanctioned rights to protest any imbalances of power between men and women in society. This right of collective action persisted throughout women's activism into the colonial and post colonial eras and featured prominently throughout many works in the bibliography of women in nationalism in Africa. Even so, Ardener does not speak to the intellectual notions that accompanied women's collective action. She did not investigate their philosophy of collective action and their rationale for relying upon it to protest even the issues of one woman.

In the same year Filomina Chioma Steady produced a monograph entitled *Female Power in African Politics: The National Congress of Sierra Leone* which detailed women's involvement in the All People's Congress (APC). The women formed the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women which was a women's wing to the larger APC. The Congress was purposed to support the policies of the President Siaka Stevens. However, when Dolly Steele, the organizing secretary and co-founder of the Congress, wanted to stand for elections in 1973, the APC did not back her. Steady said that this was due to her increasing militancy and not because she was a

woman. Although Steady believes that Steele was not discriminated against for being a woman, there should be some recognition of the trend in colonial and early post-colonial West Africa to maintain the male dominant paradigm of leadership in African politics in West Africa. Nonetheless, Steady gives a critical assessment of women's political ambition in the independent Sierra Leone via their organizing in the Congress. This is one of the earliest works to speak to political consciousness in a women's organization albeit an auxiliary of the broader male led group. Steady's work gives a portrayal of the experiences of African women in post-colonial politics while adhering to a paradigm of women as supporters by focusing on the women's wing and their work for the APC.

Female Power in African Politics was pivotal in the establishment of the use of politics as a lens to analyze gender and women's experiences during the early development of African nations an it set a precedent for works such as *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945* (1983) by Tom Lodge. He also used a political lens to discuss mass action in South Africa since the end of WWII. His book covers a wide range of topics such as defiant organizations, bus boycotts, rural rebellions, and women's anti-pass campaigns. Lodge focuses more on popular action which is important in that he begins to frame a narrative of political organizing that is not concentrated on politically elite leadership. However, women only figure in as a part of a broader story that does not fundamentally center gender. In this way the women are easily overshadowed by other currents in the narrative.

Jean O'Barr's chapter, *African Women in Politics* (1984), in *African Women South of the Sahara,* specifically centered women's colonial period political engagement. Steady looked at post-colonial politics and Lodge concentrated on popular mass movements, but O'Barr focused on the colonial period activism of women. She stated that Pare women of Tanzania in the 1940s

collectively demonstrated against the colonial tax mandate that caused their husbands to seek extra work thereby removing them from their families and farms. The women challenged the colonial officer by suggesting that he should impregnate all of them and assume the roles of their husbands in order to restore balance to their lives. Of course this was a rhetorical device of protest to showcase their dismay at losing their husbands' presence in and labor for their families due to colonial mandates. The women staged a demonstration that involved them paying tax in a neighboring district to show that they were willing and able to pay taxes but that they opposed the system under which the taxes were levied in their town. O'Barr points to the fact that women, collectively, had the power to shape policy and relations between the colonial government and their communities and that they had their own strategies and agendas for maintaining balance. O'Barr's focus on women's anti-colonialism highlighted a move towards using anti-colonial activism as a means of gauging women's influence and negotiation of gender relations in the de-colonization era. Cora Presley's *Kikuyu Women in the Mau Mau Rebellion* (1986) followed O'Barr's paradigm. Presley chronicled women's involvement in the Mau Mau revolt which was the Kenyan uprising against British settlers who were claiming their lands. She discussed the growth of political consciousness among women as well as their recruitment, enlistment, and valiant duties in the Land and Freedom Army in the forests. Her work shows that women were essential to organizing the rural/working class colonial resistance movement. Even so, her work was also foundational in establishing the trend of considering women as supporters of politically elite male led nationalist movements. She portrayed women as absolutely pivotal in but not leaders of anti-colonial nationalist movements such as the Mau Mau rebellion.

In an attempt to shift the paradigm from women as supporters to women as autonomous actors in nationalism, scholars such as LaRay Denzer, Adelaide Cromwell, and Barbie Schreiner focused more on singular personages. Their works signal a shift toward activist biography to highlight women's leadership roles as nationalists. In 1986 *My Spirit Is Not Banned*, by Barbie Schreiner, chronicled the life of Francis Baard. She spent much time interviewing Baard to understand what she had accomplished in her own right as a political activist, women's leader, and trade unionist in both the Eastern Cape and nationwide campaigns. She recounted her story as a member of many organizations including the ANC. Baard was harassed by police, jailed, and banned from Port Elizabeth to Pretoria. Nonetheless through her organizational affiliations, Schreiner highlights her role as a leader of women at the same time as being a proponent for national freedom. This biography of Baard is pivotal to the development of a narrative that centers women's importance in African anti-colonial movements but it seems to place her as an isolated actor because of the lack of focus on how women's collective work allowed her to achieve her individual accomplishments.

Adelaide Cromwell continued with this focus on individual women activists. Her book on Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford, *An African Victorian Feminist* (1986) discusses the life and expansive travels of Hayford. As a Sierra Leonean Creole (descended from freed African American and West Indian peoples), Hayford was aware of her Pan-African identity. She sojourned in United States in order to raise funds for her campaign to build schools for girls in Sierra Leone. Hayford's life and travels represent connectivity among Black women within and outside of the continent. She is one of the early examples of an African woman reaching out to other Black women in the United States to form a sense of solidarity and responsibility toward

the progress of African women. However, her biography does not speak to the masses of Sierra Leonean women that she worked with and that supported her in her endeavors and travels.

Cromwell's work influenced an interest in African women's transnational activism which is reflected by LaRay Denzer who published *The Influence of Pan-Africanism in the Early Political Career of Constance A. Cummings-John* (1987). Cummings-John was a Krio (or Creole) which were people of West Indian, African American, or liberated African ancestry that escaped or were emancipated and went to resettle in Sierra Leone. Denzer asserts that the time Cummings-John spent in America, her experiences with racism in the south, and organizations she either affiliated with or founded herself were all defining factors in the development of her early Pan-African thinking. She studied in London prior to going to America. She was a member of the League of Colored People, West African Youth League, The American Council on African Education, and The American Council on African Affairs. Denzer's work was important in that it was one of the very few that actually uncovered women's involvement in the development of Pan-Africanism. Even so, the importance of African women's collective activism is not strong in the discussion of Cummings-John's life which facilitates the portrayal of her as a somewhat isolated actor which is inherently incongruent with her image as a Pan-Africanist.

These works on singular individuals are important, because they allow one to gain a depth of understanding as to the leadership, sacrifice, and ideologies of women nationalists. However they are overwhelmingly a part of that politically elite narrative that exists throughout male centered histories of African nationalism. They seem to create a degree of separation between female leaders and the masses through a lack of mentioning the masses of working class women that supported and stood behind these female leaders thereby ensuring their path to

becoming notable activists. The leaders are portrayed as elite many times while their followers are on the other end of the spectrum and seen as non-elite. This suggests that perhaps these female nationalists were anomalies among women of their era. It conveys the idea that they were isolated actors in achieving their endeavors and that they brought consciousness back to the masses. The elite to non-elite transfer of knowledge was one paradigm for the growth of consciousness among the masses women, but it is imperative to remember that market women had been protesting and exercising their political power for a long time, according to Ardener, before any educated elite class was created. The development of activist biography does aid in profiling important women, their political and ideological development, and importance to certain ideas and movements but the genre usually does not allow for the elements to be analyzed within the collective movement of the masses of working class women.

In the late 1980s there was a shift in the bibliography women in African nationalism in which historians went away from centering biography and back towards focusing on women as a group. Signe Arnfred, in her article *Women in Mozambique: Gender Struggle and Gender Politics* (1988), spoke to the effects of nationalist struggle on gender relations in society. Her work focused on the Mozambique Women's Organization (OMM) and ways in which the war against the Portuguese colonials re-shaped women's roles in the community at large. Women requested female contingent of the guerilla army, Destacamento Feminino, which would spread information and mobilize people for the war effort among other things. The OMM constituted the broader non-combative force of women who grew food for soldiers and transported guns and weapons to them. In traditional society women and their work were subject to the authority of husbands, fathers, brothers, and uncles but as the war grew nationalist duties dismantled the gender constraints previously experienced by women. During the war women could travel alone,

stay away for long periods, do non-domestic work, and have heightened freedoms that they had not been able to have before. In the event that men rose up against women for utilizing this non-traditional and newfound sense of freedom to go and work for the OMM, women would call upon the nationalist liberation movement leaders to restrain the men. For example, Habiba, one of the OMM women interviewed by Arnfred, said that she remembered when one woman's husband started beating her to keep her from leaving. The other women came together and tied his hands behind his back and took him to the movement leaders who told the man that it was better for him not to fight her but to allow her to do her work for the army and for them to fight the Portuguese together. Arnfred's article was one of the early works to look at the impact of women's participation in nationalist struggle on their traditional status and relationship with men as well as men's reactions to this change although women were still studied as supporters of the politically elite male led nationalist movement.

Stephanie Urdang also focused on the broader status of women in *And They Still Dance* (1989). She used in-depth interviews to tell the stories of women's experiences under the Portuguese system of forced labor in Mozambique. Women were punished for low agricultural yields by rape and beatings as well as being sent to labor camps where they were made to till the ground with their bare hands. The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) began as a result of Portuguese brutality. Urdang asserted that women were an important part of FRELIMO's agenda because there is a strong connection that women's liberation shares with national freedom. She stated that the constitution and practices of FRELIMO realized that women were often majority of the poor and unequally affected by colonialism and thus overwhelmingly welcomed revolution. FRELIMO asserted that since women are represented in virtually every oppressed class in the nation, addressing women's issues would inevitably have

an effect on all these groups and thereby the nation's progress as a whole. Her study predominantly analyzed women's progress in the decade after independence in lieu of the FRELIMO's support of women. This was one of the earliest works to use intensive interview techniques to tell women's stories in their own words and to look at working class women directly after independence which is important to understanding their position in relation to the post-colony. Even so, women are portrayed as supporters of the broader FRELIMO movement which was not their autonomous creation.

While Urdang focused on women's status from the late colonial to post-colonial era Eugenia Shanklin's 1990 article, *ANLU Remebered: The Kom Women's Rebellion of 1958-1961*, was reminiscent of Ardener's work in that it centered women's right and ability to use methods of protest to protect their interests, reaffirm their power in society, and maintain their way of life. Shanklin wrote about the rebellion of Njinikom women of northern Cameroon which was organized to protest the laws to instate contour farming and to respond to a rumor that their land would be sold to Nigerian Igbos. The women came together with a war cry that alerted people of the impending *Anlu* demonstration. They lambasted the male council leader Chia K. Bartholomew with abusive songs and he was forced to run to the home of a priest when the when moved on him during a council meeting. When he thought it was safe to return home the women regrouped at his home and began dancing, singing, beating on his house, and urinating and defecating all over his property. Women from other neighboring villages later joined these women as word of the revolt spread. What Shanklin calls *political anlu* lasted for three years. Women protesters disrupted the whole kingdom. They shut down markets and schools, interfered with death rituals, disregarded traditional and colonial male authority, broke bikes and cameras, fondled men's buttocks while speaking crudely to them. At the end of the three year

protest the KNDP (pro-Cameroonian Party) won the election to defeat the KNC (pro-Nigeria Party). Shanklin, like Ardener, showed the importance of women's solidarity, protest, and organizing to political change and also the system of checks and balances that women's activism provided for their respective communities. She again highlights the autonomous mobilizing of the masses of women as central to women's power to create political change in Africa. Her work is interesting in that it speaks to women's informal organizing which was spurred by a temporary ritual. In this way it offers an early glimpse into the autonomous collective activism of women and agendas that constituted a collective female articulation of nationalism although an analysis of their philosophies and ideologies are missing.

Irene Staunton also centered collective women at war in her 1990 book, *Mothers of the Revolution: The War Experiences of Thirty Zimbabwean Women*. She led interviews with thirty women to ascertain their involvement in, thoughts about, and changes caused by the war for independence in Zimbabwe. The questions centered on women's lives before the war, their interaction with soldiers, their contributions to the war, and their lives after the war. Though Urdang used interviews Shanklin was one of the first to give an intimate history of women in independence struggles using life histories that highlighted the ways in which the women themselves perceived their place in and the aftermath of nationalist struggle. Even so, the women do not come through as autonomous actors but supporters of the Zimbabwean Independence movement.

Another ideological shift within works on nationalism and gender came with the release of *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle* (1990) by Thomas Sankara who was the leader of the leftist faction of the Council of Popular Salvation in Burkina Faso. The book consists of a speech given by Sankara on March 8, 1987 (International Women's Day) with an

introduction by Michel Prairie. The speech detailed the historical trajectory of women's oppression in society and an analysis of how patriarchy affects their daily lives. Sankara says that men experienced happiness at the development of the country as a free nation but that women are not sharing in the happiness of this victory because of their "subjugation-a condition imposed over the course of centuries by various forms of exploitation." [55] According to Susan Geiger, male African nationalists appealed to the colonial governments and argued for self rule in their own countries citing progressive platforms.[56] This was done as a means of symbolizing their readiness to build and maintain forward thinking nations that aligned with the principles that Europeans claimed to adhere to. However, Sankara's speech demonstrates that not all African countries approached women's issues the same way and that there were some African male leaders that were very concerned with women's issues and made agendas and moves towards addressing them. This view of African male leaders is extremely important because, within the majority of works on the colonial and post-colonial male leaders, they are treated as a monolithic group that is completely invested in the advancement of men over women.[57]

Other scholars that follow this paradigm of using gender to analyze nationalist struggle are Armit Wilson, in *The Challenge Road: Women in Eritrean Revolution* (1991), and Gay W. Siedman, in "*No Freedom Without the Women:" Mobilization and Freedom in South Africa* (1993). Wilson speaks to the complexities of women's experiences in the Eritrean Liberation People's Front through analyzing elements of social and economic transformations that occurred during the movement. Wilson's scope covers not only the Italian colonization of Eritrea but their

[55] Thomas Sankara, *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle* (Atlanta, Georgia: Pathfinder Press, 1990), 22
[56] Susan Geiger, "*Women and African Nationalism,"* Journal of Women's History Vol. 2 No. 1 (Spring 1990), 228
[57] The article *Separating the Men from the Boys: Constructions of Gender, Sexuality, and Terrorism in Colonial Kenya, 1939-1959* by Luise White also speaks to the monolithic nature that has been ascribed to African male leaders by historians. White says that the complexities of men's lives and experiences are not given in depth analysis as they are portrayed as zealous soldiers and politicians but not husbands and fathers and dissenters of armed struggle.

conquest of Ethiopia. Internal strife existed between the two African nations when Eritrea revolted against Ethiopia for revoking its status as an autonomous area during the Ethiopian Civil War between Emperor Haile Selassie and the Military government. This work details the ways in which land reform, health, and marriage conventions during the revolt affected women. There are also chapters on women as fighters as well as women's experiences as soldiers behind enemy lines. The contribution of this multifaceted history is in the narrative that it builds in terms of how women's lives changed as a result of certain social and economic adjustments that came as a result of the Eritrean revolt. Wilson is also one of the first to look how nationalism changed structures in society at large and how those differences operated on women's social and economic autonomy. It is also interesting that Wilson noted the growth of a more ethnic form of nationalism among women that was not the result of European colonialism by centering women in nationalist struggles between two African groups. Women are still dependent supporters of the movement in this narrative.

Like Wilson, Siedman also pushes gender analysis even further to ask a broader question as to the status of women after the nationalist endeavor has ended. In his article, *No Freedom Without Women,* Seidman asks why it is that basic social structures did not change, following many African nationalist struggles, such as men's control of women and ownership of property as well as elders' ownership of children. Seidman also argues that women's issues were a part of the agenda for some nationalist movements, such as Mozambique, but were later removed. The answers cited are that 1) African nationalist leaders felt that fighting for women's issues would be divisive to the movement because male supporters would not be invested in resolving gender subordination and 2) that the leaders felt that the home was a site of autonomous national identity which should be preserved so that domestic relations would not become contentious and have

negative effects on the movement. In essence, Seidman points to the implicit question of whether gender supersedes nation or vice versa by discussing the move from "pragmatic to strategic gender concerns". Throughout the article Seidman says that South African women did not relent on questioning the level of engagement of gender issues by post independence era leaders. They saw gender issues and post apartheid troubles as intertwined. These women formed what Seidman calls semiautonomous women's groups to further discuss and bring visibility to their issues. Their organizing presents evidence that women did not have to choose between gender equality and national stability; they could operate from a both/and model. This is one of the earliest works to undertake a more philosophical investigation of the strategic ideals that undergirded African women's collectives insomuch as South African women were fighting for both gender equality and Black self determination. This work was a forerunner in highlighting women's move from a pragmatic to a strategic philosophy of activism through specific questioning or an intellectual addressing of gender inequity, and mobilizing to combat it, within the larger context of the post independence nation building struggles. Even so, there is a missed opportunity here to use this information to shape an intellectual history of women that would bring them to the forefront as theorists of nation building instead of a micro narrative of the post apartheid struggles in South Africa.

The analysis of gender in African nationalist history was once again nuanced by Thaddeus Sunseri in the 1997 article *Famine and Wild Pigs: Gender Struggles and The Outbreak of the MajiMaji War in Uzaramo (Tanzania)*. Sunseri wrote about the *ngoma* ritual among the Zaramo people. It was performed by women to appease their god and pray for rain for their crops. What was interesting about the ritual was that the women, both Christian and non-Christian, would dress like men and brandish weapons during the dance. During the MajiMaji

war against the Germans (1905-1907), men in the rural community went to join the rebellion. Their loss of labor meant that women had to assume male roles in protecting the crops from wild pigs and other animals, reshape crop patterns, and pray for rain. Sunseri says that gender roles changed due to the anti-colonial war effort. This change in gender roles was captured in the *ngoma* rain ritual. Sunseri 's article shows how nationalist struggles redefined traditional roles for men and women by centering the women who stayed behind to ensure the survival of the family and community instead of those who fought in the war. This point of view is important in that it shows the domestic realities of rural women during nationalist struggles and how these wars for independence in Africa impacted women who were not involved directly in the fighting. Even so, it appears to be less often discussed in the bibliography of women in African nationalism in comparison to topics such as women soldiers and opposition organizers.

As the 21st century came to an end there was an important turn towards autobiography to highlight women's activism during African nationalist struggles with the publication of *Mau Mau's Daughter* in 1998 by Wambui Otieno. The book was edited by Cora Ann Presley. The autobiography covers her decades of activism in Kenyan politics including the organizing of women, and the court case that she fought over the rights to bury her husband, prominent Nairobi lawyer S.M. Otieno, upon his death. Mrs. Otieno, who had three children during the war, was arrested by the British for mobilizing the women's wing of the Mau Mau rebellion and she was sent to a labor camp. When released she met and married S.M. Otieno, who was from a different ethnic group than she, and founded one of the most successful law firms in Kenya. When her husband died she waged a long and hard fought legal battle against customary law for the right to bury her husband where he wanted to be interred and not where his clan wanted to bury him. Prior to the release of this book, there were many feminist historians that employed qualitative

methods such as life histories but this is one of the earliest published autobiographies of an African female nationalist.[58]

In the 21century scholars began a more in depth investigation of what the impact of women's involvement in African nationalism meant for their status in society during and after the movement. They scrutinized claims that a heightened freedom for women and fundamental changes to traditional gender relations accompanied nationalist struggle. In 2000 Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi published her book *For Better or Worse?: Women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle*. In this work she challenges the idea that women were liberated and gender relations were bettered during the Zimbabwean liberation struggle against the British who controlled Rhodesia's government. The British fought the Zimbawean nationalists until 1979. The country became Zimbabwe in 1980. During the war the Zimbawean African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) released propaganda that depicted women as gun toting pants and t-shirt wearing supporters. These women were purposed to be symbols of the progressiveness that ZANLA proclaimed as a central part of its mission. In reality Nhongo-Sembanegavi states that women were not allowed on the battlefield, which was seen as men's domain, until 1978 and even then they were few in number and were placed in liberated or semi-liberated zones. Women were sexually abused and also accused of being witches by men who sought to keep women's status as subordinate to their own.

Only one woman was chosen to serve in the ZANLA High Command which consisted of twenty-eight members. When the war ended only five women were chosen to serve in the fifty-

[58] The memoirs of women such as Wangari Maathai *Unbowed: A Memoir* (2006) and Winnie Mandela *491 Days: Prisoner 1323/69* (2014) are also an important addition to the bibliography of women in African nationalism because, though they are not focused specifically on nationalist activism, they do offer a very personalized view of the struggles, mistakes, and accomplishments of African women activists who experienced gender relations under colonialism and post colonial nation building. These memoirs offer nuanced definitions of nationalism and nationalist engagement in the lives of individual women.

seven member Parliament. These women were the wives of male ZANLU leaders and maintained the attitudes and opinions of their husbands and the party. Since women were underrepresented in Parliament their issues were not being heard. This caused women to found alternate groups and non-governmental agencies to address pertinent issues. The women of the Parliament vowed to stop the masses of women from mobilizing as it did not support the progressive narrative of ZANLA leaders. Police raids jailed hundreds of women who disobeyed curfew laws and took them to work in the Zambezi Valley to build up agricultural production in the area. This was seen as more fitting work for women. Nhongo-Simbanegavi did state that Parliament did pass three major legislations that: ended the treatment of women as perpetual minors, ended gender discrimination in deciding salaries, and ended the favoring of men in divorce settlements. Nhongo-Simbanegavi's work was pivotal among works on women in African nationalism because it emphatically stated that gender revolution was not always associated with nationalist revolution. Patriarchy was not a relic of colonial times that did not pass on into the post colonial era nation building; it was very much a part of the early development of many African nations. However, Nhongo-Simbanegavi misses an opportunity to evaluate the autonomous philosophies of the NGOs and other autonomous formal organizations of women that came into existence in the post colonial era which would place them as important theorists and developers of a unique brand of nationalism instead of only dissenters that form a micro narrative of ZANLA history.

Another work on women in Zimbabwean nationalism, *Guns and Guerilla Girls: Women in the Zimbabwean National Liberation Struggle* (2003) by Tanya Lyons, also centered the complexities of women's realities during the nationalist struggle for independence. It differs from Nhongo-Simbanegavi's work though in that it primarily focuses on women as soldiers and

not the broader questions of gender revolution and nationalism. Lyons uses life history interviews to reconstruct women's experiences as soldiers in the guerilla forces. The scope of the book covers the colonial and post-colonial eras but its importance lies in its addressing of female ex-combatants in the war effort. Lyons discovers what women's lives were like as veterans of the war for independence and she does so by using their own words. These women, like many others in the scholarship on women in African nationalism, were portrayed as soldiers who defended the freedom of their nation as defined by the politically elite male led movement.

In 2005 Elizabeth Schmidt articulated another interesting view of women's participation in nationalist struggle which portrayed them as a part of a broader popular movement that pre-dated the formal nationalist movements. Her work, *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939-1958,* centers the informal Guinean nationalist movement against the French. The formal Guinean movement was named the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA). The country won its independence in 1958; however, Schmidt focuses on the years prior to independence in order to investigate the contributions of veterans, urban workers, peasants, and market women. She builds a history of nationalism in Africa from the bottom up by speaking to the self organizing that the masses of working class poor who came together prior to the formal establishment of the RDA. When the RDA came into existence, it did not have to mobilize a resistance because the people had done so since WWII. Schmidt's analysis of women in service of the RDA as soldiers does not differ from many other works on women in African nationalism but she does attempt to stray from the prevailing tendency of scholars to focus primarily on the political elite. Her narrative focuses on the informal ways in which the masses rallied independently and how their early activism helped

to usher in the RDA and independence in Guinea instead of how the formal politically elite male led groups mobilized the people towards a nationalist agenda.

Safiaa Aidid specifically investigated women's agency during the nationalist era by highlighting the ways in which women's stories were co-opted by male nationalists to create a more moving narrative for the movement. In her article *Haweenku Wa Garab (Women Are a Force): Women and the Somali Nationalist Movement*, Aidid discusses the Somali Women's Democratic Organization (SWDO) and centers Hawa Taako. She says that the support and service of the group were important to the larger nationalist movement; however the work and memory of women such as Hawa Taako were appropriated for the benefit of the male leaders of the freedom movement. Taako was murdered by a pro-Italian mob during a protest against Italian trusteeship of Somalia. A statue of her was erected in 1972 by General Mohammed Siad Barre to represent an allegory of the resistance movement and to invoke public memory of the fight against the Italians from whose ire not even women were safe. The historical memory of Taako was used by the General to support the idea of the necessity of national freedom but his use of Taako's murder relegated her to being a supporter of the male led movement and not an independent actor and theorist of nationalism in her own right. Within this state sanctioned narrative little concern is given to constructing *her reasons* for joining the nationalist front or her political agency. Aidid exemplifies how women became a micro narrative of the nationalist movement in Somalia through the use of their womanhood as symbols of the nation. Although Aidid does speak to women's agency the women of SWDO were still followers and supporters of the broader politically elite male led movement and not a completely autonomous nationalist women's group.

Meredith Teretta also spoke to women as supporters of the male nationalist machine but utilized the bottom up approach to African nationalist history. She and Schmidt were alike in this approach but Teretta pointedly centers women's history while Schmidt does a general popular history with some reference to gender. Teretta's book, *Petitioning for Our Right, Fighting for Our Nation: The History of the Democratic Union of Cameroonian Women, 1949-1960* (2013), gives a detailed history of the Democratic Union of Cameroonian Women (UDEFEC). The UDEFEC consisted of largely illiterate women who formed the women's wing of the larger Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (UPC). These women were not political elites but they led a campaign of fierce petition writing to the United Nations to support national freedom for Cameroon. These women wrote from their homes, markets, fields, shops, and schools to provide an ideological foundation for the rhetoric of revolution and argument for an end to colonialism in Cameroon. This is one of the first histories analyze women's ideological contributions to nationalism in Africa outside of their role as soldiers. It is a pseudo intellectual history of a women's group involved in the African nationalist movement in that it analyzes their writings but does not explicitly trace the development of certain ideas with them. In addition the women are not a part of an autonomous group but supporters of the UPC which means that their efforts and writings were undoubtedly influenced by the ideologies of the broader politically elite male led movement.

The majority of works in the bibliography of women in African nationalism represented above, whether they see women as supporters or sole actors, portray women as a micro narrative to men's movements. Most of the works focus on women's groups that are auxiliaries of the male led groups and, as such, do not have intellectual freedom to articulate their own brand of nationalism that centers their needs. Safia Aidid said that women are "incorporated into what

can be called the national metanarrative of Somali history." She refers to nationalism as the metanarrative or overarching story of Somali history but women are also a micro narrative in the story of Somali nationalism because "they enter national memory as subjects whose agency is delimited by their metaphorical and symbolic significance."[59] She goes on to say that women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation but are denied any direct relation to national agency." Indeed, like Somali nationalism, the broader historiography of women in African nationalism has inadvertently crafted this imagery of women as followers of men who have ultimate agency in shaping nationalist theory and practice. According to Susan Geiger African nationalism:

> even when studied by historians, has invariably been treated as a phase in the evolution of African politics--a story of men, their movements and parties, and struggles over power. Women among African colonised populations, while sometimes credited with supportive `roles' in the parties, armies, or peasant protests associated with anti-colonial nationalist moments, are as often, especially in recent years, relegated to a symbolic representational place or role: protector of family, tradition and spiritual purity--a place or role said to be created and manipulated for the masculine nationalist project. Even when women's `participation' is included, the larger narrative remains one in which nationalism itself--whether perceived as evil, failed, triumphal or flawed--is frequently essentialised as a masculine political project based on men's activities, and ideas.[60]

Geiger says that African nationalism is perfunctorily treated as a masculine project. However she notes that, in the case of Tanzanian women, nationalism is multifaceted and does not only affect men: "nationhood has a complex history and multiple origins, important strains of which intersected in the lives and actions of TANU women."[61] Nation building is not a simple process and it affects all in the nation and can only be done with the help of all in the nation, both women

[59] Safiaa Aidid. "*Haweenku Wa Garab (Women Are a Force): Women and the Somali Nationalist Movement 1943-1960*." Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies vol. 10 article 10 (2011), 104
[60] Susan Geiger, *"Specificities: Citizens and Subjects Engendering and Gendering African Nationalism: Rethinking the Case of Tanganyika (Tanzania)"* Social Identities Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture No. 5 Vol. 3 (1991), 331
[61] Ibid, 339

and men.[62] Nationalism is complex and for this reason historians must realize that there are many iterations of nationalism in any nationalist movement.[63] The history is not complete if any of these articulations, by women or men, are left out or if one is allowed to supersede the other.

To this end, women must be seen as more than supporters of, a micro narrative of, or isolated elites in African nationalist endeavors. In order to do this historians have to build a narrative that highlights more concrete connections between women's *autonomous ideas and actions* and the development of African nationalist theory and practice. In a 1987 article, entitled *Women in Nationalist Struggle*, Susan Geiger asserted that women were not seen as conscious political actors in nationalist struggles and that there has been no deeper interrogation of women's nationalist activities toward gender awareness and emancipation.[64] She went on to say "Nor has there been an attempt to assess the content of women's nationalist activities as expressions of or progress toward something called emancipation, not just from colonial overrule, but from the socially prescribed gender roles and constraints attached to womanhood."[65] Since the time of her article there have been more histories of African nationalism that center women as conscious political actors in nationalist movements; however the latter parts of her critique still hold true. There must be a more substantive assessment of *the content of women's nationalist activities* toward self determination for both women and the nation.

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[62]Sheila Meintjes, *Gender, Nationalism, and Transformation: Difference and Commonality in South Africa's Past and Present* in *Women, Ethnicity, and Nationalism: The Politics of Transition* eds. Rick Wilford and Robert L. Miller (London: Routledge, 1998), chapter 4

[63] Eric Morier-Genoud edited a volume entitled *Sure Road?: Nationalisms in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique* which speaks to the varying types of nationalisms that have occurred in these areas. Justin Pearce's chapter, *Changing Nationalisms: From War to Peace in Angola*, chronicles the existence of different types of nationalism that existed within the Angolan nationalist movement over time. Also Shireem Hassim, in chapter one of her boodk *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*, theorizes about modern vs. traditional nationalism and how women were mobilized by each.

[64] Susan Geiger, "*Women in Nationalist Struggle: TANU Activists in Dar es Salaam,"* The International Journal of African Historical Studies Vol. 20 No.1 (1987), 3

[65] Ibid, 3

Women in Nigerian Nationalist History

Beginning in the early 20th century certain trends are readily perceivable in the scholarship on Nigerian nationalism in regards to women. These are: 1) a focus on politics instead of intellectual thought, 2) a complete lack of or indirect engagement with women's articulations of nationalism, and 3) an overwhelming focus on Igbo women. The body of knowledge now referred to as Nigerian nationalist historiography began with the ideas of Reverend Edward Blyden in the late 19th and early 20th century. He was born to Igbo (a Nigerian ethnic group) parents in the Dutch West Indies in 1832, came to America at age 18, and was forced to travel to Liberia to attend college because of the tide of racism in the U.S. system of higher education. Blyden is known as the father of cultural nationalism because of his views on developing Black solidarity and combating the psychology of oppression among them. He did not come to Nigeria until 1891 but his pamphlets and other writings preceded his arrival there and had a readership.[66] In his work entitled *Liberia's Offering* published in 1862, he spoke of the necessity of nationalism: "I believe nationality to be an ordinance of nature and no people can rise to an influential position among nations without a distinct and efficient nationality."[67] He uses this idea as a means of engendering a sense of togetherness that will rally the people around one cause. His use of nationalism is comparable to the imagined connection that Benedict Anderson said was socially constructed to support certain socio-economic and political agendas.[68] In, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* published in 1888, Blyden pushed for Africans to lead a cultural revitalization movement. He urged them to educate themselves on the local history and cultures in an attempt to obtain a sense of self that was only contained among

[66] Toyin Falola *Tradition and Change in Africa* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2000), 77
[67] Edward Blyden *Liberia's Offering* (New York: John A. Gray, 1862), 5
[68] Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006)

the oral historians and "uncontaminated Africans" of their homeland.[69] These assertions spoke to the utility of nationalism but posited the nationalist as male in that Blyden does not discuss or even consider the role of women or their articulations of nationalism in the formation of the independent nation. This is a sign of the pervasiveness of patriarchal undertones in his thought processes and subsequently that of his audience in Nigeria in the late 19th century. Nonetheless Blyden's contribution to the literature is important in that he establishes the tone and objective for Nigerian nationalism.

In the early 20th century, women do make an appearance in print in the colonial administration's *Report of the Aba Commission of Inquiry* published in 1930. This source consists of the court records following the investigation of the events leading up to the six week rebellion of Aba women that left fifty-five women dead. The text is rife with condescending language and derogatory speech as the colonial officers interrogated the Aba women. The names of the women are not even recorded in most of the documents which shows the disdain with which their issues and testimonies were treated. A large majority of the questions that the colonial administrators asked the women were purposed to elicit a certain response from them that could be used to craft a narrative that places culpability on the women. For example, Mr. Graham Paul repeatedly asked an unnamed woman if she and her peers disobeyed customary law in leaving their homes and cities to mobilize against their unfair treatment. In the event that she affirmed this assertion she could have been reprimanded for breaking the law. She maintained that women did not break customary law and did not have the means to pay taxes.[70] These proceedings are important and are contrasted with Blyden's works in that they, at least, provide evidence of women's issues and resistance under colonialism where Blyden does not. They also

[69] Edward Blyden *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* (New York: W.B. Whittingham, 1888), 91
[70] Colonial Administration of Nigeria. *Report of the Commission of Inquiry appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances in the Calabar and Owerri Provinces, December, 1929* (London: Waterlow and Sons, Ltd., 1930)

allude to women's activism as being the groundwork and format for subsequent nationalist movements aimed at ousting the colonial administration. This text compares with Blyden in that it also creates an ideological frame for Nigerian nationalism in its positing of colonialism as the cause of degradation, crime, and poverty among other societal, political, and economic ailments. It also set a precedent, at unawares, of informing historical events using indigenous and female knowledge as sources. These women's actions represent some of the earliest community organizing against colonialism. Even so, *The Report of the Aba Commission of Inquiry* is biased with a punitive tone toward the women who are still dominated in the narrative by subjective patriarchal notions which do not allow for a consideration of women's articulations of nationalism. There was not much change in the analysis of women's issues in the sources from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Ibadan School

In 1954 K.O. Dike became the head of the history department at the University of Ibadan and sought to use history "as a discipline with the task of nation building and nationalism." [71] In 1950 he graduated from the King's College in London. He published his dissertation entitled *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* in 1956. This pioneering work shaped the writing of national history in Nigeria. Dike used oral histories instead of archival sources to better highlight the indigenous voice in the narrative. However this research marked a turning point in Nigerian nationalist historiography because it "rejected the logic of imperial history and emphasized instead the African side of the interactions with Europeans during the nineteenth century."[72] Dike's thesis followed the ideas of Blyden and the example of *The Report on the*

[71] Toyin Falola *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2001), 230-231
[72] Ibid, 228

Aba Commission of Inquiry in his assertion that African intellectuals need to shift their gaze toward the interpretation of history to indigenous perspectives. *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* inspired many other dissertations on local cultures and the advent of colonialism such as *The Egba and Their neighbors* by Saburi Biobaku in 1953 and the *British Enterprise on the River Nigeria 1830-1869* by C.C. Ifemasia in 1959. Treatises such as these represented a new era in Nigerian historiography which was indicative of the fact that "Africans could now do original research and write books and essays on their own people…"[73] Even so, neither women's importance to and articulations of nation building nor their intellectual thought towards self determination figured prominently in these works.

As this body of knowledge, which was heavily imbued with nationalist/anti-colonial sentiments, was being formed by the Ibadan School, westerners published more critical works that interrogated, defined, and discussed nationalism in Nigerian history as well. *Background to Nigerian Nationalism* by James S. Coleman, in 1958 differed from the prior works of Dike, Ifemasia, and Biobaku in that he did not choose research topics based on that nationalist doctrine of refuting colonial stereotypes. The book is very thoroughly researched and is concerned with the growth of not only anti-colonial nationalism but other forms such as ethnic nationalism throughout the move towards self governance in the country. It spoke to the role of western religious education in the growth of political consciousness of Nigerian people and the resulting ideological strains that informed movements for freedom from the British as well as the later ethnic rivalries that threatened the consolidation of Nigerian national solidarity. Coleman used the definition of nationalism, as demonstrated by the Aba women to be resistance to as well as a

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Other comparable works are that of A.B. Aderibigbe *Expansion of the Lagos Protectorate 1863-1900* (1959), J.F. Ade Ajayi *Christian missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite* (1965), and J.C. Anene *Southern Nigerian in Transition 1885-1906* (1966)

[73] Ibid, 231

critique of colonialism, to inform his perceptions of indigenous history. Although Coleman's book identifies a shift in the historiography of Nigerian nationalism from the Ibadan School's stance on writing in defense of Nigeria to using a more objective lens to interrogate the development of nationalism within interpretations of indigenous actions in the past, his work was still quite dismissive of Nigerian women. According to the index of the book, the word woman only appears 21 times throughout the 510 page text (according to the reference section).

The trends in nationalist histories shaped by the Ibadan school and western scholars experienced yet another change during the Cold War. According to Toyin Falola "The politics of the Cold War produced a number of problems for the continent in the delay of independence…entrenchment of apartheid…and the failure of a new international economic order to spread benefits to Africa."[74] Furthermore, "All these conditions radicalized male scholars and made political economy, dependency, and Marxism into viable intellectual options…"[75] In other words, the climate created by the Cold War caused historians' works to reflect the political milieu. As a result much research came to the forefront of this historiography of nationalism in Nigerian that focused on warfare and politics.[76] The pioneer of these works was *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation* published in 1963 by Richard Sklar, professor emeritus of political science at UCLA. This book gives an analysis of the role of Nigerian political parties in mobilizing the people for the nationalist movement. He discusses the impact of men such as Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe on the youth movement and National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). Even though women such as Mrs. Kuti and Margret Ekpo were very involved in the NCNC at this time Sklar does not

[74] Ibid, 263
[75] Ibid
[76] For more histories dealing with politics and warfare see *Ijebu and its Neighbors* by Robert Smith in 1965, Dahomey and its Neighbors1708-1918 by A.I. Akinjogbin in 1967, and *The Economic Background of Etikiparapo 1878-1893* by S.A. Akintoye in 1968

consider, with any depth, their thoughts on self determination or impact on the party. Even so, his study is important because he sets a trend in the scholarship of defining nationalism in 20th century Nigeria as political activism and mobilization.

The Ibadan School was extremely influential in the formation of the historiography on Nigerian nationalism. It demonstrates that the flow of ideas changed the conception of nationalist history from the desire to protect Nigeria's legacy from colonial stereotypes to using nationalism as an ideological frame. However the trends that are exhibited throughout the 1950s and 1960s suggest that women's nationalist activities in this period were still largely ignored or overshadowed by those of men. Women were either omitted, as in Dike and Coleman's research, or their roles are downplayed and made to seem inferior to, an auxiliary to, or a micro narrative of men's actions as demonstrated in Sklar's work. Although research that comprises the Ibadan School has refined the idea and practice of nationalist history the scholarly work of these authors fail to provide a gendered analysis and overlooks the experiences of women.

Growth of a Gendered Perspective

The establishment of the Decade for Women by the United Nations in 1975, at the World Conference on Women held in Mexico City, ushered in a new era in the historiography of Nigeria. In the early 1970s historians of Africa began to highlight women as agents of social change in their research. More attention was given to women's issues, roles, influences and activism in the late 1970s through the 1980s.[77] The first study that focused solely on women's lives is *African Women* by Sylvia Leith-Ross in 1939. The advent of women's studies as an

[77] Nkparom C. Ejituwu and Amakievi O. I. Gabriel *Women in Nigerian History* (Bayelsa State, Nigeria: Onyoma Research Publications, 2003), 96 and Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 151

academic field forever changed the standard of writing on African women that was set since the writings of Blyden and the *Aba Commission of Inquiry*.[78]

The growth of Women's Studies in the west affected the further production of works on women in Nigeria and throughout the continent. The establishment of Women's Studies caused western scholars to recognize that there was a lack of information on African women. As a result they began to write histories of women in Africa without the linguistic, cultural, or contextual knowledge necessary to complete the task. In light of this circumstance, African and Africa based scholars began to produce studies that served as a corrective to biased western sources on African women. This caused African women's history as a field to flourish and also the creation of new perspectives and paradigms such as the implications of Nigerian women's work to national development.[79]

In regards to Nigeria, female scholars were among the first to produce histories that led deep inquiries into the realities of women. The first academic work on Nigerian women by a Nigerian woman was *The Role and Status of Women in Nigeria* by Felicia Adetowun Ogunsheye in 1960.[80] Ogunsheye was one of the founders of the National Council of Women's Societies in Nigeria. The organization was very involved in highlighting gender bias and resolving issues and inequality caused by it. Her work on the status of women began with the period from pre-colonial period as a basis to argue for the autonomy of women. Ogunsheye said that it was rare to find a woman in Nigeria that was solely reliant on her husband for subsistence. She said that

[78] For more works on African women from this era see: R.A. Levine's chapter in *Black Africa: Its Peoples and Their Cultures Today*; *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change* by Nancy Hafkin and Edna Bay; *African Women South of the Sahara* edited by Margaret Jena Hay and Sarah Stichter; *Marrying Well* by Kristin Mann; *Queens, Prostitutes, and Peasants: Historical Perspectives on African Women 1971-1986* by Margaret Hay; and, *Three Swahili Women* by Margaret Strobel

[79] Iris Berger, *Decolonizing Women's Activism: Africa in the Transformation of the International Women's Movement* in *Women in Social Movements* eds. Tom Dublin and Katherine Kish Sklar (Alexandria, Virginia: Alexandria Street Press, 2012

[80] Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 151

this type of situation was so rare that it was seen as shameful because women were entrepreneurs among many other self-determined economic activities. Caroline Ifeka-Moller wrote a book chapter in 1975, *Female Militancy and Revolt: The Women's War of 1929, Eastern Nigeria* that spoke to the militant organizing of Igbo women against the British. When the Igbo women heard that the colonials were planning to levy tax mandates on them there was an outcry. Women called upon their traditional informal networks of women throughout neighboring towns and villages to come and defend traditional rights of womanhood, one of which was the exemption from paying taxes. The protesting women were seen by the colonials as a threat and some of them were killed by gunfire. Ifeka-Moller brought attention to the mobilization of poor and working class women who had less access to political spheres than men under colonial regimes but were still active nationalists. Judith Van Allen also spoke to the anti-colonialism of Igbo women in 1976 when she produced an account of the Aba Women's War in a book chapter, *Aba Riots or Igbo Women's War?: Ideology, Stratification and the Invisibility of Women*. Her treatment of community activism and mobilization also set the groundwork for characterizing women's leadership as nationalism. Ifeka-Moller and Van Allen's works established a trend in politicizing women's anti-colonialism and also in analyzing Igbo women's anti-colonialism more so than that of other ethnicities of Nigerian women. Both of these issues caused the nationalist endeavors of other ethnicities of Nigerian women who espoused non-political ideologies to remain overlooked for quite some time.

Van Allen's focus on women's political activism led to the production of sources such as *The Institution of the Iyalode in the Traditional Yoruba Political Systems* by Bolanle Awe in 1977 which discussed the political autonomy that women experienced in pre-colonial times as well as how the office helped to maintain the system of checks and balances for male

leadership.[81] According to Awe the *Iyalode,* or mayor of women, was given membership in the male headed government body and brought the concerns of women to the men who developed the laws. This work was important in that it set the tone for analyzing women's political participation in pre-colonial times. This research also began a new development in the historiography by defining women's political involvement as important in group cohesion and economic development. It offered a gendered perspective of the male dominated narrative of politics as presented by Sklar and also engaged Yoruba and not Igbo women. Even so, it spoke to the political institution of the *Iyalode* and its functions only which does not allow for a deeper and more direct engagement of women's ideologies and strategies toward societal stability.

Following Awe's work on women in Nigerian politics other histories concerning Nigerian women's politico-economic involvement under colonialism surfaced. Cheryl Johnson-Odim is one of the foremost scholars on Nigerian women who patterned their works after that of Awe. Johnson-Odim's works include *Nigerian Women and British Colonialism: The Yoruba Example with Selected Biographies* which was her 1978 dissertation that focused on autobiography as a means of highlighting women's political awareness and contributions to Nigeria. In 1982 Johnson-Odim published an article entitled *"Grassroots Organizing: Women in Anti-colonial Activity in Nigeria*. In this article she speaks to the need of more work to be done on the area of African women in anti-colonial movements in the twentieth century. She notes that many scholars focused on the Igbo women's war but that not much else has been done, especially on the organizing of women in the era of African independence. She goes on to say that this opportunity to elaborate on women's contributions to anti-colonial nationalism was overlooked by the many political scientists that came to Africa to study the process of nation building there. For this reason Johnson-Odim profiles three major women's anti-colonial

[81] Ibid, 151

movements by the Lagos Market Women's Association, the Nigerian Women's Party, and the Abeokuta Women's Union. This article was important in that it brought attention to the fact that more work needs to be done on women's contributions to modern nationalism in the twentieth century. The author even focuses on formal women's organizations which were autonomously formed and not primarily linked to any political parties. This was a pivotal development in the historiography of Nigerian women in nationalism not only because it focused on formal women's organizations while other works centered women's informal anti-colonial movements but in that Johnson-Odim centered Yoruba women exclusively. Whereas Igbo women's activism was heavily researched, she concentrated onYoruba women's anti-colonialism as a wide spread movement in Nigeria. Even so, the author misses an opportunity to speak to women's ideologies in these formal organizations. Each group did have independently formed agendas and reasons as to why they felt the need for collective action which encapsulate their unique articulation of nationalism but she does not directly engage with this element, and in doing so, leaves much to be engaged.

The use of politics as a lens with which to investigate women's realities continued to be a popular paradigm among scholars of Nigerian women throughout the 1980s. In the same year that Johnson Odim released her article on Yoruba women's anti-colonialism Nina Mba published a book on Nigerian women's activism as well. *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southwestern Nigeria, 1900-1965* (1982) is a comprehensive history of primarily Yoruba women's group activism. Mba's focus however is on defining women's perspectives of and operation within the political arena. She begins her study with pre-colonial women's status in southern Nigeria with considerable attention given to their activities in political positions created for them as a result of the dual sex system. She goes on to chronicle the effects of

colonialism in southern Nigeria and women's responses to colonial rule by giving a political history of women in southwest Nigeria beginning with eastern and then western women's mass protest movements. Her analysis includes the famous Igbo women's war and the nexus of groups such as the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations as well as a deeply thorough narrative of women in Nigerian political parties. Mba's study was pivotal because she not only spoke to women in the politically elite male led parties but she went further to investigate women's articulations of politics in their own autonomous organizations such as the Women's Movement and National Council of Women's Societies. This was one of the first works to consider the existence of a distinct articulation of politics among formal women's organizations. However, Mba does not go further than to investigate the pressure group/interest group model of women's political action thereby missing an opportunity to speak to both the paradigm *and* rationale or ideological basis for their chosen form of collective action. [82] She uses politics as a lens to explore gender but not the independent intellectualism of women.

Mba's work was followed by *Palm Oil and Protest: An Economic History of Ngwa, Eastern Nigeria, 1800-1980* by Susan Martin in 1988. This was an economic history of the Ngwa people who were situated on the "palm belt" where many palm trees were grown and much of the oil was made. The narrative inherently focused on women because they were some of the major producers of palm oil. The palm oil export economy was affected when the colonials introduced taxation and the native court system as well as when African middlemen from the coasts began to move inward spreading the knowledge of Christianity and cassava, the newest cash crop. Women were often disproportionately affected by colonial interference in trade because they were given less consideration in economic affairs and avenues for entrance

[82] For more sources on women's political activism see A.E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929* (1972); *The Role of Nigerian Women in Politics* by Reverend Fr. Patrick Kenechukwu Uchendu (1993), and *Nigerian Women In Social Change* by Simi Afonja and Bisi Aina (1995)

into the cash economy by the colonials who operated from a patriarchal model of economic advancement.[83] In light of this reality, Martin says that the Igbo women, and women in neighboring towns and villages, rebelled in the women's war of 1929. They wanted a restoration of the palm oil trade that they had been successful in prior to colonial intervention. The palm oil market steadily declined while women who remained as traders had to turn to cultivating the cassava cash crop for economic vitality. Martin's study highlights the intersection of gender, economic subsistence, and colonialism and throughout the work it becomes clear that women's rebellions were, in part, responses to the negative impacts colonialism caused in regards to their economic potential. Her account of women's political mobilization within the broader economic history of the area was highly important for understanding women's economic reasons for unrest. However, Martin relies on politics and does not do an in depth investigation of women's intellectual discourses during their mass mobilizing campaign or their thought process during the organizing of their response to colonial control of the palm oil trade.

In the 1990s there was a shift toward biographies of African female leaders as a major work of this era which profiled singular women who had contributed much to historical processes of development in Nigeria. *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective* by Bolanle Awe focused on extraordinary female leaders. Awe's edited volume consists of biographies of thirteen female leaders whose significance in Nigerian history has gone undisputed. These women include Queen Amina of Zaria, Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura (owner of gold), and Lady Oyinkan Abayomi (founder of the Nigerian Women's Party). Awe states, in the introduction, that women's roles in African societies were not passive but dynamic and conclusive. The

[83] For more on this point see *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe* by Elizabeth Schmidt; *I Will Not Eat Stone* by Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian; and Jane Guyer in *African Women South of the Sahara* by Margaret Jena Hay and Sarah Stichter.

underlying premise of the book is that women have contributed to the building of the nation of Nigeria throughout its history from pre-colonial to contemporary times and, as a result, the nation should be concerned as to the empowerment of Nigerian women. This source offers valid and deeply nuanced perspectives on women's contributions to nation building in Nigeria. Even so, it unintentionally confines the narrative of women in nationalist endeavor to, what appear to be, sole elite women's actions. In addition these biographies lean on politics more so than the ideological developments of these notable women.

An important book by Byfield, *The Bluest Hands* (2002), did not center biography but revisited the use of economic enfranchisement as a lens through which to understand women's anti-colonialism. Her study revolved around working class women of the indigo dyeing industry in Abeokuta from 1850-1939. Men would grow the cotton and women would process, weave, and dye the cotton to make *adire* or a blue cloth. Political consciousness and organizing among women took on new dimensions as the slave trade ended and colonial enterprise began. The end of the slave trade caused many transitions in the political economy of Abeokuta. The British, as well as freed slaves, came into Abeokuta in search for new forms of economic enfranchisement. Byfield tells how women in the community and markets navigated the changes to their reality due to colonial mandates, tariffs, and taxes brought on by the global transition away from the slave trade and toward manipulation of the existing industries in Yorubaland. The restrictions in trade and shipping, female taxation, and the competition that arose when the British began to produce the adire cloth themselves caused women to go to their traditional leader for help and when he refused they unionized themselves to further fight repression. Women used male lawyers and letter writers to inundate different parts of the colonial administration with their concerns and demand that a commission of inquiry be set up to investigate women's issues.

They were successful in getting policy reversed but the adire industry continued to declined especially after 1937. Byfield's research was a valuable in that it privileged the voices of the working class women in the first full length study of the period from the end of the slave trade to the early colonial era (including the Great Depression, WWI, and the beginning of WWII). It speaks to the intersections of gender and political economy although it does not center women's intellectual development or ideologies that supported their agendas for economic enfranchisement.

In the early twenty-first century there was a revival of interest on Igbo women's societal contributions and activism including their anti-colonial resistance. Gloria Chuku supported this development me with her book *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation in Southeastern Nigeria 1900-1960* (2005). The book contains topics such as Igbo women in the economy before 1900, women in agriculture and food processing, women traders, and women's resistance movements. The complete study historicizes the importance of women's work and resistance to Nigerian development. In her chapter on resistance Chuku speaks to the symbolism, traditions, and protests that women used to secure their rights in Igbo societies. She asserted that there were many forms of resistance such sex strikes, domestic strikes, insult, nudity, singing, occupation of a man's compound, and lastly physical threats. The women's war of 1929 was one form of these various types of collective resistance which had been established centuries prior to colonialism. Adam Paddock and Toyin Falola, *The Women's War of 1929: A History of Anti-Colonial Resistance in Eastern Nigeria* (2011) also focus on Igbo women. They give an extremely detailed account of the war in 914 pages. Their analysis looks at the strategizing of both the women and colonials, the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of the events leading up to the war, and subsequent actions by Igbo women following the war into the 1930s. M. Matera,

Bastian, and Kent produced *The Women's War of 1929: Gender and Violence in Colonial Nigeria* in 2012. This latest work interrogates the relationship between the colonized and colonizer in this event. Women were shot and killed by colonials because they did not understand women's resistance tactics which had been a part of women's collective action since pre-colonial times. The authors use this information to point to the fact that there was an obvious confrontation between gender ideals of the British and those of West African cosmology which caused the British to treat women's institutions as less important than men's. This action based on British gender norms caused the Igbo women to rebel and fight for the maintenance of their traditional ways of life which offered women more autonomy. These sources are important in that they add to depth to the cannon on Igbo women, their political organizing, social and economic history, and anti-colonial resistance but add to the trend of privileging Igbo women as the quintessential or paragon example of women's anti-colonialism in Nigeria. In addition they do not speak to the intellectual history of Igbo women in resistance of colonialism and the development of the nation.

Summary

Scholars in the historiographies of African intellectual history, women in African nationalism, and women in Nigerian nationalist history have missed opportunities to deepen the analysis of women's contributions in these areas due to a lack of engagement with women's intellectual theorization of self determination. Those that have written on women in African nationalism have characterized them as supporters or sole actors in the development of nationalism which has cast them as a micro narrative or anomaly in the larger story of politically elite male nationalist movements in the continent. In addition, these works are mostly on eastern, central, and southern Africa. There are comparatively not many sources on West

African women in the historiography of women in African nationalism. *Ojo Nro* addresses these issues by centering women as autonomous nationalist leaders (instead of supporters) and analyzing their intellectual thought in the nationalist history of a *West* African nation. The histories of women in Nigerian nationalism have been characterized largely by works explicitly on politics as well as an overwhelming focus on the Igbo women's war in their approach to women in nationalism. These narratives speak to women in nationalism *indirectly* by virtue of their political participation in revolts or work in political parties. There is no *direct* engagement of their articulations of nationalist philosophies that were developed in formal autonomous women's organizations. For these reasons this study seeks to *directly* engage with women's nationalism by focusing on women's independent development of a nationalist consciousness, philosophy of nationalism, and articulations of nationalism in a formal women's umbrella organization.

Although there was a growth of gendered perspectives in histories of African nationalism from 1975 onward, women have been treated in specific ways in the narrative of nationalism. It is highly problematic that scholars have focused mainly on women in east, south, and central Africa because this leaves much to be desired in terms of West African women's approaches to nationalism. In addition there is no emphatic engagement with or attempt to construct African women's intellectual history during the nationalist era. Also, women's agency seems truncated in the sense that formal and autonomous women's groups, which developed outside of men's political organizations, are virtually missing from the narrative. Women are spoken of in these works as supporters of nationalist movements that are male led and politically elite, as isolated actors, or as a micro narrative wherein their agency cannot be divorced from that of the broader male led movements. These three distinct trends in the historiography are indicative of the

women in nationalism paradigm. A focus on women's autonomy in activism, intellectual developments, founding of formal organizations, and nationalist agendas for self determination is missing. There needs to be a shift towards the *women's nationalism* paradigm which highlights women's autonomous creation of intellectual narratives that define their collective agendas toward and articulation of self determination. In *Ojo Nro* I assert that it is imperative to highlight this distinction between *women in nationalism* and *women's nationalism* to substantively analyze women's contributions to nationalist theory and practice.

My research combats these prevailing trends in the scholarship on women in African nationalism in distinct ways. First, I focus on the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies which is an autonomous collective of women nationalists. In this way my work does not portray women as followers and supporters of men nationalists but nationalist leaders in their own right. Second, I chose this group because it is not local but a nationwide umbrella organization which means that it is heterogeneous. As a result it allows for the analysis of the dynamics of women's collective organizing across class, ethnic, and religious lines. This is important in order to avoid the construction of a politically elite narrative. Considering the collective agenda of the FNWO helps to privilege the experiences of women throughout Nigeria without only focusing on the trials of group leaders. Investigating the growth of this umbrella organization also allows for a discussion of the ways in which its famous female nationalist leader engaged and was supported by the masses of women who joined the group. In this way the founder will not be seen as an isolated political actor. Lastly, *Ojo Nro* seeks to portray women as developers of pivotal nationalist theory and practice as not to treat them as a micro narrative to the endeavors of men toward national self determination. For this reason I highlight the intellectual development of distinct ideologies and agendas in the FNWO, a formal and completely autonomous women's

group, to understand their articulation of nationalism and evaluate its contribution to the Nigeria nationalist movement as a whole.

Women in Nigerian nationalism have been highly politicized which has constricted scholars' perspectives and level of engagement with women and self determination. The ways in which women created political spaces for themselves to express their anti-colonial and feminist sentiments are highlighted within the sources. Even so, most of the sources that directly engage with women's anti-colonialism do not engage their intellectual thought and focus predominantly on Igbo women. Also, there are some assumptions within these sources that should be nuanced; mainly that politics was *always* at the center of women's articulations of self determination. In order to do this, scholars must engage directly with topics such as women's political philosophy in formal autonomous organizations in the independence era. *Ojo Nro* diversifies the current historiographic trends by interrogating women's declarations of non-politicism. It also centers a Yoruba women's federation instead of the Igbo women's war to discover the contributions of other Nigerian women to nationalist ideology and practice in the country.

Perhaps the most important contribution of this dissertation is in the realm of Black women's intellectual history. There are virtually no works on African women's intellectual history within the bibliography presented above (in terms of women in Nigerian nationalism or in the literature on African women). It is imperative for histories to trace the development of African women's collective ideas on how to achieve nationhood and self-government in addition to women's empowerment to increase the gendered analysis of African nationalism and women's importance in it. As a result *Ojo Nro* traces the intellectual stances and rationale behind the

specific agendas of the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations as a means of charting the growth of their intellectual development as nationalists.

Chapter Two:

Researching African Women: Methodology and Methods

This chapter presents my rationale of and approaches to data collection. This includes the theories that informed the project as well as the research paradigms, and an explanation of methods. The theories, paradigms, and methods for this project follow an African (woman) centered approach to ensure that its historical analysis privileges the words and thoughts of African women activists. For this reason, African gender theory is at the heart of this dissertation. Scholars of African gender have made the claim that any understanding of African women's empowerment must be rooted in the cultural realities and gender philosophies of African peoples.[84] This chapter begins with a discussion of the theorizing of African gender scholars that is important to this research. This is followed by a highlighting of paradigms used and lastly an explanation of methods.

Theory

This work is informed by the theorizing of African gender scholars who have focused on articulating philosophies of gender that center African cultural ideals and women's agency. They all argue that a grounding in concepts of gender as they exist in Africa is essential to developing an understanding of empowerment among African women. For this reason, the very use of feminism to describe African women's empowerment has been problematic for some gender scholars because feminism is a western term that is imbued with western concepts. African gender scholars such as Oyeronke Oyewumi have cogently expressed this point:

> Applying feminist concepts to express and analyze African realities is the central challenge of African gender studies. The oppositional male/female, man/woman duality and its attendant male privileging in western gender categories is particularly alien to many African cultures. Interpreting African realities based on these claims often

[84] See Obioma Nnaemeka *Nego-feminism (2002)*, Catherine Acholonu *Motherism (1995)*, and Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie *Re-Creating Ourselves: African Women in Social Transformation (1994)*

> produces distortions, obfuscations in language, and total lack of comprehension since the social categories and institutions are incommensurable. In fact, the two basic categories of woman and gender demand rethinking…[85]

Oyewumi advocates for an approach to developing gender theory in Africa that centers African cosmologies or worldviews because western gender terms and definitions are fundamentally adverse to those found in African contexts. Obioma Nnaemeka supports this view but does not disavow the term feminist. Her article "Mapping African Feminisms" in *Readings in Gender in Africa* speaks to some of the specific differences between the philosophical foundations of African feminism and western feminism in an effort to reinforce the distinctiveness of African feminism. She said that African feminism is not radical, does not abandon or dismiss motherhood or maternal politics as un-feminist, the language is one of compromise, it is not focused primarily on sexuality, and champions concerns such as clean water and food availability.[86]

Nnaemeka is very much concerned with the practice of telling women's stories from below and giving them agency to shape theory that will ultimately be used to analyze their realities. This objective is represented in her development of nego-feminism in that she allows for the existence of multiple African feminisms and not solely one monolithic or generalized concept:

> I will use the different features and methods of feminist engagement in Africa to propose what I call *nego-feminism* (the feminism of negotiation; no ego fem- inism) as a term that names African feminisms. Aware of a practice (feminism in Africa) that is as diverse as the continent itself, I propose *nego-feminism* not to occlude the diversity but to argue, as I do in the discussion of "building on the indigenous" in the last section of this article, that a recurrent feature in many African cultures can be used to name the practice. The diversity of the African continent notwithstanding, there are shared values that can be used as organizing principles in discussions about Africa, as Daniel Etounga-Manguelle

[85] Signe Arnfred et. al., *African Gender Scholarship: Concepts, Methodologies, and Paradigms* (Dakar, Senegal: CODESIRA, 2004), 7
[86] Obioma Nnameka, *Mapping African Feminisms* in *Readings in Gender in Africa* (Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2005), 32

> aptly notes: "The diversity—the vast number of subcultures [in Africa]—is undeniable. But there is a foundation of shared values, attitudes, and institutions that binds together the nations south of the Sahara, and in many respects those of the north as well" (Etounga-Manguelle 2000, 67).[87]

The paradigm that she establishes, building on the indigenous, includes communalism, or shared values as organizing principles, and is central to nego-feminism. She says that building from the indigenous establishes a process of theory building that is more democratic and encapsulates the worldviews of the people. This paradigm supports viewing African women where they are now and not solely how they were historically or as tied to tradition. It views them as not having stagnant but more complex and dynamic identities. The perception of African women as a universal category of oppressed woman has led to silencing and misrepresentations which can only be corrected by deeper theoretical investigations and development. Nnaemeka argues that theoretical development must center an authentic representation of the people as they see themselves and must prioritize those factors that are most important to them.[88] With this in mind, Nnaemeka says that:

> African patterns of feminism can be seen as having developed within a context that views human life from a total, rather than a dichotomous and exclusive, perspective. For women, the male is not 'the other' but part of the human same. Each gender constitutes the critical half that makes the human whole. Neither sex is totally complete in itself. Each has and needs a complement, despite the possession of unique features of its own (Steady 1987, 8). African women's willingness and readiness to negotiate with and around men even in difficult circumstances is quite pervasive.[89]

African feminisms are not near sighted in the sense that in that they do not champion their struggles and celebrate their triumphs selfishly. They are a part of a synergism that creates a stable and unified society when men as well as women are involved in resolving issues. This desired unity and balance is maintained through negotiation. She asserts that: "First, *nego-*

[87] Obioma Nnaemeka, "*Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way" Signs*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Development Cultures: New Environments, New Realities, New Strategies Special Issue (Winter 2004): 360-361
[88] Ibid, 377
[89] Ibid, 379-380

feminism is the feminism of negotiation; second, *nego-feminism* stands for "no ego" feminism. In the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise, and balance."[90]

Negotiation is the guiding principle of nego-feminism. It helps African women to navigate their circumstances in the least disruptive means possible. African women find themselves at the center of converging forces that destabilize their societies and gender relations such as the clash between western and African cultures, tradition and women's rights, and also power dynamics inside and outside of the feminist movement.[91] As a result, they are constantly in a state of negotiation as they attempt to create stability in the face of competing powers. The expression of feminism in Africa, in essence, is meant to preserve and ameliorate gender relations instead of treating them as collateral damage of the movement to dismantle abuse of male power. According to Nnaemeka, nego-feminism is definitively a practice of negotiating expressed in language of compromise instead of the western feminist language of agitate, challenge, and disrupt.[92] This language of compromise is a tool by which African women fight to obtain and maintain stability in their societies. However, a researcher risks subsuming African women under this western language of feminism if in fact they do not root African women's work toward empowerment and gender equality in African principles of culture.

One such ideal that is very important to and central to African cultures is that of motherhood. Catherine Obiyanju Olumba-Acholonu echoed this sentiment about the importance of African women as mothers in her book *Motherism: The Afrocentric Altrenative to Feminism* (1995). Acholonu coined the unique term motherism to characterize African women's influence

[90] Ibid, 377-378
[91] Sinmi Akin-Aina, *"Beyond an Epistemology of Bread, Butter, Culture, and Power: Mapping the African Feminist Movement"* Nkoko no. 2 (Fall 2011): 69
[92] Obioma Nnaemeka, "*Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way" Signs*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Development Cultures: New Environments, New Realities, New Strategies Special Issue (Winter 2004): 380

and as a means of avoiding the political baggage and ideas associated with the term feminism. She defined motherism as a more natural alternative to concepts that juxtapose men and women as opposing forces. Acholonu supports the idea that women could achieve equality through using the skills and endurance they acquired through their cultural roles as nurturers. She asserted that African women need a theoretical frame that suits their context, cosmology, and culture in which mother is an essential position and primary source of power:

> An Afrocentric feminist theory, therefore, must be anchored on the matrix of *motherhood* which is central to African metaphysics and has been the basis of the survival and unity of the black race through the ages. Whatever Africa's role may be in the global perspective, it could never be divorced from her quintessential position as the Mother Continent of humanity, nor is it coincidental that motherhood has remained the central focus of African art, African literature (especially women's writing), African culture, African psychology, oral traditions, and empirical philosophy. Africa's alternative to western feminism is MOTHERISM and Motherism denotes motherhood….The Motherist is the man or woman committed to the survival of Mother Earth….The weapon of Motherism is love, tolerance, service, and mutual cooperation of the sexes…. The motherist writer …is not a sexist. The motherist male writer or artist does not create his work from a patriarchal, masculinist, dominatory perspective. He does not present himself arrogant, all knowing self-righteous before his muse.[93]

Acholonu argues that respect of motherhood is one of the primary components of African cosmology and has been essential to the growth and development of any Black society. She supports this assertion by highlighting that the importance of motherhood can be seen in its centrality to African art, literature, philosophy, psychology, and history. The motherism framework, like nego-feminism with its idea of building on the indigenous, is yet another means of rooting an analysis of African women in concepts that stem from their own cultural philosophies.

There are few works that propound motherism as a viable theory of African gender however they have implications for this work. *Feminism: The Quest for an African Variant* by

[93] Catherine Acholonu, *Motherism: The Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism* (Owerri, Nigeria: Afa Publications, 1995), 3

Sotunsa Ebunoluwa. Her argument is that feminism was not sufficient to analyze the experiences of African American women and that they, in turn, created Womanism.[94] However, Womanism "purports to interpret Black female experiences globally" and this is problematic because it does not capture the complexities of African women's experiences.[95] As a result, Ebunoluwa asserts that there is a need for more African centered gender theories. She says that motherism is one framework that exemplifies how a theory of gender should center African women because it is "a beginning in defining and formulating an indigenous African gender theory."[96] Elvira Godono argues in favor of motherism and its potential to help writers craft African female characters that are more representative of African women. *In Postcolonial Motherism: A Brand New Woman in the African Novel* Godono states that motherism is a movement among African writers and provides a counter to "the European epistemological system."[97] For her, the African woman has been misunderstood in literature that uses European ideals of womanhood: "This western point of view sometimes has misunderstood, particularly, the meaning of feminine symbols in African literature."[98] She goes on to say that motherism helps writers and theoriests "to imagine a new female typology…." and that the theory has influenced many works in African fiction, drama, and poetry.[99] Filmoina Chioma Steady, in Women and Leadership in West Africa: Mothering the Nation and Humanizing the State (2005), says that mothering is now and has long been a paradigm for female leadership in Africa. In essence, the skills, knowledge, and wisdom required to mother someone provide the foundations for and translate to leadership potential. She sites examples from Diop's Precolonial Black

[94] See *In Search of Our Mother's Gradens* by bell hooks for more on Womanism.
[95] Sotunsa Mobolanle Ebunoluwa, "*Feminism: The Quest for an African Variant*" The Journal of Pan-African Studies vol.3 no.1 (September 2009): 227
[96] Ibid, 232
[97] Elvira Gondono, "*Postcolonial Motherism: A Brand New Woman in the African Novel*" African Postcolonial Literature in English. Postcolonial Web. September 23, 2005. Web. April 17, 2018
[98] Ibid
[99] Ibid

Africa (1987) and Monges' Kush: The Jewel of the Nile (1996) saying that women in Africa had always served in positions of power as soldiers, rulers, queens, sole heads of state, and military, while Greek women could not leave their homes without a male chaperone. Steady asserts that female leadership is indigenous to Africa and can be manifested directly or indirectly in the form of queens, empresses, royal lineages, queen mothers, chiefs, and paramount chiefs. This is one of the main reasons that Africa has had more female heads of state and parliamentarians than Western countries. According to Steady, President Ellen Johnson of Liberia built her campaign on motherhood perceiving herself as mother of the nation and one who could raise the country up from poverty and violence. She portrayed herself as a mother who would redirect the wayward child (the nation). Nancy Steele of the Women's Congress of the All People's Congress of Sierra Leone led a campaign to get out the vote saying that "women give birth to men, therefore we own them. Women are natural leaders."[100] Both of the articles support the idea that motherism helps scholars and writers to view African women from a culturally grounded lens that does not adhere to western notions of gender. In terms of politics, the skills gained through mothering prepare one for savvy leadership in the community. This is important to the framing of women's activism in this work because this dissertation argues that Nigerian women must be understood from their own cosmology. It also asserts that they developed a theory of nationalism that empowered them to fulfil their duty as women which was to ensure that the community grew and developed properly. They centered the whole community. They, as mothers of the community, formed a philosophy of activism that would serve men, women, children and the nation.

Ojo Nro shares the sentiment of African gender scholars that African women's knowledge and experiences are valid and can only be properly represented and understood

[100] Filomina Chioma Steady, *Women and Leadership in West Africa: Mothering the Nation and Humanizing the State*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), chapter 1

within the context of their own perspectives. Their agency in any research is strengthened by an analysis rooted in their own cultural and intellectual worldviews that are rooted in negotiation. I believe in building from the indigenous as Nnaemeka discusses and so I have elected to use the ideas of negotiating and preserving balance in society to theorize Nigerian women's activism during the nationalist era. Motherism posits women as leaders in society with a unique set of skills garnered from their work as mothers. The central aspect of motherism is that of women as nurturers and therefore a significant force in society and the maintenance of social welfare. This concept has also been used to analyze Nigerian women's influence during the nationalist era as a means of interrogating the motive behind their intellectual developments and practical agendas.

With this idea of building upon the indigenous in mind, it is imperative that one pay careful attention to the building of conceptual frameworks in research on African women as not to place them in jeopardy of losing any part of their agency in the work. According to Houston and Davis, simply adding Black women to any conversation does not guarantee that masculinist or Eurocentric concepts will not be employed.[101] Researchers must be forward thinking about theoretical development, and methods as well, in order not to stifle the voices of the women under study. The intellectual, cultural, and activist traditions of African women have always been vital to struggles for justice and, in order to highlight their agency in this regard, I use a both/and instead of either/or framework to conceptualize their philosophy of activism.[102]

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[101] Marsha Houston and Olga Idriss Davis, *Centering Ourselves: African American Feminist and Womanist Studies of Discourse*, (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2002), 3

[102] Patricia Hill Collins in *Black Feminist Thought* (1990) discusses a both/and conception of interlocking oppressions when she says that centering African American women and other marginalized groups highlights the possibilities of a both/and ideology. She argued that interlocking oppressions cannot be seen as additives or separate pieces but as a part of a whole fabric that disenfranchises people on multiple levels. Women of color are discriminated against on the grounds of both gender and race. When this is recognized then it opens up more possibilities as to the understanding of and means and methods of addressing their multifarious issues. I organically saw that Nigerian women adhered to a both women and the nation framework for nationalism through data analysis and I thought that this would best describe their nationalism. Collin's theory did not inform the development of that perspective but since her model is akin to my theorizing, it is necessary to mention it although all ideas informing

African women act on behalf of both sexes and the nation by blending feminist action and social welfare with the demand for self determination; they do not choose between these elements of liberation but they strategically and carefully negotiate them and this is highlighted by African feminist theories such as nego-feminism by Obioma Nnaemeka. With this framing of their activism and agency I assert that in order to build an African woman centered history of African women, researchers must develop epistemologies rooted in their knowledge, lived experiences, and cosmology or worldview.[103]

Methods of Data Collection

Archival Data

The data for this work was collected from the archives in several cities in Nigeria over a six-month period with the help of Joseph Ayodokun, an academic research professional. The documents came from five archives which are located in the cities of Ife, Abeokuta, and Ibadan, Nigeria. These repositories were at the University of Ile-Ife Library, the Office of the Secretariat in Abeokuta, the K.O. Dike Library at the University of Ibadan, the National Archives in Ibadan, the Daily Tribune newspaper archive in Ibadan, and the Ogunseye Foundation in Ibadan. The greatest number of sources came from the K.O. Dike archive and are most prominently figured in this study because that archive held the bulk of the Kuti and FNWO papers.

The data that supports this research is of a historical nature, including oral history interviews as well as archival documents, and sources were selected with criteria that privileged the general principles of African feminist scholarship and Afrocentric Feminist Epistemology. Feminist method can be broadly defined as a means of conducting scientific investigations based

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her model cannot be applied to African women's experiences. Nonetheless, as does Collins, I use this both/and framework to express more fluidity and broadness in the reasoning for women's activism during the nationalist movement in Nigeria. Their activism was not for women only but for both women (and men) and the nation.

[103] Ibid, 5-6

on theories grounded in the concrete realities of all women globally.[104] Early on, feminist methods were initially based on qualitative research because quantitative research was seen as problematic in that it reflected or mimicked the power relationships that comprised the social structure.[105] Feminist qualitative methods included, but were not limited to, participatory action based research, interviews, life histories, and ethnographies. The data collection process for *Ojo Nro* followed the clearly defined principles of feminist scholarship: to reveal andocentric bias, create social change, highlight human diversity, and acknowledge the positionality of the researcher.[106]

I utilized phenomenology to identify similar patterns of thought on nationalism throughout the substantial number of sources I collected. Phenomenology alludes to the fact that there is some kind of phenomenon that the researcher has identified and seeks to evaluate. In this study the phenomenon is women's collective expression of nationalism. Phenomenology has specific practices of document analysis such as:

1. Coding of data to produce concrete themes
2. Reduction of data into themes
3. Review of reduced data content to find recurrent ideas
4. Interpretation of ideas (analysis) using theory of choice

Some of the patterns identified broadly in the sources include: Nigerian women's positions on national self determination, feminist ideology, collective activism, agendas, and the necessity of autonomous organizational development. From these patterns I chose specific themes on which to focus my analysis: community development, gender equality, Black consciousness,

[104] Ann Oakley, *"Gender, Methodology and People's Ways of Knowing: Some Problems with Feminism and the Paradigm Debate in Social Science*" Sociology vol. 32 no.4 (1998):707-731
[105] Ibid
[106] Acker, J., et al. Objectivity and truth: Problems in Doing Feminist Research. Women's Studies International Forum, vol. 6 no. 4(1983): 423-435

transnationalism, non-politicism, and music radicalism. Documents were then reviewed and grouped by their content, based on these themes, and reviewed based on a criterion of relevance to Nigerian women's ideological and practical approaches to self determination in formal organizations. Since this is a history of women I sought to use their words to assess their collective consciousness building and experiences that shaped their political, social, and economic views. With this in mind, documents such as speeches, letters, meeting minutes, constitutions of organizations, press releases, and articles from the FNWO and personal papers of Mrs. Kuti were important. They were used to center women's own philosophies in the research using their words.

Oral History Interviews

Nineteen interviews were conducted with women and men ages 60-128 (there was a woman who cared for the temple on Olumo Rock who was celebrating her 128th birthday when I came to speak with women there).[107] Of the interviews that I conducted, all of the women whose words appear in the document were either founding members of or were involved in the groups I reference during the height of their activism. Only five interviews were used for this dissertation. Those that were selected were the most pertinent information for the topic of this research. The five interviews were from people who were in women's activist organizations or who were family of or lived in the same town as Mrs. Kuti during the era of the protests she led.

Some of the older people, especially those in the market such as the *Babaloja* (father of the market) and the women at Olumo Rock, preferred to conduct the interviews in Yoruba language but not all of the interviews were fully in Yoruba. There was switching in and out of Yoruba in other interviews but most of them were conducted in English. I had a long list of questions but found them to be restrictive and so the interviews followed a semi-structured

[107] See Appendix B for interviews.

format because I felt it was less imposing and made interviews flow as conversations and not examinations.[108] This more relaxed tone helped the participant to move from topic to topic as they pleased and this facilitated much more rich and detailed memories conversation because people were free to talk about ideas and circumstances that were directly and tangentially related to the topic at hand. Asking pointed questions throughout the whole interview could have elicited more direct, stream lined, truncated and therefore less diverse answers which would lack the multifaceted nature and depth of organic free flowing speech which supports more open-ended discussions. For the greater part of the time I allowed the interviewee to control the flow of our conversation organically. I would also ask follow up questions about points of interest in the interviewee's recollection or explanation of events. Each interview was different because of the semi-structured nature. For example, the content of each conversation was specific to each person's knowledge and comfort level in terms of sharing information. Follow up questions varied based on what the person said organically. The structured portion of the interviews contained these types of questions: biographical, local history and community, women's status, gender relations, women's organizations and local protests. These interviews would last from 30 minutes to over an hour.

It was of utmost importance to know the culture, mannerisms, and language in preparation for the interviews. When meeting with interviewees, it was customary to say specific greetings when entering the house and to greet any people coming into the house. There were also specific greetings for sitting, working, and so on. As a visitor, I was also obligated to bring something to the resident of the home. In this case I usually brought fruit. I resolved never to pay money to any interviewee as not to encourage them to share fabricated information for the sole purpose of obtaining payment. Only one person asked for monetary payment and refused

[108] See Appendix A for questions I choose from.

the interview when I shared that I could not pay them. However, another stood in this person's place and did the interview. In addition to culture and language, it was important to watch for mannerisms and unspoken cues during interviews. There was no video for any of the interviews performed. Only still photos were taken. As a result, I had to be very attentive to the periods of silence, laughter, movements, and facial expressions such as confusion or misunderstanding and surprise. These things rendered an even more nuanced interpretation of events discussed.

Research Limitations

There were limitations to this study. The first was that I was not able to locate and interview surviving members of the FNWO. However I did have an extensive archive on the organization within the Kuti papers at the University of Ibadan K.O. Dike Library. The interviews that I chose to use herein were from the eldest members of groups that were contemporaries of the FNWO and whom expressed the same non-political ideology of Mrs. Kuti's organization. The second limitation was that I was not able to gain access to the market women for interviews. As an outsider, I needed approval. I met with the father of the market but he could not give me entrance to interview market women without the word of the mother of the market. I was not able to set up an appointment to meet with her as my time in the country dwindled. I look forward to accomplishing these interviews during future trips to the country as I continue my research on this topic.

Summary

This research project is African centered. The theory and methods of data collection that support this research are ultimately purposed to privilege African philosophies, gender ideologies, experiences, and perspectives. For this reason, I have used principles from nego-feminism and motherism to inform my theorizing about African women's activism during the

nationalist era. Data collection followed qualitative methods of extensive archival searches and oral history interviews. The interviews were semi-structured as a means of allowing for more free flowing, organic, and unrestrained recollection of historical moments that was richer and more varied than it would have been to answer a pointed question. As historians often do, I barrowed from other methods, phenomenology methods, to help reduce the amount of data that I would work with. As with any research project there were some limitations, namely that I could not interview FNWO members or market women, however, the data that was collected suffices to speak to the practical and intellectual articulations of nationalism by Nigerian women. Most importantly, the project is rooted in their own words, culture, cosmology, and experiences.

Chapter Three:

*Awon Obinrin Je Pataki Pupo: Theorizing the Gendered Cultural and Historical Foundations of Nigerian Women's Activism

In order to understand why negotiation and maintenance of societal balance that informed Nigerian women's activism during the nationalist era it is important to highlight the culture, cosmology, dynamics of gender, and solidarity of the women of the FNWO. As a result this chapter presents background information that is essential to understanding the cultural and historical foundations of Nigerian women's nationalist ideology. First, a very concise overview of Yoruba history is given to situate the conversation on Yoruba women culturally and geographically. Next, I give a gendered analysis of Yoruba culture and cosmology. Then a discussion of dualism is offered to support theorizing of women's desire to negotiate gender relations to achieve societal balance and their shared responsibility to collective survival. Women are central to social stability in Yoruba thought (dualism) and with this influence on societal function comes a responsibility to ensure collective survival which, in turn, warrants negotiation with men. I also highlight the lack of biological determinism as a concept of gender in Yoruba society to present gender among the Yoruba as uniquely complex and unaccepting of the idea that women are the weaker sex. Women were not viewed with a deficit model based on assets or their contribution to society. This impacted their autonomy towards gendered activism in society. In order to support this, the chapter chronicles some important events in Nigerian women's pre-colonial and post-colonial organizing in order to highlight their collectivism and attendant practices as a part of a long founded historical trajectory of women's activism in the country. Nigerian concepts of gender are dynamic and this warrants an analytical frame that is rooted in their context, cosmology, and culture. Considering this, the chapter ends with a discussion of *Legbeism*, my original theory of African gender. This chapter addresses the

research question *how did women articulate nationalism in Nigeria* through investigating elements that shaped Nigerian women's activist philosophy, namely culture, cosmology, gender solidarity, and historical strategies of protest.

Yoruba Culture and Cosmology

Prior to the advent of colonialism, and subsequent nationalist movements, Yoruba people inhabited the land encompassing present day Nigeria down to Togo on the west coast of Africa for tens of thousands of years (estimated at 40,000 years). The fact that they inhabited a large area for a far reaching time is evident in that Yoruba cosmology exists within neighboring groups. Those surrounding peoples accept that man originated in Ile-Ife (the heart of Yorubaland), which is considered the center of the earth.[109] According to one of the earliest and most thorough works on the Yoruba by a Nigerian scholar, *The History of the Yorubas* (1921) by the Reverend Samuel Johnson, Ile-Ife was believed to be the place where God created man (Black and White). After creation in Africa, both are said to have spread outward throughout all the earth.[110] Johnson also says that the Yoruba have connections to and are indeed kin to the Egyptians. He says that peoples emigrated from Upper Egypt to the region of Ile-Ife. Johnson substantiates this with artifacts called the Ife Marbles which are attributed to the ancestors of the Yoruba. One of the marble sculptures is an obelisk known as Opa Oranyan or Oranyan's Staff and these types of monuments were prevalent in Egypt. Several of the marbles were taken and put on display in the Egyptian court of the British Museum.[111] They are a historical testament to the connectedness of Africans from different parts of the continent and also that, through those

**Awon* is a prefix that pluralizes a noun. *Obinrin* means woman. *Je* is an iteration of the verb 'to be' while *pataki* is important and *pupo* means together. This phrase means 'women are very important.'

[109] Stephen Adebanji Akintoye. *A History of the Yoruba People* (Amalion Publishing: Dakar, Senegal, 2010), Chapter one

[110] The Reverend Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (Lagos, Nigeria: CSS Limited, 2001), 15

[111] Ibid

links, the Yorubas may have origins even further than West Africa. They may have migrated to West Africa from North East Africa.

Today the Yoruba are found in Benin, Togo, and Ghana in addition to Nigeria. Their population is estimated at 40 million. This number makes them one of the largest groups in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the southwestern part of Nigeria there is an estimated 33 million. Of this number there are 15million in Lagos but the most populous city of the Yoruba is Ibadan, Nigeria.[112] Benin is home to about one and a half million Yoruba. According to Abimbola Atakpame, Togo's second largest city, is a Yoruba city. There are also 50 Yoruba villages in Ghana.[113] The people and culture are spread out over a vast area in West Africa.

The Ifa system of worship is one of the hallmarks of Yoruba culture. Ifa has several meanings:

1. It is the name of the Yoruba god of knowledge and wisdom
2. It is the name of the system of divination related to the god of knowledge and wisdom
3. It is the name of the sacred texts used by priests and priestesses
4. It refers to a special herbal mix that is used medicinally[114]

The Babalawo (Ifa priests) and Iyanifa (priestesses) are the custodians of the sacred texts of Ifa. Their text consists of poems that have been written down but many have not been recorded. The poems range from five lines to about twenty pages. The priests and priestesses must memorize at least five poems from each of the 256 books of sacred text during their training which takes 15 years if the person does full time study and 35 years if the person does half time study. [115] In the Ifa belief system the cosmos is divided into left and right with 200 primordial beings on the left

[112] Kola Abimbola, *Yoruba Culture: A Philosophical Account* (Birmingham, United Kingdom: Iroko Academic Pubilshers, 2006), 35
[113] Ibid, 36
[114] Ibid, 47
[115] Ibid

and 400 on the right. The Orisha are the benevolent deities on the right who will punish wrongdoers who disrupt society. The Ajogun are of the left and are malevolent. The title Ajogun means warrior and thus these beings of the left war against humans and Orisha.[116] Only the Aje (witches who are allies of the Ajogun and can afflict humans, eat them, and suck their blood) and Esu (neutral mediator) occupy the space in between left and right. Esu is neutral but is still regarded as an Orisha. Humans also occupy the right hand side of the universe because, although they are not divine, they have the ability to become a divinity.[117]

In Yoruba cosmology (an explanation of the nature of the universe) the supreme god is *Odumare*. He is also called *Olorun* or the lord of heaven which comes from the Yoruba root words *Olu* (lord) and *Orun* (heaven). *Odumare* sent *Obatala*, a lesser being, to create land for the earth which was covered solely by water at this time. *Obatala* could not complete his mission because he became intoxicated with palm wine and was rendered immobile. At this point another diety, *Oduduwa*, was sent out and found *Obatala* passed out. *Oduduwa* continued on to fulfill the mission that the drunken messenger could not do. *Obatala* failed at his first mission but would later become the one who forms human bodies. [118]

The story continues with *Oduduwa* descending to earth from heaven on a chain. He took some earth that he carried with him from the heavens and poured it onto the water. This first land on earth would later become the town of Ile-Ife that is said to be the center of the earth from which all other land and peoples emanated. Next, a chicken was placed on the land and as the

[116] Ibid, 49
[117] Ibid, 50
[118] Stephen Adebanji Akintoye. *A History of the Yoruba People* (Amalion Publishing: Dakar, Senegal, 2010), Chapter one

animal scratched and pecked it spread the land over a broader surface of the water. This is the method by which the Yoruba tradition claims that the continents to formed.[119]

Some of the most thorough evidence for Yoruba origins comes from archaeological excavations and linguistic evidence. Gathering from archaeological data scientists believe that Africans originated in the area of the Great Rift Valley in East Africa. From there they travelled to North Africa before going into West Africa. The people were predominantly hunter-gatherers in the Early Stone Age years of 10,000 B.C. In the Late Stone Age, around 4,000 B.C., the people became more sedentary as they domesticated animals and began farming. At this time the people around the Middle Niger River began to form language and communication systems that were related to one another. These languages belong to the Kwa language group which is a subset of the larger Niger-Congo groups. Over time the languages became distinct with Yoruba being the last to evolve. As a result, the present day Yorubas developed ethnically and linguistically around 4,000 B.C. when West Africans began domesticating crops.[120]

Yoruba culture, historically and presently, is both hierarchical and communal. People are ranked by age, status in the family, wealth, etc. In social interactions, people had to be able to perceive whether a person is a superior, a peer, or a subordinate so that they may address them accordingly. The culture of respect is tied to the hierarchal foundations of society. A younger person would never call an adult by their first name.[121] This respect of persons also translates to value of life. The Yorubas have a saying *Eniyan l'aso* which means people are clothes and should be understood as *people should surround you like clothes*. This indicates the belief that

[119] Ibid, Chapter one
[120] Ibid, Chapter one
[121] Florence Olajide, *My Culture-Yoruba: A Quick Guide to Yoruba Culture for British Teachers* (Leicester, United Kingdom: Traubador Publishing Ltd., 2012), 14-15

people are interdependent on one another and that the collective is of the utmost importance.[122] In pre-colonial times polygamy was practiced with no limit to the number of wives that a man could have. The families were large so that there would be enough people to do labor intensive agricultural work. Communities met one another's needs through these large family networks. Extended family is also very important in this communal paradigm because the established family members would be expected to care for poor family members no matter how close the relation.[123] As the Yoruba say *Agbajo owo lafi nsoya* meaning 'you need your whole hand to beat your chest'. This should be understood as "all members of the community need to work together to be effective."[124]

Dualism

Just as the family was important to the social fabric of the Yoruba, so was the work of women and this is why their cosmology pays homage to women. According to Oyeronke Olajubu, one the most important deities in Yoruba cosmology, *Oduduwa*, could have been a female. He cites Yoruba oral tradition and Ifa sacred texts wherein women were said to have been rulers of the society to suggest that female rulers may have been common among Yoruba in the pre-colonial period. He also asserted that there were stories that people had to consult female rulers before settling in an area such as the example of hunters who had to consult a female leader before settling in Oshogbo.[125] Olajubu goes on to state that stories about women having powers since the beginning of time but how they were tricked by men who stole their power and placed them into subordination are replete within the Ifa literary corpus. One of these stories is recorded in *Odu irantegbe* chapter of Ifa which states that *Olodumare* recognized the

[122] Ibid, 21
[123] Ibid, 22-23
[124] Ibid, 21
[125] Oyeronke Olajubu. *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), 68

complementary roles of male and female humans to such an extent that he preferred the male deities to go back and make peace with *Osun*, a female deity.[126] The male deities ignored her and were not able to succeed in the work he sent them to do (to set up the earth). *Olodumare* admonished the males that nothing could be done without *Osun* and they went to make ammends.[127] The story also says that *Osun* had the ability to "effect and affect the power that activates life force; hence she could render all normal life processes immobile."[128] Thus, nothing could be done in terms of establishing earth and humanity without *Osun* because she held the keys to life for humanity. Olajubu stated that "Youruba gender and power relations therefore derive from people's cosmology."[129] She went on to say that Yoruba political structure rested on mystical principles held within the custody of women: "This ritual power is used to maintain harmony in the society; hence while men in principle held political offices and authority, women controlled the ritual base that made political rule possible."[130]

This idea of the complementary nature of men and women (dualism) was not only a Yoruba phenomenon. It also existed among other Nigerian ethnic groups such as the Igbo who had a dual sex system which was not predicated upon defining biological difference between men and women in terms of domination and subordination. The Igbo system recognized those differences but does not privilege the male in the relationship of the two as does the mono-sex system of Europe and the west.[131] According to Nkiru Nzegwu: "Structurally, this political structure of sex differentiation is one in which women and men's interests were institutionalized

[126] Ibid, 75
127 Ayele Kumari, *Iyanifa Woman of Wisdom: Insights from the Priestesses of the Ifa Orisha Tradition, Their Stories and Plight for the Divine Feminine* (United States: Maat Group, 2014), 40
[128] Oyeronke Olajubu. *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), 75
[129] Ibid, 127
[130] Ibid, 26
[131] Nkiru Nzegwu. *Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture* (State University of New York: Albany, 2006), 220

by the state so that the heads of the two administrative structures complemented rather than duplicated each other's powers and privileges. They were not in an adversarial relationship."[132] In her assessment of the Onitsha dual sex-system in southeastern Nigeria, Nzegwu says that the Omu (female) and Obi (male) were both monarchs and were in a complementary relationship wherein the woman represented national interests in "economic and certain political, social, and spiritual functions as well as the interests of women." [133]

Yoruba culture was influenced by this same principle of dualism which was manifested in Igbo politics of the dual sex system. It is a philosophy wherein women and men were equal opposites. Dualism posited women as important to the survival of society, as in the story of *Osun*, and as a result women had political and economic autonomy and social mobility in the pre-colonial period. According to Oyeronke Oyewumi notions of gender based on biology were not intrinsic to Yoruba culture; the more rigid ideas of gender came with colonialism.[134] Nina Mba concluded that women generated much if not most of the wealth, could become wealthier than the men, "largely controlled their economic activities," and enjoyed property rights over those of men.[135]

The office of *Iyalode*, leader of women, allowed them to have representation in government groups[136]. The *Iyalode* would go around meeting with and collecting the concerns of women in the town and come back to report women's issues to the governing body so that their needs were prioritized and placed on the agenda. There were also other offices, developed for women, that presented women with authority such as the *Iya* afin (highest office in palace

[132] Ibid, 221
[133] Ibid
[134] For more on the lack of gender concepts in pre-colonial Yorubaland see Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women* (1997)
[135] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 14-15
[136] Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 3

administration), *Iyaloja* (head of market women), and *Ayaba* (wife of the king).[137] These positions gave women political, economic, and social mobility and power.[138] Some of the *Iyalode* were very influential and even became kings. In the area of Sabe, Ondo, and Ilesha there are lists of rulers that reflect five female *Obas* or kings of the Yoruba people.[139]

The ideology of dualism shaped a narrative of womanhood in early Nigerian societies that established the woman as essential and important to the stability, growth, and advancement of the state. The rights and duties that Nigerian women were afforded due to dualism created for them a culture of women's relevance, independence, and empowerment. This historical cultural gender paradigm cannot be ignored for its implications as to their activism. The elements of community building, organizing, protesting, economic and political savvy, and communal accountability forged in pre-colonial women's realities through the dualism, seemed to have formed the basis of the democratic socialist orientation of many women's groups in the colonial and post-colonial eras. In this cultural perspective, women were by all means required, just as men, to facilitate the development of the society in a way that supported self determination and sustainability. Dualism was the embodiment of the sense of balance that is a central feature to Yoruba cosmology which posits a duality to the physical and spiritual world:

> The Yoruba divide the universe (*aye* or *agbaye*) into two broad groups. Both groups are interconnected and interdependent. These groups are the invisible (*ariri*) and the visible (*riri*), the spiritual (*emi*) and the physical (*ara*), the good (*daradara*) and the bad (*buburu*), the heaven (*orun*) and the earth (*aye*), and the negative (*ajogun*) and the positive forces (*orisa*)…the need for accommodation and diplomacy between the groups guarantees peace in the universe. The Yoruba worldview is rooted in holistic harmony;

[137] Simi Afonja and Bisi Aina, *Nigerian Women in Social Change* (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University, 1995), 12
[138] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 12-13
[139] Ibid, 19 and Simi Afonja and Bisi Aina, *Nigerian Women in Social Change* (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University, 1995), 12

> hence the principle of relatedness is the *sine qua non* of the people's social and religious reality.[140]

As stated by Oyeronke Olajubu, at the heart of Yoruba social structure was the idea that two opposing forces must work in harmony to create a coherent whole. These opposing forces are those things that are the opposite of one another such as good and bad, seen and unseen, man and woman. The actions of Nigerian women's organizations, based on my conjecture, in colonial and post-colonial times were very much a psycho-somatic performance of this deeply engrained sense of responsibility and empowerment that has always been a part of their ontological (existential) thought.[141]

Understanding Yoruba Gender

It is imperative to deconstruct Yoruba gender to explain *what it is* and *what it is not*. This will also aid in realizing the underlying reasons that the women of the FNWO articulated nationalism the way they did. With these things in mind, it is also necessary to state that the application of western gender theories to studies of African women is inherently problematic and does not suffice to analyze their experiences. One of the foremost Yoruba gender scholars, Oyeronke Oyewumi, characterized the use of western gender in studies of African society as "western dominance of African studies."[142] She went on to say that it is:

> necessary to undertake a re-examination of the concepts underpinning discourse in African Studies, consciously taking into account African experiences. Clearly, all concepts come with their own cultural and philosophical baggage, much of which

[140] Oyeronke Olajubu. *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), 2

[141] It is my contention that this notion of dualism which mandates women's responsibility to maintain harmony in society also caused them to achieve their empowerment and activism with a language of compromise and negotiation instead of disruption because the latter would be detrimental for gender relations and therefore negative to the society as a whole. It is feasible, then, to conjecture that women's inclination to work in a concerted effort with men, express responsibility for holistic community health and stability, and empower women during the nationalist movement is an embodiment of their cosmological belief in dualism.

[142] Oyeroke Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), x

> becomes alien distortion when applied to cultures other than those from which they derive.[143]

She calls for a "mapping" or analysis of the "cultural logic" of African societies that is *not* rooted in western philosophies. In fact, she goes as far as to say that gender was not a defining characteristic in Yoruba societal structure as it definitely was in the west and Europe. In light of this belief Oyewumi investigates reasons that gender has become a fundamental category of analysis within scholarly discourse on the Yoruba by interrogating "western assumptions about sex difference…used to interpret Yoruba society and, in the process, create a local gender system."[144] She concluded that the very category of woman which is often used as a bio-anatomical classification of social function is not historically accurate or descriptive of Yoruba concepts of male and female.

According to Oyewumi there are certain assumptions made in western gender discourses which are:

1. Gender categories are universal and timeless and have been present in every society at all times.
2. Gender is a fundamental organizing principle in all societies and is therefore always salient. In any given society gender is everywhere.
3. There is an essential, universal category "woman" that is characterized by the social uniformity of its members.
4. The subordination of women is a universal.
5. The category "woman" is precultural, fixed in historical time and cultural space in antithesis to another fixed category- "man."[145]

Her list alludes to the western notion that physical bodies are always social bodies. This thinking does not allow for gender (social constructs of masculine or feminine) to be distinct from sex (biological differences). Thus, in the west, social categories are embodied in a very rigid way

[143] Ibid, x-xi
[144] Ibid, xi
[145] Ibid, xi-xii

but in Yoruba culture there is no precedent for basing social categories on biological sex.[146] This fact is further elucidated in a socio-linguistic analysis of the Yoruba terms *obinrin* and *okunrin*. The two terms are used to refer to woman and man respectively but are not diametrically opposed or indicative of any social hierarchy. The term *obinrin* does not come from the term *okunrin*. The common suffix –rin represents common humanity while –obin and –okun signify the variety of anatomy. Additionally, *eniyan* is the word for human being while man is used in the west as a synonym for humanity. If man is the norm then woman is the other or the antithesis to man.[147] In Yoruba *okunrin* is not the fundamental category of personhood and is not synonymous with privilege. *Obinrin* is not ranked in relation to *okunrin* and is also not a position of inferiority or powerlessness. Furthermore, *obinrin* is not tantamount to woman or female (although the Yoruba word *obinrin* is translated as such for lack of a more efficient western word) because those two terms equate to:

1. Those who do not have a penis (the Freudian concept of penis envy stems from this notion and has been elucidated in western social thought and gender studies);
2. those who do not have power; and
3. those who cannot participate in the public arena.[148]

In light of these tenets that characterize womanhood in the west, it is apparent that woman is a category defined on what females *do not have* in relation to males.

Oyeronke Oyewumi's refutation of the idea of biological determinism, or the assigning of social characteristics determined by biology, within Yoruba culture historically has many implications as to gender studies that center the Yoruba. It is an indictment of scholars, especially western, to consider cultural logic, cosmology, context, and even language in researching gender relations in African cultures. This will serve as a more effective means of

[146] Ibid, xii
[147] Ibid, 33
[148] Ibid, 34

developing gender theories that are commensurate with African worldviews. If the Yorubas did not have a fundamental pre-historical-cultural worldview to provide a basis for rigid and constrictive boundaries for gender roles then this has implications as to how men and women related to one another and worked with one another in their society. Women were not looked upon with a deficit model in Yoruba culture, for what they could not do in relation to men, but for what they *did contribute* to the society. It is the contention of this study that this less confining more asset based worldview, or cosmology, of gender among the Yoruba created an atmosphere for their women to have a degree of autonomy, to be assertive, and to be independent thinkers and actors. This freedom, in turn, presented them with more opportunities to express themselves politically and intellectually.

Nigerian Women's Pre-Colonial Methods of Collective Activism

As a result of the way that Yoruba culture envisioned women, they were able to be vociferous about their grievances which constitutes their legacy of activism that was always been a part of their deeply rooted culture. In order to understand the resistance tactics of Nigerian women in the colonial period, it is imperative to analyze their pre-colonial collective activism. Feminist agendas were globalized by the suffrage movements in the U.S. and Europe but these demonstrations were by no means the impetus of feminist awareness in all locations around the world. In fact, during and before the western suffrage movement, women in Nigeria were leading their own movements for equality and autonomy. The Yoruba are estimated to have been in existence for 40,000 years. Throughout this time ideas and actions toward women's empowerment and the creation of balance in gender relations among the Yoruba were not non-existent until the advent of women's movements in the west. It would be remiss to think so. Nigerian women have always had certain means and methods of resisting any infringement upon

their rights and fighting against the exacerbation of male power since pre-colonial times. Mass action has long been a tool of resistance for women.[149]

Nigerian Women gained power through collectivization. Throughout Yorubaland, women formed socio-economic groups called *egbe*. These organizations were based on age, occupation, religion, neighborhood, cultural interests, or friendship. The *egbe* held their own elections, managed their own finances and also oversaw their own projects.[150] Nina Mba says that Igbo and Ibibio women's activism was a consequence of exogamy and sex differentiation (dual sex system) by leading women to form their own collectives.[151] According to Mba:

> In this dual sex system women had solidarity that was stronger than that of the men. Since women did not own land, occupy the highest offices, and did not ascend to the leadership of lineages there were fewer areas of competition among them than among men. The only major status distinction was in monarchial systems, between "royal" and "non-royal" women. The collective unity of women was enhanced by the commonality of their interests; most women participated in the same type of economic activity and in childbearing, for which they developed a mutual support system.[152]

Female solidarity arose among groups of women within the same village and between those of different villages through both a lack of competition and common interests shared by women.

Women's collectives protested not only for themselves but for the good of the community. In 1934 in the Calabar and Owerri Provinces it was the women who fought the taking of communal farmland for a colonial reserve. Women came out in mass to stop the colonials from demarcating the lands for the Ukpon Forest Reserve. Sixty-three women from Apaipum were arrested for disrupting the demarcation workers; however the Lieutenant

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[149] For more information on this point of view see Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982) and Gloria Chuku, *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation in Southeastern Nigeria 1900-1960* (New York: Routledge, 2005)

[150] Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Yoruba Women, Work, and Social Change*. Bloomington (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009), 4

[151] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 68

[152] Ibid, 291

Governor did make adjustments to the boundaries of the reserve per the women's demands. This episode repeated itself in 1935 when Item women, who thought that council members were trying to sell their land without consent, mobbed the District Officer and demanded a return to the old system. The women claimed that they paid the council secretary to redeem their land from the government but that he used it for his own needs. They hired an African lawyer from Aba and went to court. The District Officer asked the women to come to Umuahia to help him investigate the case but they refused and said that it should be tried at Aba where the lawyers and journalists congregate. Their strategy was to get public support by having the case publicized widely through Aba media outlets. During the court proceedings women spoke boldly and passionately to the point that the District Officer saw their testimony as a disrespect to him. He held Mgbafo, one of the leaders of women, in contempt of court and arrested her at which point two hundred women stormed the court and demanded her release. They dispersed when she was freed.[153]

In some instances women would go on strike and refuse sex to their husbands, to prepare meals, perform domestic chores, and take care of children as well as taking care of the market place and town square. During these strikes women would gather in the town square or market and sing and dance until their demands were met. In Ontisha in 1886 women went on strike and ended a sociopolitical war between two groups because men could not survive without them and thus had to come together to end the war on peaceful terms. Another example of this was the mass flight of women of the town of Orlu in the 19th century to the king of an opposing town, Iseikenesi. The women ran away to negotiate an end to the war and achieved this although male

[153] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 114-116

mediators had not been able to do so. When their hometown began to fall into disorder, the men ended the war (when they saw that threatening the women to come back did not work).[154]

Other forms of resistance were the boycott and also the use of force.[155] Women would refuse to patronize organizations or individuals in the markets if they received word that even one woman in that village was mistreated. In instances wherein Igbo women would be sent back to their parents by a husband for a minor offense the women of the *Umuada* would bring her back and force the man to accept her back into his home. In the event that he did not do this the women could help him come upon a decision by physical threat or outright assault on the man.[156]

In addition to these means of protest women would also use sitting on a man and nudity as tools of resistance. Sitting on a man involved the forceful occupation of his compound.[157] This form of activism included dancing and singing insulting songs that were composed in the moment. The dancing was sexually suggestive as to embarrass the man. Leaves, sticks, and mud would be piled on the man's home and his crops and livestock confiscated. The women would also forcibly beat on the man's home with heavy pestles used for pounding yam. Additionally the women would force the man himself out of his home and strip him naked and force him to walk through the town. Nudity of women (*Ibo ike*) was used in very serious cases. Women would bare their genitals in public to shame the offender into submission.[158] *Ibo ike* was women's way of displaying women's utter refusal to recognize men's authority. Even the elderly women participated in nude demonstrations. A man could be driven to commit suicide due to seeing his mother march naked in the town or at his compound so this was an especially

[154] Gloria Chuku, *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation in Southeastern Nigeria 1900-1960* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 206
[155] Also see *Sexual Insult and Female Militancy* (1973) by Shirley Ardener
[156] Ibid
[157] For more on nudity and sitting on a man see the article *"Sitting on a Man": Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women"* (1972)
[158] Gloria Chuku, *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation in Southeastern Nigeria 1900-1960* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 208

serious tactic. In each instance of activism women called their demonstrations *nagaghari* (protest demonstrations) or *ogu umunwanyi/ndiome* (women's war).[159]

Nigerian Women's Colonial Period Resistance

The institutions that afforded Nigerian women with a means of gender power were affected with the advent of colonialism in 1900. In the years preceding Nigerian independence in 1960 colonialism drastically exacerbated sexism and patriarchy in Nigerian society and this changed the status of women. According to Professor Adebisi Sowomi, a botanist, environmental archaeologist, author, and theologian born in 1939:

> I am a Yoruba and Yoruba women have been, generally speaking, independent women. You know, especially those that belong to polygamous homes, usually its each mother that looks after her own children. So, Yoruba women are very enterprising. They work very hard. They try to earn money to look after themselves and their children. So from that point of view, economically, I think that the women were not subservient or subordinate. But with regard to getting their rightful position in society they were still looked down upon in society. A woman that was found to be forthright and pushful, they will say she is a man or she is acting like a man and they will give her all kind of derogatory terms….Women were not very much visible in public life. I can say that. On a personal level they were pulling their weight. And then, you know, in those days in the fifties there was still a lot of prejudice against women. People thought that women could not get very far and men preferred to educate their sons rather than their daughters.[160]

Professor Sowomi described the paradox of women's status under colonialism in the 1950s. Although they were very much important to the survival of the family, and in fact they cared for their own children in polygamous marriages, they were still looked down upon as the weaker sex. The way that society viewed women was in no way indicative of their true contribution social and economic stability and development. In her statement, it is apparent that the biological determinism (the idea that women should be confined in certain roles because they are women) of colonial gender ideals is clashing with the multilayered reality of women's work even

[159] Ibid
[160] Professor Adebisi Sowomi, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. 2015)

in the 1950s, which is the late colonial era. The reality of women's situation was incongruent, at best, with the colonial perception of women. The women were actually adhering to traditional African standards of female economic and social responsibility to the family by independently earning money while being underappreciated in the public imagination due to colonial philosophies that supported women as the inferior sex. According to Nina Mba colonialism "is not just a system of administration but a way of living and thinking."[161] In Europe women were "considered unsuitable for the rigors of public life; hence they were not allowed to vote, to contest elections, to sit in Parliament, or to be employed in the civil service."[162] Thus the colonials favored elite male governments and marginalized institutionalized women's roles such as the office of *Iyalode*. After this was done by setting up native courts in which only men ruled, the voice and concerns of women were no longer central to the political agenda. Their economic mobility was also stagnated by the relegation of women's groups and unions that protected their interests in production, trade, and the market place.[163] Women's perceived importance in society waned as their economic, social, and political representation diminished.[164] This assertion was also supported by Professor Sowomi when she summarized women's colonial period activism:

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[161] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 39

[162] Ibid, 39

[163] The dynamics of gender, colonialism, and capitalism combined to degrade the status of women throughout Africa. This is examined by Elizabeth Schmidt in *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe* (1992). The Shona household traditionally depended on women's work and thus Shona men and the colonials took much interest in controlling women's labor, fecundity, and resources. While women cared for the home and family crops, men would have time to work on colonial projects. Schmidt contends that the manipulation of women by elites and colonials fed the growth of capitalist patriarchal enterprise in Rhodesia as well as an underdeveloped class of women. Jane Guyer's chapter in *African Women South of the Sahara* (1984) contends that in Ghana women's work became relegated to certain sectors where they were not involved in the cash economy and, as a consequence, were not trained in the technology and skills that would have made them able to earn income. When the men focused on planting and harvesting cacao the colonials made more money and produced more goods to trade on the global market. During colonialism the survival of the family and the villages depended much on women's labor but only the men benefitted from being active in the cash economy by learning new skills and technologies. This chapter shows the ways in which colonialism exacerbated patriarchy and further disenfranchised women.

[164] Raisa Simola, *"The Construction of a Nigerian Nationalist and Feminist, Funmilayo Ransome Kuti"* Nordic Journal of African Studies 8:1 (1999): 99

> When the colonialists came the women were not so much repressed, I think, in pre-colonial days. As you probably know there was a female *oba* [king]…Then the British displaced the women and put the men in charge or so to speak. So the women had a double role now to bring women up as well as to bring the nation itself, in general, up. If you see what I mean. So they were fighting at two levels or so to speak.[165]

As a cultural insider she says that women were more enfranchised in pre-colonial days and that they had respect and recognition in government, as the female *oba* she cited. What is interesting is her analysis of how the British affected the status of womanhood. They *displaced* women according to Professor Sowomi. This is indicative of the fact that women, in the culture traditionally, did experience autonomy but were oppressed at the advent of colonial rule. At this point the women were faced with the task of reclaiming their previous freedoms and position of importance in society in addition to fighting for the freedom of the broader nation. Their oppression was one with that of the nation in that British colonialism disenfranchised them both. This is one of the underlying ideologies that supported and developed women's nationalist consciousness in Nigeria.

According to Mr. Alfred Gbolahan Sowemimo, a family member of Mrs. Kuti and a student in the Abeokuta Grammar School born January 9, 1929, women's productivity and public life were truncated under the colonial administration. They were able to work, but only for a short time: "At that time any woman who entered the service had to resign on marriage…. That was relaxed later during Awolowo's regime. At that time the women could have maternity leave. When they got married they didn't resign or retire, but they got maternity leave and after 12 weeks, six weeks on half pay and six weeks on full pay, they would come back." [166]

What motivated the policy of retirement for women upon marriage?

[165] Professor Adebisi Sowomi, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. 2015)
[166] Alfred Gbolahan Sowemimo, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. January 2015)

> It was colonial. Colonial. It was the British way of life because they introduced that here. They wrote the general orders to be followed by anyone in the civil service. But when Awolowo came he reviewed that and gave them some liberty. Women too could aspire to any position. Previously, when you want to get married, you resigned but when Awolowo came that was relaxed….What I am saying is that, for instance, you as a young lady enter the civil service and when you want to get married you inform the authorities and you resign your appointment. If you want to have a family you resign.[167]

Pre-colonial Nigerian women were always able to work even through marriage and raising a family but the British did not adhere to this type of dynamic and preferred women to operate only in the domestic sphere. The British compromised by allowing women to work only until marriage, at which point it was obligatory for them to resign. This meant that they would become completely dependent on their husbands for subsistence and livelihood. This scenario further impacted their power and leverage in the society as they went from wage earners who supported the family and economy to dependents who could no longer participate strongly in economic development. Their role in public life diminished as their ability to operate in that sphere became more and more constricted. They were being forced into housewifedom per the terms of British gender relations. When this forced economic seclusion is coupled with the systematic reduction of women's authority through the disregard of their political groups and associations, the result is an overall degradation of women's status in Nigerian society. However, it is interesting to note that when Awolowo, a well known politician and founder of the Action Group, came to prominence he restored some semblance of traditional rights to women in respecting their right to work whether married with children or not. Whether or not he did this for political gain, it is indicative of the fact that there were Nigerian men that were not against women's autonomy in the colonial era.

The changes that colonialism brought to women's status in Nigeria caused women to invoke their pre-colonial methods of resistance which traditionally served as a system of checks

[167] Ibid

and balances to mitigate male power and privilege. When asked about gender relations among Yoruba men and women during colonial times Professor Bolanle Awe, renowned historian and former Commissioner of Education in Oyo State born in 1933, said: "In fact my husband was citing this proverb a few days ago. We have a proverb that if a man sees a snake and a woman kills it, it doesn't really matter who does it so long as the snake is killed. So that the issue of who does it doesn't matter. What is important is the job at hand and how we can do it. That, I think, sums it up more than anything else."[168] What Professor Awe referred to was the idea that one party chooses work in relation to what the other party has done. Tasks are completed based on necessity and not biologically determined roles. The woman in the adage killed the snake because the man was not able to for whatever reason, but in the end it did not matter that the woman killed it. She was not castigated for doing a man's job. She simply did what was necessary for the communal good. As Professor Awe said, what is important is that the job is done. She went on to say:

> The women in the traditional society also feel that there are certain rules for men and certain rules for women but that you don't cross over boundaries easily. There are certain things that women are supposed to do and certain things that men are supposed to do. And you respect those. But if you do not, then you have problems on your hands. There's a lot of saying to indicate this. They say *egbe obinrin jeje, egbe okunrin jeje*. That is, women on one side quietly, men on one side quietly. No problem. But if you start crossing boundaries and taking liberties, then they will speak. The interesting thing is that the women tend to sit back and watch. They allow the men to take the lead. The men are conscious of the fact that these people are just watching. If you overstep your bounds they will pounce on you and they will make nonsense of you. Men are also conscious of that. That there are certain things that you must not do in the society and that you must respect the women as well.

This pre-colonial model of gender relations should not be mistaken for biological determinism. It is a method of ensuring the proper functioning of a system of checks and balances for male power. Women were able to protect the status of womanhood in broad and far reaching areas by

[168] Professor Bonlanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. February 2015)

keeping a close watch on the men and their activities and using their activism as a corrective when necessary. Women conceded leadership rights to men but also held men accountable for using their power to manage the society responsibly in a way that supported the growth and enfranchisement of both men and women communally. This construct of gender relations is rooted in the West African philosophy of dualism and it persisted in the colonial era although contested by colonial ideals of gender. Women's methods of activism, which were socially sanctioned in pre-colonial times, were invoked during the colonial era to combat perceived infractions by men, whether indigenous or British, on the rights of women. According to Professor Awe:

> They will resort to their traditional system of resistance. They might come out in large numbers and start demonstrating, singing songs of abuse. Going to the chief of the town or even going to the District Officer and abusing him and making a nuisance of themselves until people ask what is the matter. Very often, they will listen to them. They could also boycott the market and say they are not going to the market and that's a serious matter. And if worse comes to worse some of them would strip naked which was an abomination. During the colonial period, a number of the protests were against the rules and regulations laid down by the colonial authorities. But they would direct their protests against the colonial powers that be but sometimes against the traditional ruler or the chiefs in the neighborhood because they should be speaking for them, they look up to them. As far as they are concerned, those are their rulers who should protect their interests. But if they feel that the *alake* (king or ruler) are there not speaking up then sometimes they will start with a protest going to their compound and then going from there to the D.O.'s [British District Officer] office or whatever.[169]
>
> *What types of issues and reasons made them come out and demonstrate?*
>
> As I said, if there was an attempt to control as the one I cited before or if there were regulations against sanitation for instance. That's a serious one. They use to have sanitation inspectors going around trying to see that the houses are clean and so on. And those sanity inspectors could be vicious sometimes and very finicky and they would protest that they are disturbing them. Its just some of the regulations that the colonial government tried to introduce that they would object to.[170]

[169] Ibid
[170] Ibid

The mandates of the colonial administration infringed on the autonomy and rights of women and caused them to resort to their traditional means of protesting the abuse of male power through collective demonstrations, and civil disobedience. Mass uprisings were the hallmark of women's frustrations.

There were several notable mass uprisings of women. The Nwaobiala Movement (dancing women's movement) consisted of Atta women in the Okigwe division of Owerri Province who believed that they witnessed a divine birth and had been given a message from *Chineke* (God). They felt it their duty to pass on this word by travelling north and asking the chiefs to pass on the message. The women would look for the compound of the traditional ruler and then sweep his compound (sweeping was symbolic of purification) and perform the *nwaobiala* dance. The chief was expected to give the women a goat and ten shillings. The women traveled in bands of 50-300. They took action against those that would not help them spread the message. At Nnobi the women placed obstructions in the main road, burned the market, and filled the courthouse with refuse. The District Officer warned the chiefs not to help the women but many of them ignored this admonishment. The content of the message was a demand to return to pre-colonial social system, especially the aspects that pertained to women. They rejected the use of coinage, especially for dowry payments. In some areas they demanded that women's prostitution be stopped. They wanted fixed prices for cassava and fowls and also for the roads not to be paved as this increased the flow and speed of traffic which caused many deaths.[171] In 1928 women (and men) in Aboh, Oguta, and Warri raised money to send delegates to Lagos to see Herbert Macaulay for the purpose of seeking advice to fight against colonial tax mandates. In Aboh, Obi Oputa reported the people's actions to the colonials and the old women kidnapped him and forced him to sing (presumably about what he had done) all over town. In

[171] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 68-72

1928 women of the Izzi clan in Abakaliki division who wanted to show their disdain for taxes mobbed the village leaders who accepted tax discs which were distributed by the colonials to show that their town had paid taxes.[172]

One of the most incendiary and degrading colonial mandates on women came in the form of taxation laws. The response to these decrees constituted some of the earliest anti-colonial activity among women in Nigeria. The Aba Women's War in southeastern Nigeria is among the most well known of these protests. On November 29, 1929 a man named Mark Emeruwa, a teacher from a mission school and a census worker for the colonial appointed warrant chief Okugo, walked into the home of Nwanyeruwa, a woman of Owerri province in east Nigeria. He demanded to count the women and livestock that were in the compound so that the household could be taxed. Nwanyeruwa protested and the following scene occurred[173]:

> He asked me to count my goats, sheep, and people. I turned to look at him and said: "Are you still counting? Last year my son's wife who was pregnant died. What am I to count? I have been mourning for the death of that woman. Was your mother counted?" He held me by my throat. One's life depends on her throat. With my two hands…I held him also by the throat. I raised an alarm, calling a woman….I asked her to help me raise an alarm…In the meantime Emeruwa ran away. Okugo then ordered that I should be brought before him. Then they came and dragged me out of my house….he said "Woman dare you assault my messenger…? When the District Officer comes he will take charge of you."[174]

Nwanyeruwa publicly expressed her disapproval of colonial taxation of poor women by going to a meeting of women and speaking of all that happened to her. This caused women all over the Owerri provinces to revolt, in what became known as the Aba Women's War, and lead mass demonstrations against patriarchy, malfeasance, and the colonial administration. The women

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[172] Ibid, 72-73

[173]Esi Sutherland-Abby and Aminata Diaw. *Women Writing Africa* (New York, New York: City University of New York, 2005), 169

[174] Nwanyeruwa, *Testimony Before the Commission of Inquiry*, (Wednesday March 12, 1930)
This primary source demonstrating women's struggles against colonialism in Nigeria was reproduced on pg. 171 of *Women Writing Africa: West African and the Sahel* edited by Esi Sutherland-Abby and Aminata Diaw. The full report was published in 1930 in the *Report of the Commission of Inquiry appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances in the Calabar and Owerri Provinces, December, 1929*.

were able to achieve reform that led to the people having more of a say in government.[175] In the introduction to *The Women's War of 1929* (2011) Adam Paddock and Toyin Falola stated that:

> The Women's War of 1929 has been a subject of extensive historical debates between British imperial and African scholars. The women's actions unified Igbo and Ibibio women against colonial rule, terrified colonial officials and European traders, and captured the attention of future generations of nationalists. Yet perhaps its most central significance has been how Nigerian and African women used the event as a rallying cry for increased political and civil rights…The Women's War lasted for little more than four weeks; however, the women's determination and the violent end of their confrontation with the British military led to far-reaching consequences for resistance to British colonialism.[176]

The far-reaching consequences that Paddock and Falola referred to were the ensuing uprisings of Nigerian women in different parts of the country in response to British rule.

In the southwestern area of Nigeria, where the Yoruba people are most populous, there were also some notable uprisings; however, unlike the Aba Women's War, these protests were organized by formal women's organizations. The Lagos Market Women's Association (LMWA) was already very active during the mid 1920s although the exact founding date is unknown.[177] Madame Alimotu Pelewura, an illiterate Muslim woman, was the leader of the LMWA who started as a trader of fish in Lagos. In 1910 Eleko Eshugbayi, the leader of Lagos, recognized her as a very important figure to market women in the area.[178] In 1920 she was elected *Alaga*, leader of women, in Ereko which was the largest meat market in Lagos and, according to colonial record, the most efficiently run market in the area as well.[179] The traders at Ereko each paid a fee into an account set up to provide lawyers and also employ two literate fulltime staff to read and write letters and also interpret English for the traders when colonial officers came to

[175] For more information on the Aba Women's War see *Women and Revolution: Global Expressions* (1998) by Marie Josephine Diamond
[176] Toyin Falola and Adam Paddock, *The Women's War of 1929: A History of Anti-Colonial Resistance in Eastern Nigeria* (Durham, NC: Carolina University Press, 2011), 3
[177] Cheryl Johnson, *"Grassroots Organizing: Women in Anti-Colonial Activity in Southwestern Nigeria"* African Studies Review vol. 25 no. 2/3 (June-September, 1982): 138
[178] Ibid, 139
[179] Ibid, 139

speak with them.[180] In 1932 Pelewura became elected to the Ilu Committee which was a traditional government body in which she represented the voices of 84 market women's representatives from 16 markets.[181]

The LMWA vehemently opposed the taxation laws that the colonials planned to enact on women. Pelewura associated the group with one of the largest political parties of the time, the Nigerian Nationalist Democratic Party and its leader Herbert Macaulay.[182] However, she wanted the LMWA to be a pressure group and not an outright politically charged organization. This is a theme that is recognizable throughout Nigerian women's resistance in the colonial and post-colonial periods. In 1932 a suspicion spread stating that the British planned to tax Lagosian women although the tax was not instituted until 1940.[183] World War II had a great impact on women's economic standing. The British instituted the Income Tax Ordinance which stated that women whose annual income was 50 pounds or more were to pay taxes on that money. In addition the British requisitioned foodstuffs and controlled distribution processes in the markets in an effort to gain resources and money to support their war effort.[184] After assembling women and shutting down the markets in December of 1940, Pelewura and the LMWA were able to achieve the raising of the threshold of taxable income from 50 to 200 pounds which was an amount that the overwhelming majority of market women never achieved. She went on to organize more militant protests against the interference of the colonials in women's economic affairs and many women were arrested and jailed. Upon being bribed with a monthly allowance of seven pounds and position as leader of gari sellers by A.P. Pullen, the creator of the food price controls, Pelewura said that she would not ally with him even if he paid her 100 pounds a month

[180] Ibid, 139
[181] Ibid, 139
[182] Ibid, 139
[183] Ibid, 139
[184] Ibid, 140-141

to "break and starve the country where she was born."[185] The LMWA went on to agitate for years and was pivotal to ending the British control of food process during the General Strike of 1945 wherein women supported striking workers for 37 days by keeping food prices low and advocating for self government.[186]

During the time of the LMWA activity in the General Strike Margaret Ekpo emerged as a prominent leader. Ekpo was of Igbo and Efik heritage who lived in the town of Aba. She accompanied her husband to Dublin, Ireland for treatment of his stroke in 1946 at which time she graduated from Rathmines School of Domestic Economics.[187] Ekpo came to prominence after her bold actions in attending rallies and speeches of the nationalist leaders of the time. Her husband, Dr. John Udo Ekpo, had some objections about the treatment of indigenous doctors by the British administration but he had no recourse to voice his grievances because, as a civil servant, he was not allowed to attend political discussions and forums.[188] Ekpo stood in proxy for her husband at these meetings that discussed colonial racism and oppression and her political consciousness grew.

She worked to organize the Aba Market Women's Association (AMWA) in 1945 for women's rights and activity in public life through an ingenious method. There was a shortage of salt throughout colonial Nigeria due to WWII which produced a decline in shipping, maritime dangers, and a turn towards war manufacturing in Britain where most of the salt was imported from. According to Gloria Chuku salt was so scarce that it was equated with gold during this

[185] Ibid, 142
[186] Ibid, 142
[187] Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong and Henry Louis Gates, *Dictionary of African Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 281

[188] Jubril Olabode Aka, *Nigerian women of Distinction, Honor, and Presidential Qualities* (Bloomington, Indiana: Traffor Publishing, 2012),35- 36

time.[189] Ekpo bought up all the salt in the markets at Aba and only gave access to the women who were members of the AMWA.[190] When the women's husbands could no longer stand food with no salt, they allowed their wives to join the AMWA and in this way the membership greatly increased. Ekpo and the AMWA led protests to support coal miners who went on strike due to frustrations with colonial oppression. The British massacred 21 of the miners and some women leaders were arrested and detained. The AMWA formed an even larger demonstration, like that of 1929, and caused the colonials to free their leaders and launch an investigation into the matters instead.[191] Ekpo grew in political importance and became a special member to the Eastern Region House of Chiefs to represent women's issues. She was highly effective on the council as the number of women voters in the region outnumbered the male voters in the municipal election.[192]

Rethinking Elitism

The relationship between Ekpo and the AWMA exemplifies the ability of Nigerian women to work together across class lines and to supersede elitism for the greater benefit of women and the society as a whole. With that said, one must rethink the meaning of elite in the Nigerian context so that it is more complex and does not confine those deemed to be non-elite to a less important role in the historical narrative. One cannot ascribe elite to educated women while ascribing non-elite to market women. In fact, the market women are the ones that carried many women's movements to fruition as in the examples above. In pre-colonial times women would enlist the help of other women in their local vicinity as well as those from other cities,

[189] Gloria Chuku, *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation in Southeastern Nigeria, 1900-1960* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 119

[190] Margaret Ekpo and Kammonke Abam, *Breaking Barriers: An Autobiography* (Calabar, Nigeria: Profiles and Biographies, 2003), 18

[191]Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong and Henry Louis Gates, *Dictionary of African Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 281

[192] Ibid, 282

towns, and villages to restore and enforce the rights of even one woman who had experienced unfair treatment as in the Aba Women's War and other collective action discussed above.[193] Their communal worldview, solidarity enforced by the dual sex system, and the attendant desire to protect the status of womanhood broadly mandated that individual women work together for the benefit of all women. They understood that a threat to womanhood in one area was a threat to womanhood in every area. It was with this philosophy of collective activism, or that creation of community based on shared vested interest, that women protected themselves from an imbalance of male power. This collectivism was therefore a very important tool for women in procuring their rights and autonomy. Consequently, it was this same collectivist ideology that caused women in the colonial period to work together across class, religious, and ethnic lines for nationalist aims. In the case of Ekpo and the AMWA, just as in many other organizations such as the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations and the National Council of Women's Societies, this philosophy of collective activism is apparent and it caused market women to work with educated women.[194]

Although there were differences among the market and educated women, in terms of the roles that they both occupied in society, it would not be completely correct to classify their interaction as elite (educated) with non-elite (market women) so as to imply that the latter was in deference to the former. Those hard distinctions do not apply neatly here because there were educated market women, there were wealthy market women, and some of them were considered elite as well. What can be asserted is that the relationship between educated and market women was one of mutual respect and understanding wherein the educated women were not ubiquitously

[193] For more on the solidarity and mobilizing of protesting Nigerian women see Shirley Ardener *Sexual Insult and Female Militancy*; Judith Van Allen *Sitting on a Man: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women* and Caroline Ifeka-Moller's reply to Van Allen *Sitting on a Man: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women A Reply*

[194] F.A. Ogunsheye, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. March 2015)

seen as elite, only educated. This is an important distinction because the way in which their relationship is defined has direct implications as to the agency that market women are perceived to have had and the power that is attached to the educated women in the narrative. According to Felicia Adetowun Ogunsheye, a geographer and librarian trained in Cambridge and the U.S. born in 1926, "You have to define elite. We had different types of elite. There was the educational elite but there was the elite too in the sense that they came from a royal family. But we didn't make much difference really until the education thing really created class."[195] When asked about when education created a class her response was "I think after independence. After independence."[196] Although there were people who were considered elite in circles of educated Nigerians, Professor Ogunsheye says that the women made no distinctions between educated and market women until after independence when class stratification became more definite as more people adopted western culture. During the colonial period those communal principles were stronger than in the decades following independence. This means that during the colonial period women were able to organize across class lines because they did not see themselves as markedly different from one another and because it was understood that they were fighting for something that would benefit all of them, irrespective of their status in society. It is interesting to note that she makes a distinction between educational elite and royal elite as if to say that education did not qualify one for special treatment or to be revered as did being a descendant of the royal house. The word *kabiyesi* is another Yoruba term for king, ruler, or leader and it literally means one whose authority cannot be questioned or one who is accountable to no one.[197] The educational elite were recognized for their experiences and broader knowledge base but were in no way put on a pedestal, worshiped, or blindly followed without critique, conversation, and

[195] Ibid
[196] Ibid
[197] Chief Olugbolahan Ijaola, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. March 15, 2015)

collaboration with very decisive and independent thinking market women. Professor Ogunsheye was careful to make the distinction between the different types of elite so that the nuances of the term in the Nigerian cultural context could be understood and so that it was clear that educational elite were not at all elite in the sense that *awon kabiyesi* (plural of kabiyesi) are elite.

Professor Awe further contextualized the view of elite when she said:

> We knew about people like Mrs. Obasa as a different breed. These were people that had a western education and came back and they were *ladies*, the people who could be accepted in society. The spoke well, they had soirees, they dressed well. And we were in the boarding house [as young school children]. We attended the cathedral. That's where we use to attend church on Sundays. And all these women would come, all dressed up with high heels on. And we noticed that after getting to their seats they take off their shoes because its tight. But we use to admire them because they spoke well, they dressed well, and they walked well, and they had so much confidence about them that one wanted to be like them somehow. So when we got back to school, we would try and walk like them.[198]

The women who took on western culture and had been to western countries and who had western education were admired because of their connection to western ways. However they were not revered as were traditional elites in the society. They were looked up to not only for education but the association with the west. Professor Awe went on to say that:

> The National Council of Women's Societies [another women's umbrella organization during the nationalist era] was made up of all strata. The elite, the educated, the not so educated, the literate, the market women. They were all there. It was an all embracing organization. And as you see it was a council of women's societies so it was like a council that drew its membership from different societies of women and some of those societies are made up of educated women. The Association of University Women was one of them…The university women were educated women and, if you like, you might say that they were the elite. At that time they were the privileged few in the society that were educated. They were educated. And in fact the emphasis was women with university education.[199]

The women with university education were set apart from others in that they were privileged to have that education. Nonetheless they still worked alongside market women and other women of

[198] Professor Bolanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. February 2015)
[199] Ibid

various levels of education. She does not draw a hard distinction between educated and market women when she lists the types of women who were in these activist organizations because that would indicate that market women were synonymous with the uneducated. Just as there was diversity among educated women, as there were elite and non-elite among educated peoples, there was also variance among market women. Some were educated and rich while others were neither educated nor rich. Then there were also those that fell at various points in between these distinctions of elite and non-elite or rich and poor.

Another circumstance that bonded women together across class lines was their mutual origin from market women. Many of the educated and successful women and men whether in the markets or not were born to market women who worked tirelessly to ensure that they had the primary education necessary to have better opportunities in life. Professor Ogunsheye asserted that "Many of the wealthy men in Ibadan are children of women who had made it in trade, you know."[200] She alluded to the fact that the well to do men and women of the nationalist era came from mothers who were market workers. For this reason there was respect, concern, and support for market women among circles of both male and female educated, elites, politicians, etc. Professor Awe recounted the story of her grandmother and how she was the one who ensured that her mother and uncle had a good education:

> My grandmother….she was a fantastic women, a business woman, a trader who had a lot of foresight. She was the one who trained my mother and my uncle and insisted that they should go to school….She use to sell *wowo* cloth….And she went to this government establishment and there was a man there who was given a letter to take to the prison….After he had left the secretary or clerk who gave him the letter said, 'Poor man. he doesn't know what his fate is going to be. That letter says that he should be locked up as soon as he gets there, that he should be imprisoned.' My grandmother said, 'How could that be?' [The clerk] Said, 'that letter says it. She said, 'But how?' [The clerk said] 'If you can read and write you will know that, its people who go to school.' She then came back and said that two of her children must go to school…And told her husband that she wants two of the children to go to school. Then the husband said 'I

[200] F.A. Ogunsheye, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. March 2015)

> can't afford to send those two children to school, they must be working for me on my farm. But if you can give me two other people to work for them, in place of them, then I will allow them to go.' And she was quite comfortable, wealthy, and she had people that we use to call pawns in those days. know, you borrow money and like interest you will ask somebody to be serving until you are able to pay the money back. She asked her husband to take two of them and sent my mother and my uncle to school. But it was quite interesting because my uncle became the first student to go to Government College in Ibadan. He was number one on the list. My mother was in UMC. She was one of the first trained set of teachers and classmates with Mrs. Esan [first woman senator in Nigera]…and so on.[201]

In this story about her grandmother Professor Awe exemplified the fervor with which these market women worked so that they could gain the resources necessary to send their children to school and give them better lives as a result. The grandmother was moved by the conversation with the clerk and had to barter with her husband just to send two of the children to school. This education changed the course of their lives. Many women paid for their children's school fees by themselves as well.[202] Many people, who served in the government, were politicians, educated abroad, wealthy, etc., whether male or female had mothers and grandmothers who were market women and used their income to fund their children's education. Market women were a pillar of nationalism because their work and sacrifices helped to train, educate, and cultivate future nationalists and politicians. This is another reason that women such as Margaret Ekpo, Mrs. Kuti, and Professors Awe and Ogunsheye could not and did not see themselves as removed from or higher than the masses of working class women. This viewpoint is essential to the characterization of women's intellectual developments in umbrella organizations as a product of the collaboration between market and book women (as Professor Awe called the educated women) and not the ideals of book women superimposed on market women. These intellectual trends in women's umbrella organizations very much tell the story of market women, their issues, resolutions, and desires.

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[201] Professor Bolanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. February 2015)
[202] Professor Adebisi Sowomi, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. 2015)

The actions of Women such as Margaret Ekpo and the AMWA and Pelewura with the LMWA paved the way for the larger and more consolidated organizations of market and book women that came about in the decades before independence. Mrs. Kuti was a contemporary of Ekpo and had her own women's union at this time as well but she did not institute the federation until 1953. Nonetheless, the precedent of women's activism had been long set since pre-colonial times which was that all women must support the standard of womanhood because an injury to one woman can lead to a loss of status to all women. In addition, the cosmology of dualism helped women to situate themselves and their activism as a function of their responsibility to societal stability. This philosophy is fundamental to the establishment of the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations and helped to shape their ideologies on collectivism, non-politicism, and self determination but has been overlooked due to a focus on men in nationalist historiography.

Towards a Concept of African Gender for African Nationalism

Anne McClintock said in 1991, "In the chronicles of male nationalism, women too, are all too often figured as more scenic backdrops to the big- brass business of masculine armies and uprising."[203] But she notes that "so far, all nationalisms are dependent on powerful constructions of gender difference."[204] She goes on to say that "The needs of the nation are identified with the needs, frustrations, and aspirations of men."[205] McClintock points to this tendency to define nationalism on male terms whether as a movement or an ideology, but women have also contributed much to nationalist theory and practice. According to McClintock "women are subsumed only symbolically into the national body politic" and I argue that it is the same in

[203] Anne M. McClintock, *"No Longer in a Future Heaven Women and Nationalism in South Africa,"* Transition 51 (1991), 105
[204] Ibid, 105
[205] Ibid, 105

terms of narratives of the development of nationalism wherein women are subsumed by male-centric viewpoints even when they are mentioned.[206] She concluded her conversation by saying "Nationalism is constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power."[207]

Legbeism is one such gender theory that can aid in analyzing West African nationalism to draw out the unique contribution of women. I derived this concept from the words and actions of women as recorded in my sources, both archival and interview based. In much the same way that Ula Taylor developed her theory of Trumping Patriarchy, I did not determine that the women at the center of my study fit neatly into the parameters of U.S. Black feminist or African feminist theories due to their lack of addressing the relationship between the cosmology and intellectual history of African women. [208] As a result, I resorted to describing their philosophy of gender based on what I deduced from their words and actions. What resulted was an original African centered framework that has been derived from an African cosmology of gender as interpreted by the women of the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies. *Legbeism*, which embodies complementary synergism between men and women as a premise for people's actions, is purposed to give a more accurate understanding of Nigerian women's nationalism in relation to their cultural perspectives on gender and society.[209]

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[206] Ibid, 105
[207] Ibid, 105
[208] Dr. Ula Taylor visited Michigan State University October 28, 2016 and spoke about her forthcoming book on women in the Nation of Islam. The central feature of this talk was the ways in which women in the NOI managed their men by using their ingenuity to manipulate power relations and managed their husbands for short term leadership and family survival. Her talk centered the actions of Khalilah Camacho-Ali during her marriage to Muhammad Ali.
[209] Linda Tillman's chapter *Insider/Outsider Perspectives and Placing Issues* in Performing Qualitative Cross Cultural Research (2010) edited by Pranee Liamputtong discusses different types of cross cultural researchers. She says that there are those who are insiders (born into the culture under study), outsiders (not affiliated with the culture under study), external insiders (those not born in the culture but aware of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and knowledge of the culture under study), and external outsiders (those not born in the culture and who have little tolerance for the values, perspectives, and knowledge of the culture under study). I recognize that I, as an African American woman, am within the external typology when doing cultural research and theoretical development

Tenets of Legbeism

Legbeism is used within this dissertation as a means of evaluating Nigerian women's philosophy of activism as a function of their consciousness of and experiences with gender relations and nationalism. It is a foundation from which to build a rationale as to why and how Yoruba women articulated nationalism in the ways they did. It has been used to lead an assessment of Yoruba women's activism, consciousness, and experiences with gender relations and nationalism through their intellectual development, leadership, and gender conceptions. The theory also, very importantly, offers a framework to investigate their declarations of non-politicism and how this was defined by them. Lastly, *Legbeism*, being rooted in a cosmological trajectory of Yoruba culture, is better suited to uncover and evaluate characteristics of Nigerian women's leadership in the nationalist movement and the perceptions that constituted their gendered worldview.

Legbeism is an original African centered gender concept that I derived from Yoruba cosmology and Yoruba women's intellectualism and philosophies of activism. The terminology is derived from Yoruba language descriptions of position where *siwaju* is in front of, *seyin* is behind, but *legbe* is on the side of. The latter has been chosen as a symbolic expression of how men and women in Yoruba cosmology have been situated as equal opposites. The tenets of *Legbeism* are:

1. Relative perception or a sense of shared responsibility among men and women where groups choose work relative to what the other group has done. In essence men's and women's work is not determined by biology but by necessity of what needs to be done. In this way both work to maintain a synergy through shared responsibility.

concerning Yoruba women. With that said, I have striven to be an external insider which can be seen in my efforts to develop a theory that suffices to describe Nigerian women's nationalism and intellectual activism that is rooted in their cosomological beliefs.

2. Cooperation, necessity, and mutual respect are central to gender relations; they are interdependent and complementary. Balance and progress is created in a system by granting mutual respect to opposite parties.

3. African women's struggles for equality encompass the both/and model (for both men and women); they are for communal and not individualistic benefit.

4. A consideration of relative perception and intellectual trends is essential to understanding the distinctiveness of men's and women's actions in any given moment

Legbeism offers a means of analyzing African women's experiences as a function of their shared responsibility as autonomous contributors to society. Its principles espouse the West African philosophy of dualism as a means of centering gender relations instead of privileging either of the two sexes. Some gender theories privilege women's empowerment as the sole objective of women's activism but *Legbeism* allows for the centering of community/national development, which inevitably includes women's rights. In this way it is better equipped to help construct a more holistic representation of the objectives of Nigerian women's activism for themselves and the nation (men included) during the period under study. *Legbeism* provides a broader framework with which to analyze women's contributions to nationalism by centering their perspectives in and work toward communal empowerment through shared responsibility. Through looking at women as a part of a holistic system of gendered responsibility to the community, *Legbeism* places the implications of their activism not only within the confines of what this means for women but into a larger context of nation building and gender relations.

Scholars of African gender have described this relationship between African men's and women's power with terms such as mutual cooperation, interdependence, non-adversarial, and alongside.[210] This paradigm of shared responsibility caused women's importance to be

[210] Nkiru Nzegwu, author of *Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture* (2006), stated that men and women's power were not at all contentious in their interactions with one another: "…women and men's interests were institutionalized by the state so that the heads of the two administrative structures complemented rather than duplicated each other's powers and privileges. They were not in an adversarial relationship." Nina Mba,

recognized which aided the establishment of a framework for female leadership in society which has always been existent in West Africa according to Filomina Chioma Steady.[211] This language of mutual cooperation also alludes to the inherent importance of relative perception (interdependence) and communalism instead of individualism. *Legbeism* brings all of these characteristics together to analyze African women's intellectual history.

There are indeed African feminist theories that could be used to interpret the data collected for this study, however, they do not fully address women's articulation of nationalism in the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations. For example, Catherine Acholonu and Obioma Nnaemeka, in their pursuit of identifying and naming African women's activism, do not build an unequivocal trajectory from the past to present that will help to historicize African feminism.[212] They also miss the opportunity to highlight women's intellectual history and how the development of certain ideas shaped their practices as activists. *Legbeism* attempts to rectify these issues.

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in *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (1982), said "Certainly in many cases the women acted on behalf of the whole community; they were functioning not as a vacuum but as a society composed of men and women in an interdependent network." Femi Ojo-Ade, in *Death of a Myth: Critical Essays on Nigeria* (2001), said that: "In the generality of African culture, woman has always been considered essential, primary, and all important to our lives. Without woman, the world would be devoid of humanity. The concept of Mother Africa expresses this notion. Woman is our all in all, our beginning and our end…..Our culture, centered upon the community, has not encouraged social engagement and struggle in the individualistic and centrifugal fashion of the west…"

[211] See Steady's book *Women and Leadership in West Africa: Mothering the Nation and Humanizing the State* (2005)

[212] Catherine Obiyanju Olumba-Acholonu talked about the importance of African women as mothers in her book *Motherism: The Afrocentric Altrenative to Feminism* (1995). Acholonu supports the idea that women could achieve equality through using the skills and endurance they acquired through their cultural roles as nurturers. While this has been done in African contexts, such as the examples of Ghanaian Queen Mothers, the women in this dissertation are not seeking to use their motherhood to defend their nationalist stances, although it figures into their intellectual arguments at times. Obioma Nnaemeka, in an article entitled *Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way* (2004), is very much concerned with the practice of telling women's stories from below and giving them agency to shape theory that will ultimately be used to analyze their realities. She calls this practice "building upon the indigenous." This allows for the existence of multiple African feminisms and not solely one monolithic or generalized concept. Even so, she focuses on a paradigm but does not give specific characteristics of a clear theory. This is not too helpful for interpreting data on these female nationalists.

Perhaps one of the most important factors excluded by these theorists is centering the importance of relative perception which is central to *Legbeism*. My concept of relative perception refers to the analysis of women's and men's actions (based on their adherence to cultural gender ideas which support shared responsibility) relative to one another. This notion of relative perception is very important because it shapes Yoruba women and men's shared responsibility to uphold the stability of the society. Work is constantly shared so that needs are met. If one person is doing a task, but does not have the capacity to do other necessary tasks at the same time, then the other person will complete what has been left undone. In this way less of the needs of the family and society go unmet as everyone is contributing to the good of the group. This relative perception is important to understanding African feminism and analyzing women's activism, work, and contributions to social change in any era of African history. It is an alternative to biological determinism and it is descriptive of a philosophy that supports one's actions toward establishing that concerted effort between both men and women for the best interests of the society as a whole.

Summary

In the Nigerian context, women have always shared an equal responsibility with men to ensure the stability and prosperity of the society and this had an impact on their activist philosophy. Even their origin stories pay homage to the absolute importance of women and women's work to the maintenance of culture and society. The concept of dualism also impacted women's status and therefore their understanding of their roles by affirming that men and women are equal but opposite forces that are necessary to the health and survival of the society. According to leading gender scholar Oyeronke Oyewumi, in pre-colonial times, Nigerian societies did not operate from a biological determinist orientation thus Nigerian women were not

considered weak or deficient just because they were women. They were thus entrusted with an important task. They were expected to contribute in a substantial way to the community. For this reason, their activist philosophy during pre-colonial and colonial times was not only to maintain and restore womanhood to a certain status but to also create opportunities for liberation for all in the society, females and males alike. Their orientation to serve all in the society warrants a reconceptualizing of elitism in women's activist movements. Elites in Nigeria were not necessarily pretentious and separate from the working class poor. They worked with the poor and for them, men and women alike. Due to the nuances in the conceptions of gender in Yoruba society and the ways in which it has caused people to relate to one another, scholars must develop gender concepts that are grounded in Yoruba cosmology. This is the preponderance of *Legbeism.*

Chapter Four:

*E Ku Ise, No Be Small Tin: Establishing the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations

This chapter gives a background of the FNWO from its earliest days as a homemaking club through its radical transition, or complete disavowal of the more domestic lifestyle, to an anti-colonial nationalist organization beginning with a profile of its leader Mrs. Kuti. The group espoused ideas on solidarity, nationalism, and preserving the respect of womanhood throughout its development. These ideas were central to building a feminist consciousness and support of women's empowerment among the masses of women in Nigeria. In light of this, the FNWO ideologies in reference to gender solidarity, nationalism, and feminist empowerment are analyzed here as well. The chapter will also highlight some of the collectively unique characteristics of women's philosophies and tactics of anti-colonial nationalist protest such as Black consciousness, transnationalism, music radicalism (the use of music for a radical purpose such as protesting established norms and institutions), gender equity, and non-politicism. Through this discussion, two of the research questions identified in the introduction are addressed: *what is women's nationalism?* and *how did women articulate nationalism in Nigeria?* In order to interrogate how the women of the FNWO articulated nationalism this chapter focuses on their theoretical and practical expressions of nationalism as they are represented in the documents of the FNWO. Their theoretical formulations of nationalism are herein considered as their intellectual thought expressed through their stances on colonialism, gender inequality and solidarity, Black consciousness, transnationalism, and an early articulation of non-politicism. Their practical (physical movements and actions) expression of nationalism is highlighted through their protests, music radicalism (a rejection of established norms in an effort to change

the fundamental nature of institutions using songs), and displays of cultural solidarity or Black consciousness.

Profile of a Leader: Funmilayo Ransome Kuti in Historical Memory

On October 25, 1900 at 2:55 am Mrs. Kuti was born Frances Abigail Olufunmilayo Thomas to Christian parents in Abeokuta. Her parents placed great emphasis on education and she accredited her accomplishments to them: "…my mother who brought me up in a way that made me what I am today and also to my father who worked so hard to be able to give me the education…"[213] She went to St. John's Anglican School for her primary education and was the first girl to attend the Abeokuta Grammar School for secondary education in January of 1914. It was not customary for girls to be educated but her father pushed for her to receive a quality education so that she would be self sufficient. When she graduated in 1918 she went to Wincham College in Cheshire, England and studied music, education, and domestic science. In 1922 she returned to Nigeria, became a teacher at the Abeokuta school, and married her husband Reverend Israel Olodotun Ransome Kuti on January 20, 1925. They had four children together, Dolupo, Olikoye, Beko, and Fela.[214]

The people of Nigeria are widely cognizant of the name Funmilayo Ransome Kuti. She is a fixture in historical memory of the populous for either being an activist, the mother of Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the first woman in the country to ride a bike or drive a car, or a politician, strong willed, and so on. However, there are few left who actually lived around her. Mr. Sowemimo, a retired officer in the Nigerian civil service, knew Mrs. Kuti and her husband when he was a

*When the letter E appears in a word or phrase it is an honorific. It is used with adults most times, as well as to formally greet a person or group of people. *Ku* is a standard prefix for greetings generally taken to mean "good" or "happy." Ise means work. The phrase E ku ise means good work or happy working. The phrase *no be small tin* is a pidgin saying which means that "this is not a small feat or thing." Altogether this means good work because this is not a simple thing that you have done.

[213] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *Hand Written Autobiography* (Abeokuta, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, c. 1968), 5
[214] Ibid, 9

student in their grammar school in Abeokuta in 1944. "Mrs. Kuti's husband was the principal of Abeokuta Grammar School. That is Israel Olodotun Ransome Kuti. He was the first student to be admitted to that school in 1908. So, I was there [as a student in that school]."[215] When I asked if he came across Mrs. Kuti he said "Yes, I was in the boarding house. She was our guardian in the boarding house. She was in charge of the food. I was a boarder. I was staying in the boarding house and she took care of our food, of our feeding."[216] When asked about his experiences with her he said, "She was a very strong woman. She was like a man. Strong willed. Strong willed."[217]

Chief Ijaola of Owu Abeokuta also recalled many things about her strong character. In order to demonstrate her progressiveness and willingness to supersede established norms, he affirmed that "It was to her credit that she was the first woman to drive a car here in Abeokuta at least but people later said in Nigeria."[218] He went on to say that she had never been able to contest an election and win and that this is probably why she warned her children never to go into politics. Chief Ijaola said that

> …she had established a school which they called Mrs. Kuti Primary School. And normally there was a stream of students that her husband would [allow to] be admitted to the grammar school in Abeokuta. That school did everything to be supportive of the type of students that is normally accepted into the Abeokuta Grammar School where her husband was principal.[219]

She was very strict about education. Chief Ijaola shared that she trained the children well and that she was "very particular about education."[220] He said that she was "a woman of sound training…you can't pass through Mrs. Kuti [school] and not establish yourself as a good student.

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[215] Alfred Gbolahan Sowemimo, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. 2015)
[216] Ibid
[217] Ibid
[218] Chief Olugbolahan Ijaola, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. March 15, 2015)
[219] Ibid
[220] Ibid

And this accounts for all her children [having an education], even Fela who was in music did master's."[221] As he reflected, he pointed out that some "people see her alone as an agitator, but some of us see her as someone who is a very knowledgeable woman at training children."[222] It is interesting that Mr. Sowemimo saw her as a strong woman while Chief Ijaola remembered her as a strict but nurturing woman. This latter image is one that is not often privileged in the face of the things that she did as an activist and nationalist. The Chief's reference to *training the children* identifies her nurturing character which is a bedrock tenet of the African feminist theory of Motherism. Her work as a teacher exhibited the skill of mothering such as diligent nurturing and preparation of children for future endeavors or *training* according to Chief Ijaola. This can be seen in the way the effort that she put into ensuring a quality education for the children, as any loving mother would. According to Chief Ijaola she *did everything to be supportive…..* to the students. She invested much time in children and even did unpaid work for three years in the school where her husband was principal at Ijebu Ode when the family moved there in 1925. She began a kindergarten class in Ijebu in 1928 which she operated for three years until the family moved back to Abeokuta in 1931.[223] Even as a strict woman who defied norms, such as being a politician and purportedly being the first woman to drive a car in Abeokuta, Mrs. Kuti did not choose between the nurturing part of her character and her public persona. She exhibited Motherism in the way she cared for and watched over her students as *guardian in the boarding house* according to Mr. Sowewimo and the sacrifice that she made in not receiving pay for years just to ensure that the children of her town were properly trained and educated.

[221] Ibid
[222] Ibid
[223] Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 38

She was a multifaceted woman who loved children and education but was also constantly cultivating her political consciousness. According to Mr. Sowemimo, "…..during the period [of the 1940s] she was involved in Nigerian politics which made her to be a part of a delegation comprising Azikiwe, Herbert Macaulay [major leaders of the nationalist movement in Nigeria], herself, and some other people. They toured Nigeria….educating people on the need to have independence in the country. During that tour Herbert Macaulay died in 1946."[224] Mrs. Kuti had an extensive political career. She founded the Nigerian Union of Teachers and West African Students Union with her husband. As Mr. Sowemimo pointed out, she travelled the country with the mainstream male nationalists doing a tour to educate people about the fight for independence. In 1947 she was appointed a delegate of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) and participated in talks in Britain for Nigerian Independence.[225] Chief Ijaola asserted that it was this delegation that really brought her "into the limelight" as far as politics because that trip gave her more political visibility.[226] She was released from her NCNC position after being denied the right to be nominated for refusing to give her position to Mr. J.A.O. Akande in 1959. As a result she started her own party called the Nigerian Commoner's Party.[227] In the 1960s she continued to speak out against gendered issues and also spoke vehemently against the Biafran War. Her activism also made her one of the most widely traveled Nigerian women of her time. According to Raisa Simola's article:

> she became the only Nigerian woman - and perhaps the first African woman ever - to travel to the USSR, China, Poland, Yogoslavia and East Berlin. In China, she met with Mao Tse-tung." In those times it was considered a crime to travel to the so-called 'iron-

[224] Alfred Gbolahan Sowemimo, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. 2015)
[225] Cheryl Johnson-Odim, *'For Their Freedoms': The Anti-Imperialist and International Feminist Activity of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria"* Women's Studies International Forum 32 (2009), 54; Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 370-371
[226] Chief Olugbolahan Ijaola, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. March 15, 2015)
[227] Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 113-114

> curtain' countries. "So, in 1955, upon returning from her trip to China, her passport was seized. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was then Prime Minister." A little later, however, she was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize[228]

Her involvement with the NCNC was instrumental in shaping her activist networks. Her international network outside of Africa was extensive as she continuously visited and became affiliated with women's groups throughout Europe and Asia.[229] For example, while in Beijing she met with Mao Tze-Tung who supported her involvement in the campaign to resolve women's issues in his country.[230] Throughout the late 1950s and early1960s Mrs. Kuti continued travelling with the WIDF. In 1967 Kuti attended an international symposium in Moscow where she heard from women of Russia, India, and Canada about their impact on and place within the nation.[231]

The precursor to her extensive travels abroad and connection to women's organizations throughout Europe and Asia came in 1947 when she served as a delegate of the NCNC to London. The two month trip was not very successful as the British parliament was in session and unavailable to meet during most of time the delegates were there.[232] Determined not to let the trip go to waste, Mrs. Kuti contacted her acquaintances Arthur and Violet Creech-Jones in an effort to forge connections with like-minded women's organizations and also to raise awareness among them as to the status of women in Nigeria. They helped her to create an itinerary centered on researching women's groups there in the U.K. She made contact with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) herself and was also invited to speak for the London Women's

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[228] Raisa Simola, *"The Construction of a Nigerian Nationalist and Feminist, Funmilayo Ransome Kuti"* Nordic Journal of African Studies 8:1 (1999): 103
[229] See Nina Mba and Cheryl Odim, *For Women and the Nation* (1997) for more on her extensive travels.
[230] Mao Tze-Tong, *Report on An Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan*. (Ibadan: K.O. Dike ArchivesMarch 1927)
[231] Lakshmi Rhegu Ramajah, *The Part Played by Women in Socialist Society* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives March 9th-11th, 1967)
[232] Cheryl Johnson-Odim. *'For Their Freedoms': The Anti-Imperialist and International Feminist Activity of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria.* Women's Studies International Forum 32 (2009), 56

Parliament Committee, a group of female journalists, the National Federation of Women Institute, and National Council for Maternity and Child Welfare, among others. She even spoke at a reception hosted by the Lord Mayor of Manchester on September 20, 1947 where she discussed the issues of women in Nigeria.[233] While in London she wrote an article for The Daily Worker entitled "We Had Equality Til Britain Came" wherein she analyzed the effects of colonialism on the status of women through a comparison with their pre-colonial autonomy:

> Before the British advent in Nigeria,…Women owned property, traded, and exercised considerable political and social influence in society. With the advent of British rule,…..instead of women being educated and assisted to live like human beings their condition has deteriorated…Even though they are the main producers of the country's wealth.[234]

Through her words, it is clear that she led a feminist critique of colonialism by citing its impact on the status of women in the nation. In pre-colonial times, *before the advent of the British in Nigeria,* she said that women had more economic vitality as well as other influence in politics and society as a whole. Their community functioned in a way that supported the activities of women in regards to maintaining their financial stability and also their social and political importance. However, following the start of colonialism she opined that the status of women was continually degraded by British enterprise. At the point that Mrs. Kuti gave this speech in Britain, women were still very essential to the workings of the society because they were *the main producers of the country's wealth*. Even so, she pointed to the fact that they were underdeveloped and *instead of women being educated and assisted to live like human beings their condition has deteriorated.* Her speech critiqued colonialism as the factor that reduced women's status in Nigeria through truncating their economic, political, and social rights. The

[233] Ibid
[234] Funmilayo Kuti, *We Had Equality Til Britain Came*. (Nigeria, 1947)

idea that these rights should be freely accessed by women is the bedrock of feminist thought and emancipation. Furthermore, the fact that she gave this speech as a means of appealing to the intellect of British masses is an example of a nego-feminist approach which espouses that women negotiate in more congenial ways before more severe action is taken. This speech was a means of firmly stating that women in Nigeria needed help due to the hardships impressed upon them by colonialism without being outright contentious and agitating with more intense forms of activism such as protests and civil disobedience.

The time that she spent in London afforded her many opportunities for advancing the causes and collective voice of women in Nigeria. It was during this time that she met with delegates of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). The WIDF was founded by French women in 1945. The group may have been non-political. This can be conjectured from their affiliations and documents.[235] The group eventually became affiliated with global humanitarian organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF.[236] Its main objectives were to unite women across religious, racial, political, or national lines, to raise the quality of life of women and children, and to prevent destruction due to war and conflict.[237] Mrs. Kuti had a long relationship with the WIDF and after the association courted her for some time she finally began to go to their conferences and meetings always carefully choosing which one she would attend. In 1948, she was asked to write a piece on the status of women in Nigeria as a part of a WIDF initiative to create awareness about the issues of women in Africa and Asia. It was

[235] The WIDF papers viewed for this research do not show that the group had political affiliations. Those papers do not state that this was a political organization. Also, the papers do not state that it was non-political, however they shared some objectives with the FNWO which referred to itself as non-political. Due to the WIDF's shared objectives with the FNWO (to unite women across religious, racial, political, or national lines, to raise the quality of life of women and children, and to prevent destruction due to war and conflict) the WIDF can be considered a non-political organization by the definition of this dissertation.
[236] Women's International Democratic Federation, *Pertinent Information Concerning the Women's International Democratic Federation* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, c.1964), 1, 6
[237] Rosa Pantaleon, *Letter on Opening of WIDF Bureau In Berlin* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, October 3rd, 1963), 1

published in the WIDF Information Bulletin and again in a book entitled *The Women of Africa and Asia: Documents*.[238] In a response letter she sent to Amy Ashwood Garvey from August 9, 1949 Mrs. Kuti stated that the WIDF had invited delegates from her Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations to their conference to be held in China in December of 1949.[239]

In addition to having connections and alliances with women's groups in Europe and Asia, Mrs. Kuti and the FNWO was involved with or linked to a significant amount of African women's organizations outside of Nigeria. Some of these include groups in Botswana, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Liberia, South Africa, and Tanzania among others.[240] Each group had different agendas and objectives however they were able to join as one to fight against sexism, racism, and economic oppression perpetuated by colonialism. For example, on May 15th 1952 the women of Bamagwato in Botswana asked for Mrs. Kuti and her organization for support in a politically charged and blatantly racist matter, the return of their rightful chief, Seretse Khama.[241] He had been deposed by the British due to his marriage to a British woman which was against the law in South Africa at that time. He was replaced with a tyrannical ruler that was more sympathetic toward British causes. The women of Liberia also sought alignment with Mrs. Kuti to back their self defined social and political movement. They defined their purpose as follows:

> The Liberian Women's Social and Political Movement is a National organization which embraces all women of Liberia. The organization is a social and political movement because it aims, by a connected series of efforts and actions, to achieve certain ends pertaining to society and the mutual relation of individuals as also those relating to civil government and its administration.[242]

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[238] Johnson-Odim, 57
[239] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti. *Letter to Amy Ashwood Garvey*. (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, August 9th, 1949)
[240] Various boxes of documents from the Kuti papers in the K.O. Dike archives in Ibadan, Nigeria.
[241] Bamagwato Women. *Letter to Mrs. Kuti*. (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, May 15th 1952)
[242] Liberian Women's Social and Political Movement. *Constitution and By-Laws.* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, May 7th, 1946), 1

The fact that these different African groups were seeking to be connected to the FNWO seemed to be indicative of the existence of Black consciousness among them and the FNWO. The requests for alliance from these African women's organizations shows that African women saw their movement as one that had to center Pan-Africanism (cultural solidarity among those of a shared heritage or descent) to achieve their goals. The Bamagwato women of Botswana and Liberian women were far apart in terms of distance from West to South Africa but they were in lockstep when considering their ideas to ally with other women's groups in the continent to strengthen their own calls for justice, gender equality, and anti-colonialism. The FNWO established neutral transnational links whereby Black women came together across class, ethnic, and political affiliations for the empowerment of women.

In addition to transnationalism, Black consciousness was an important but under-analyzed part of FNWO activism, but Mrs. Kuti also cultivated it in her personal life. Just as transnationalism was an influential factor in the development of her activist stances, Black consciousness was also an apparent part of her growth and development as a politician and leader of women's collectives.[243] The racial incidents she lived through as a college student in England produced in her a heightened consciousness about race and its inextricable link to European colonialism. In order to exhibit the solidarity with and support of working class women Mrs. Kuti, who was fluent in English, used Yoruba language and traditional dress during talks with colonial officials. These actions are a testament to her Black consciousness in that she proudly displayed her Africanity in a time where English culture and language were considered to be markers of distinction or high class. She refrained from using her western names as early

[243] Black consciousness in this chapter refers to 1) the awareness of racism and its use as a tool to subjugate groups and 2) a sense of solidarity with people of the same ethnic origin or heritage.

as her college days while in England when British people perceived her dark skin and African identity as markers of inferiority and she experienced racism firsthand.[244]

Her use of culture was representative of the nego-feminist principle of building upon the indigenous. For example, her biographers stated that she used Yoruba dress and language as "a statement of class allegiance" and also to develop "cultural pride and solidarity with the market women."[245] By wearing Yoruba clothing and using her indigenous language when meeting with the colonials she made a statement that African people who adhered to African culture and customs were in no way less professional than or less intellectually capable than Europeans. She empowered the women through her use of culture. She said she wanted to "make women know and feel that I was one of them."[246] The way that Mrs. Kuti applied Yoruba language was significant for the market women because it created an autonomous space for the non-English speaking working class women to develop the political consciousness needed to make informed decisions for their collective benefit. She always dressed in the traditional clothing of the Egba women because this helped her peers to relate to her as one of their own although she had been privileged to be educated abroad. In fact, her biographers Odim and Mba state that no pictures of her in western attire can be found after 1940.[247] This is indicative of the fact that she did not use her culture only for a momentary statement or political ploy but that she experienced a lifelong mental shift due to developing a sense of Black consciousness because her encounters with the British as a student and as an activist culminated in her disavowal of western culture altogether. Her Black consciousness began in her college experience when she stopped using her

[244] Cheryl Johnson-Odim, *'For Their Freedoms': The Anti-Imperialist and International Feminist Activity of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria"* Women's Studies International Forum 32 (2009), 54
[245] Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, For Women and the Nation (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 66-67
[246] Ibid, 67
[247]Ibid, 66

English name and continued when she returned to Nigeria and stopped wearing western clothing. In archival pictures, it is true that no matter where she travelled she wore traditional Nigerian clothing. Through these means she cultivated Black consciousness among women who worked alongside her as a means of protesting the abuses of European colonialism and to center cultural pride in her methods of activism.

Gender equality, transnationalism, and Black consciousness are apparent themes in Mrs. Kuti's anti-colonial activism. Early in her life, her parents gave her a lesson in gender equality and radicalism when they focused on her education. That was radical in early 20th century Nigeria when girls were not educated in formal schools to the extent that boys were. This sense of gender equality and radicalism was further cultivated in her interest and activity in politics at a time when not many women endeavored to be politicians. When she founded her ladies club after finishing her college education, she realized that the oppression that women faced was widespread and very debilitating. The experiences of poor working class women, whom she met and whose stories she sympathized with, helped her to articulate a need for gender awareness and a focus on the plight of women in Nigeria through a nego-feminist approach. In essence, each stage of the women's war with the colonial administration represented their negotiation with British patriarchy and power structures to create gender equality in colonial Nigeria. Each successive response that the women gave to the British, as the colonials refused to address their grievances, was increasingly more severe. They started their negotiations with requesting meetings, then went to civil disobedience, and finally large demonstrations. When Mrs. Kuti joined the NCNC delegation to Britain she used the opportunity to advance issues of gender equality in Nigeria to the international arena. She argued that colonialism created gender inequality in her home country which led to women's oppression. Her assertion was that before

the British arrived in Nigeria, women had social and political influence and economic rights. She contrasted this with the contemporary status of Nigerian women in her lifetime by saying that women were not allowed to live as human beings although they are important as the main producers of the country's wealth. With this central message, she continued to reach out to and ally with many women's organizations in Europe and Asia. These partnerships represented the growth of her transnationalism. She effectively created a supportive transnational community of women with which she felt Nigerian women shared similar experiences and objectives. Her transnational networking exemplifies that she was well adept at cultivating solidarity among women's groups. However, she was also adroit at cultivating solidarity among women with whom she protested in Nigeria. Her use of culture during negotiations with the British was meant to create togetherness between her and her followers but also to protest the imposition of British culture on Nigerians as a preferred or better standard of existence. These two things signified her Black consciousness in that she used African culture as a means of strengthening the morale, cultural pride, and unity of Nigerian women in the face of racism and colonialism. She did not dress in western attire or even speak English to the colonials during meetings in order not to subjectify Nigerian culture to British standards. Through her identification of colonialism as an agent of women's oppression in Nigeria, her international networking, and use of culture as a tool of protest, the themes of gender equality, transnationalism, and Black consciousness are evident within Mrs. Kuti's activism as a leader of women.

From Ladies to Radical Women: The Evolution of FNWO Ideology and Activism

The public activist career of Mrs. Kuti and the origins of what would later be called the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies began with the foundation of the Abeokuta Ladies' Club (ALC) founded in 1944. The ALC consisted of Christians, educated women, teachers, and

traders. Influenced by her father's liberal attitude toward the value of educating girls, she believed that education was empowering to women. A market woman told Mrs. Kuti of her desire to read and that she saved old newspapers in hope that she will be able to read them one day. This moved Mrs. Kuti who had a close friend that held her hymnal upside down every Sunday because she was illiterate.[248] It was this event, the realization of the struggles of market women, that spurred a shift in the organization. Prior to the change that occurred in the organization, the ALC focused on teaching women domestic skills that would prepare them for marriage. In 1944 the central goal for the ALC became "to help in raising the standard of womanhood in Abeokuta……to help in encouraging learning among adults and thereby wipe out illiteracy."[249] In order to gain unified support of this new ALC objective, she advocated for women to help other women to rally together across perceived class lines and this gender solidarity continued to be central to her organizing throughout the 1960s. She said "It is still more lamentable that even the few educated women look down upon the uneducated ones, instead of encouraging them to pull their weight and shake off their slavish ideas. They ignore and render them no help to improve the condition of these unfortunate ones."[250]

The introduction of market women pushed the ALC to develop a practical nego-feminist approach and a gendered nationalist ideology. When the market women entered the group, their sufferings became apparent through the sharing of their stories. The realization of these women's oppression, that came to Mrs. Kuti through becoming familiar with market women, pressed her to rally all women in her area in support of one another. The nego-feminist principle of communalism can be seen in their mobilizing of women, across class lines, based on shared issues. The addition of market women into the ALC was the impetus to this organizing of

[248] Ibid, 64
[249] Ibid, 64
[250] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *The Status of Women in Nigeria* (Nigeria, 1961)

women based on common interests. The ALC's gender aware sense of nationalism can be seen in the way they highlighted women's oppression, due to colonialism, through centering indigenous women's economic and civic rights. The addition of market women also sparked the early development of a nationalist ideology within the organization. When market women in the collective shared their experiences under colonialism, the ALC's focus organically shifted from alleviating hardships of the poor to the removal of the cause of hardship." [251] This signified a more militant or radical ideological shift wherein they were no longer interested in teaching domestic skills but identifying and eradicating an institution, an enemy (colonialism) and the cause of women's systemic oppression in Nigeria. This thinking caused a practical shift in organizational actions as well. In 1946 the ALC changed its name to the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU) at which point it became radical. Radicalism constitutes a complete rejection of norms previously adhered to in order to fundamentally change an institution.[252] After the market women came in and the focus became to alleviate the causes of women's oppression, the AWU also began to formulate anti-colonial or nationalist ideology which centered the nego-feminist principle of building upon the indigenous. Mrs. Kuti grounded the anti-colonial efforts of the AWU in a cultural reality that centered the pre-colonial experiences of indigenous Nigerian women:

> Before the British advent in Nigeria,…Women owned property, traded, and exercised considerable political and social influence in society. With the advent of British rule,…..instead of women being educated and assisted to live like human beings their condition has deteriorated…Even though they are the main producers of the country's wealth.[253]

[251] Bolanle Awe, *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective* (Victoria Island, Lagos: Sankore Publishers Ltd., 1992), 138
[252] This definition draws from Jacqueline Rhodes' *Radical Feminism, Writing, and Critical Agency: From Manifesto to Modern* (2005).
[253] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *We Had Equality Til Britain Came* (Nigeria, 1947)

She believed that colonialism was the perpetrator of the degradation that women experienced in all aspects of life. This speech signaled a practical and ideological shift in the AWU. It was practical activism in that it was an outward rebuke of colonialism. It exhibited a line of intellectual reasoning through a historical analysis, from pre-colonial to colonial, that posited colonialism as the culprit in the underdevelopment of women in Nigeria. In essence, the group established a perspective that in order for women to be free of oppression and penury, the colonial regime would have to be dealt with. With this point of view, the AWU called attention to women's issues with coercive cultural outsiders, such as the British and also incorrigible indigenous leaders working with the British, by leading a struggle against the colonial administration in a public and political manner.[254] Mrs. Kuti vowed: "To defend, protect, preserve, and promote the social, economic, cultural, and political rights and interests of the women in Egbaland [the specific area she was from in western Nigeria] and to cooperate with all organizations seeking and fighting genuinely and selflessly for the economic and political freedom and independence of the people."[255]

The issue of tax was a burden that she fought against for all the people in her area, but it especially caused much stress and strife to women. Her vow to help all people who were enslaved by colonial taxation policies also exhibited the nego-feminist principle of communalism which expresses concern for the wellbeing of all in the community. She championed this cause against taxation for *independence of all people*. However, she also focused on women first because they were the most affected by the tax laws.

Mrs. Kuti, along with the AWU, led the cause to stop the taxation of the masses of women by taking more radical actions. According to Mr. Sowemimo,

[254]Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 146
[255] Ibid, 146

> During that period in the 40s the Egba Native Administration which later became a local government, used to collect tax from women. Women were made to pay tax and Mrs. Kuti thought it was wrong for women to pay tax. So she started that agitation….The women took to her. She must have mobilized them, telling them that what was happening to them was wrong. For them to pay tax. The women were not as they are today. Women were mostly housewives, and they worked in the farm and did petty trading in the market. So they could hardly afford to pay the tax. Mrs. Kuti was the only rallying point for the women [in Abeokuta]. The women rallied around her and believed in her.[256]

She began to rally women and educate them as to the ways in which colonial tax laws impacted their lives. This mobilization of women, *telling them what happened to them was wrong*, was a radical action because she was teaching them a perspective that would have them to go against an established institution. She wanted them to understand how the British administration and their laws were oppressive. With this insight, she could then lead them to begin to challenge the very institution of colonialism through varying means so that when *she started that agitation…the women took to her.*

The event for which Mrs. Kuti is most well known is the series of attacks that the AWU made against the colonial administration, which constituted the Egba women's war from October 1946 through December 1948.[257] This women's war was another strategy by which women negotiated power relations with men through a series of different levels, degrees, or intensities of intentional actions purposed to help them to achieve their goals. The negotiation began with formal complaints and graduated to civil disobedience before finally becoming a large public protest in which women aired their grievances. The women had meetings at the Abeokuta Grammar School to discuss what they would do in regards to their anti-colonial protest.[258] However, "the *Alake* [title of ruler in this town] *of Abeokuta* at that time, *Oba* [general term for

[256] Alfred Gbolahan Sowemimo, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. 2015)
[257] Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, For Women and the Nation (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 79-81
[258] Ibid

king] Ademola II had influence so he told the Egba District Church Council, which owned Abeokuta Grammar School, that they should not allow her to hold political meetings on the school premises. The meetings were shifted to Mrs. Kuti's father's house…to Kemta…It was from there that things escalated."[259]

Chief Ijaola described the complexities of the fight against taxation. He said that the *Alake* at that time, Ademola II, was a very powerful man who was educated in Britain. The *Obas* "are the all in all."[260] Ademola II had such a connection with the British that if he did not want to a person to stay in Abeokuta, that person could not stay even one night. The *Oba* and the head chiefs formed a council in the town and "it was the *Oba* and head chiefs at that time who normally collect tax. They give your name to the council. In fact, it was the *Alake* that was the head of the council."[261] The first thing that Mrs. Kuti did was to contact this council and say that women should not pay taxes. This is the first level of resistance in her negotiation of patriarchy. Her formalized complaint was one that honored the institutionalized processes of governance in the community in hopes of having a conversation about women's needs. This can be seen as a negotiation because she was not forcibly presenting an issue but cordially and formally imploring male leaders to hear her stance. Even so, she was met with unyielding attitudes of influential men. According to Chief Ijaola she argued that they were a part of the poor masses and that only the wage earners should pay taxes. The *Alake* at that time had a council that was "very tough. One of the tough ones among them was a man we called Shushobanle. He was very literate and had worked in government offices before. And himself and some other ones got on the back of the *Alake* that there are some women they know like Mrs. Kuti who ought to pay

[259] Ibid
[260] Chief Olugbolahan Ijaola, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. March 15, 2015)
[261] Ibid

tax."[262] Chief Ijaola also said that these men only stopped demanding that Mrs. Kuti pay tax when she said that she had been paying her taxes.

This issue of Mrs. Kuti paying tax is interesting and can be seen as a more firm level of action in her ongoing negotiation with indigenous male leaders. Instead of going through the proper channels of governance, in which she was met with criticism and disdain, she took a more resolute and demonstrative approach that would surely bring visibility to women's cause. Mrs. Kuti's biographers said that she refused to pay taxes on more than one occasion and that each incident went to the courts. In the first instance Mrs. Kuti was sentenced to one month in jail or payment of a fine in the amount of £3.[263] Her biographers stated that this sentence was ordered just before her trip to London with the NCNC in 1947 and so she paid the money so that she could leave the country.[264] In the next instance she refused to pay taxes and it went to the courts again. It is not clear whether she refused to pay taxes because of her belief that all women should not pay taxes but it was likely a show of solidarity with the women who were being summoned to court and jailed because they could not afford to pay taxes. When she went to court and was sentenced, she drew large crowds of thousands of protesters and gained visibility for her cause against colonial taxation. This time, an anonymous benefactor paid her fine and the case was closed.[265] After successive demonstrations led by Mrs. Kuti, a British colonial broadcasted a radio announcement that a review committee, which would have women members, was going to be set up to assess women's claims against taxation.[266]

[262] Ibid
[263] Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, For Women and the Nation (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 80-81
[264] Ibid
[265] Ibid, 81
[266] Ibid

In regards to the women who followed Mrs. Kuti and supported her protests, according to Chief Ijaola, there was an issue with a faction of them who resented her designation of them as too poor to pay tax. Chief Ijaola said, "I know my mother came in and said, 'Who does she think is poor? Have I gone to beg bread from her?"[267] He claimed that this issue caused a problem among the women who were supporting her. He shared further that when the *Alake* was finally exiled (discussed later) two or three women who should be paying tax were arrested and the women went to Mrs. Kuti. Chief Ijaola recalled that Mrs. Kuti told them that she could not do anything about their situation because she herself was paying tax in light of the fact that she could afford it.[268] He suggested that the wage earning women in Abeokuta had to pay taxes but Mrs. Kuti was fighting for the *poor* women who *could not* afford to pay. However, according to him, some of them did not like being classified as poor and "So a lot of them said who is poor?"[269] He asserted that even though there were women who resented being seen as poor the majority of women followed her for almost three years.

The issues over taxation continued to grow and become more complex in terms of the designation of "poor" and even affected voting rights. The chief shared further that the *Alake* was asked to come back after a lawyer on his behalf pointed out that Mrs. Kuti had and the women had no right to expel him over the issue of taxation. The lawyer said that their grievance made no distinction as to what is considered poor. There was no distinction between women who should and should not pay taxes.[270] To add to these disturbances in Abeokuta, the Richards Constitution of 1945 stipulated that only taxpayers could vote. This rule significantly and

[267] Chief Olugbolahan Ijaola, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. March 15, 2015)
[268] This instance happened after the Alake had been exiled from Abeokuta to Oshogbo for corruption and enforcing colonial mandates that were oppressive to his people in 1949. The instance is discussed in greater detail in the following pages of the chapter.
[269] Chief Olugbolahan Ijaola, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. March 15, 2015)
[270] Ibid

overwhelmingly suppressed market women who would now have no representation whatsoever in the government because they did not have the wages to pay taxes.[271]

In essence, their movement centered a gender based intellectual critique of colonialism that highlighted it as the major factor of women's oppression. This meant that colonial mandates had to be attacked and dismantled in order to give women a fair chance at growth and development. One of the most strenuous colonial mandates was that of taxation. As a result, the group began their earliest and most well-known anti-colonial activism by bringing visibility to the issues of taxation. Their line of reasoning that posited colonialism as the largest detriment to women's wellbeing served as a foundation to many of their initiatives in the organization's early development, especially their tax revolt.

In response to the growing angst about taxation the AWU formed a radical three stage protest wherein they first employed intellectual initiatives (constructing an ideological argument) by writing letters to newspapers and speaking with the media to expose the debilitating effects of colonialism on women.[272] This protest constituted the next level in their tactics of negotiation with male leaders of the community. Their multiphase protest was radical in that it purposed not only to take on the colonials but also some of the most powerful indigenous rulers in the area in an effort to fundamentally change institutions that opposed women's rights. The women of the AWU also wrote many appeals and sent petitions to the colonial government concerning a rationale for the repeal of taxation on women. The group delegated members to do thorough research and write the proposals that contained solutions to the problems they highlighted. For example, the AWU had an accountant to go over the reports of the Egba Native Authority (ENA) treasury and catalog the spending of funds. After locating excessive expenditures the women

[271] Ibid
[272] Bolanle Awe, *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective* (Victoria Island, Lagos: Sankore Publishers Ltd., 1992), 141

created a formula to cut unnecessary spending. They presented this evidence and posited that women would not have to pay taxes if the ENA could save some of the money that went to frivolous purposes. In 1946 they asserted that there be "no taxation without representation."[273] They vowed that women would not pay taxes into a system that did not allow them voting rights or opportunities to run for political office.

The next phase of the women's war exhibited civil disobedience in their refusal to acknowledge colonial policies. In this stage of their resistance movement Mrs. Kuti and others would refuse to pay their taxes. The women would be charged with breaking the law and be summoned to court which in turn attracted media attention to their cause and complaints. Women were harassed and jailed in large numbers. In one instance Mrs. Kuti learned that a woman, who had just given birth to a nine day old baby, was arrested and jailed, with the baby tied to her back. Mrs. Kuti complained to the British District Officer who said "My dear Mrs. Kuti, what does it matter if a woman is jailed with a nine day old baby? What we want to know is that she pays her tax. We did not know that she had paid before she was summoned and jailed."[274] In this exchange with the British officer it is clear that collecting money was more important than the health, wellbeing, and respect of Nigerians, especially women. This realization underscored the women's demonstrations.

The women of the AWU were a powerful, radical force. They came by the thousands to protest the degradation of womanhood through colonial taxation. According to Mr. Sowemimo,

> The pressure of this meeting [protest] was too much for the authorities at that time. In fact, there was a siege on the palace. Mrs. Kuti led the women to do a siege on the palace. They didn't allow the *Oba* to move out [come in and out of his house]. They

[273] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 148
[274] Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, For Women and the Nation (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 84

> were doing all sort of things there. That made the authorities to remove the tax. Not that alone! The *Oba* himself was exiled. In 1948 *Oba* Ademola II was exiled![275]

The protesting women were extremely influential. To attest to this, Mr. Sowemimo shared that he had a grandfather who was a very powerful man in the community. His grandfather was Chief Durojaiye Sowemimo and he did not openly support any side in the conflict between the women and the *Alake* because he was mandated to remain neutral, as were all older statesman, although Mrs. Kuti was his niece. The *Alake* actually feared Chief Sowemimo due to his influence and connections. According to Mr. Sowemimo, the people would say that "the crown is in the palace but the authority is in my [grand] father's house."[276] That phrase meant that the right to rule is with the *Alake* but the greater power and influence belonged to Chief Sowemimo. The protesting women of the AWU thought that Chief Sowemimo was silent on their issue because he was supporting the *Alake.* As a result, they wanted to stone the home of the chief. This is a meaningful instance because it was symbolic of the radicalism and boldness of the AWU in their protest. They were ready to contend with a chief, through physical aggression, who had so much influence that he was more powerful than the *Alake* himself.

The final stage of the war was mass demonstration. On November 29th 1947, thousands of women marched to and flooded into the courtyard of the palace of *Alake* Ademola II.[277] Mr. Sowemimo said that the protests were "very violent" in the sense that they were very high energy and volatile as the women stood in contention with the leaders of the community.[278] They were not harming other people. They were furious that none of their appeals were taken seriously. Their voices rose as they chanted "NO MORE TAX." The *Alake* came out of his palace onto a

[275] Alfred Gbolahan Sowemimo, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. 2015)
[276] Ibid
[277] Ibid, 141
[278] Alfred Gbolahan Sowemimo, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. 2015)

balcony and asked, "Why it is that you people always have to be made to pay your taxes?"[279] During this show down between the Ademola II and the protestors, Mrs. Kuti demanded that he address the taxation problem once and for all. The district officer said, "Go on, go home and mind your kitchens and feed your children. What do you know about the running of state affairs? Not pay tax indeed! What you need is a good kick in your idle rumps."[280] He yelled at Mrs. Kuti saying, "Shut up you women!" and Mrs. Kuti replied, "You may have been born but you were not bred. Would you speak to your mother like that!"[281] Meanwhile the other women of the AWU threatened to "cut off his genitals and post them to his mother."[282] In this instance of radical defiance the women showed that they were not in deference to the British. The women remained there for 24 hours and finally dispersed to plan an even larger protest on the palace grounds. The market women closed their shops and stalls to store food, water, and other supplies and set up restroom facilities so that all protesters could commit to the forthcoming 48 hour sit-in. The second mass protest was held on December 8th 1947. The organizers held mock sacrifices that culturally signified funeral rites to demonstrate to the *Alake* that his days in office were coming to an end. [283] These rituals were accompanied by the performance of songs.

Music, in fact, was a staple and pivotal part of the AWU mass protests. This was likely because it had always been a tool of activism among women in Yoruba culture. According to Professor Awe:

> The women are the ones who know the songs. They mobilize the whole community. They will wear their *aso ebi* [clothing that shows solidarity through color coordination]…you wouldn't get many men doing that except now when you are getting some of the younger boys. But they are a different breed [than the older men]. But these

[279] Wole Soyinka, *Ake: The Years of Childhood* (London: Rex Collings Ltd., 1981), 208-210
[280] Ibid, 210-212
[281] Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, For Women and the Nation (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 84
[282] IBid
[283] Bolanle Awe, *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective* (Victoria Island, Lagos: Sankore Publishers Ltd., 1992), 141-142

> women, they do all the songs. There was a time when Toyin Falola came to give a lecture in Mapo and the deputy governor then came to preside or whatever. He came and he brought a host of women with him. These were women, I'm sure, couldn't understand too much of Falola's English anyhow. They were all over. In all the balconies and so on. But the thing is that when the deputy governor looks up and raises his handkerchief they started singing. [As for] Toyin this is not the place for grammar oo. You better say whatever you want to say in short Yoruba. And you got your paper published anyhow. You can distribute them [laughter]. But they do this all the time. When we wanted to write a biography of the Olubadan and the think ended in a fierce scorn…the Olu wanted Tinubu to be the chief launcher and he [Tinubu] had invited a number of governors but he was not on good terms with Akala. So, I was chairman of the launching committee so I went to him and said, 'Look, you can't invite other governors and not the governor of this state. In fact they will first phone him and say look, we are coming to your state and if he says he's not there, they will not come.' So he eventually agreed that we should invite Akala and Akala did very well. He came. He was quiet, he gave a good speech, but he brought this same hefty governor who had these women. They were all dressed up. And I was very happy. I thought they were just innocent market women. I said 'Ahh, these people have come to pay their respects to the Olubadan and so on. But apparently they were Akala's people. And I think Tinubu had been informed that there was going to be a show of strength there so he had also brought his own people. So as soon as this hefty governor waived his handkerchief the women would break into songs. In fact when I first saw them there were so many people I said '*E joo maa* please, can you make space for our guests?' And they were looking like, what is this woman talking about, they just sat tight. They will break into songs. As soon as they finished. Tinubu would also look at his own people, they would also break into songs. There was confusion. The whole program of luncheon!...At one point I went to see Tinubu. I said 'Look Tinubu please now, stop this thing.' He said, 'Madam, you don't know what you are talking about. Look at his women. They are singing abusive songs about me and you want me to keep quiet. I can't do that.' The thing ended in fierce scorn. We couldn't go on with the luncheon and so many people had come. But you see, that's the sort of thing that the women are good at….Eh heh. They could embarrass, they could give support, they could make you feel that you are the person that everybody wants, that you are the favorite and so on….You will get a good audience, you will get good approval from the people around and so on that this is the man…..[284]

From the recollection of Professor Awe, one finds evidence, that music radicalism was a tactic used by women to mobilize and pass insults or grievances in order to disrupt established events and processes.[285] The women's performance of songs inhibited the structure of the event and it

[284] Bolanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. 2015)

[285] Music radicalism from Nigerian women has also been highlighted by Golria Chukwu in her study of Women in Southeastern Nigeria, 1900-1960 published in 2005. The same use of music has been seen in Cameroon, a neighboring country to Nigeria, in Shirley Ardener's pioneering work entitled *Sexual Insult and Female Militancy.* Also, the songs listed in this chapter provide further evidence of this trend of using music radicalism. This same use

was also very improper to cause such a scene at an event with prestigious personalities in attendance. Their disruption of the event went against cultural norms of decorum and respect. Their action was radical in that sense. Although they were told to sing their songs by a male attendee, it is undeniable that this method of using songs as a tool of disruption was a tactic that was well established among women. This can be seen in the fact that the governors knew to call on the women specifically to put on such a show of strength. They did not call men. This instance also shows the substantial power that women had in that they could turn the tide of events and could even impact the livelihoods and reputations of statesmen. In essence, this music radicalism (method of using songs for radical purposes or activism)as a tactic of protest was used overwhelmingly by women, was a collective show of strength and solidarity, and could be very destructive (or supportive) for anyone who was targeted.

Yoruba women were fighting a systemic oppression set up by British men with guns. The British exhibited that they did not have much sympathy for these women at all. This can be seen in the passing of harsh tax laws, flippant disregard for the new mother who was jailed with her baby, and the way that the District Officer addressed the women at the palace saying that they needed to be kicked. Protesting an administration that has no regard for African women was dangerous as women were known to have been brutalized and killed during demonstrations. In spite of the real threat of danger the AWU continued to fight against colonialism with a full knowledge of the dangers involved. This act of struggle, to change the fundamental nature of an institution by any means necessary, is a radical act.

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of songs from the colonial period was utilized in more recent Nigerian history according to Dr. Awe. In the story that she shared, she said that women embarrassed the people that they were singing about. This was the exact same thing that happened to the Ademola II during the protests of Mrs. Kuti and the AWU.

The AWU demonstrators also used music as a weapon of radical protest. They criticized the malfeasance of Ademola II (who drove a Rolls Royce according to the biographers of Mrs. Kuti) and the ENA council members:

> Ademola
> Big man with an ulcer
> Your behavior is deplorable
> *Alake* is a thief
> Council members are thieves
> Anyone who does not know Kuti will get in trouble[286]

In her autobiography Mrs. Kuti said that Ademola II used his position of authority in the community to falsify leases and steal land from poor farmers.[287] The women sang about their intentions to remove Ademola as well:

> Oya ti a o fi elomiran joba
> Oni lao fi elomii joba wa
> Alake Ole Omo Ajibosi
> Oni lao f'elomiran joba
>
> It is time we are going to make another person our king
> It is today that we are going to make another person our king
> Alake the thief the child of Ajibosin
> It is today that we are going to make another person our king[288]

They also warned him that the protests would be of serious proportions and that the *Orisha* Orunmila [diety of wisdom and knowledge] would help them to weed out the traitors.

> Eni a ro, Alake kilo fun kesi, Eni a ro
> Eni a ro Okanbido ko ma ri bi are, eni aro
> Orunmila mu odale o (2x)
> Oro mi la mo odale (2x)
>
> Today will be dangerous, Alake warn Kesi (Ademola's supporters) Today will be dangerous

[286] Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 83
[287] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *Hand Written Autobiography* (Ibadan, Nigeria, c. 1978), 18-21
[288] Funmilayo Ransonme Kuti, *Women's Union Song Book* (Ibadan, Nigeria, c.1945)

Today will be dangerous, Let no child of the land walk like a stranger, Today will be dangerous
Orunmila will catch up with the traitors (2x)
My deity will catch up with the traitor (2x)[289]

The colonial administrators who spoke dismissively to the women were also addressed:

White man, you will not get to your country safely
You and *Alake* will not die an honorable death…..
You pale-faced one keep off
That we may have a chance
To chat with Father *Alake*[290]

The deeper symbolism in the song can be seen as an example of a critique of colonial interference which may have led to a degradation in the relationship between Egba men and women. This can be gleaned from their words "You pale-faced one keep off that we may have a chance to chat with Father *Alake*." These women wanted to talk to their male leader but could not because the colonials were exercising power over him and using him to siphon money from poor women. This colonial interference led to a break down of the relationship between the women and the *Alake*. The realization of the detrimental impact of colonial interference led the women to wish that the "pale faced one" would "keep off" and stop interfering in African relations so that they could have their rightful "chance to chat with Father *Alake*."

The *Alake* who witnessed the protest from inside the palace called upon the male priests of the *Oro*, a secret society, to disperse the protesters. Women were not allowed to see or take part in *Oro* ceremonies. When the priests came through the crowd Mrs. Kuti snatched their sacred staff and displayed it in her home.[291] She supported the end of traditional beliefs and practices that were oppressive to women. The women attacked the priests and tore their

[289] Ibid
[290] Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 83
[291] Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 81

garments. The protesters then sang the secret chant of the *Oro* as the men retreated. Soyinka recalled the women shouting:

> Oro o, a fe s'oro
> Oro o, a fe s'oro
> E ti'lekun mo kunrin
> A fe s'oro[292]

This translates to "Oro-o, we are about to perform the Oro, lock up all the men, we are about to perform the Oro.[293] The women sang many songs during the 48 hour demonstration but one song seems to summarize their movement:

> O you men, vagina's head will seek vengeance:
> You men, vagina's head shall seek vengeance
> Even if it is one penny. If it is only a penny
> Ademola, we are not paying tax in Egbaland
> If even it is one penny[294]

This is a blatant statement that women will seek retribution no matter what the consequences. The song signaled their early civil disobedience exhibited by Mrs. Kuti when she refuse to pay taxes and was summoned to court and fined. In addition, it represented their whole movement against oppressive colonial mandates in that the singers vowed to stand firm on their protest against taxation and malfeasance by their public representatives. The women's efforts were rewarded when the *Alake* abdicated in January of 1949 and they celebrated:

> Ademola filu sile kilu ba le roju
> Adupe lowo olorun fun idasile yi
> Ki gbogbo Agbaye ba wa kun fayo
>
> Ademola has left the city for peace to return
> We thank God for this freedom
> Let all the world celebrate with us
>
> Ademola oba ika, ti ko je ki Igba gbeni

[292] Wole Soyinka, *Ake: The Years of Chilhood* (London: Rex Collings Ltd., 1981), 213
[293] Ibid
[294] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 150

O le gbogbo awon omo egba jinna rere.
A fogo fo'olorun fun idande re

Ademola the wicked king, who turned the season against people
He sent all the Egba children far away
We give God the glory for this deliverance

Nisisiyi ki gbogbo wa ka kun fi imo sokan
Ki a sit un ilu wa se f'olorun oba wag be

Presently let us all come united in purpose
And develop our city for the dwelling of God the king
Hallelujah Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Hallelujah[295]

This victory by music radicalism signaled the height of their nego-feminist activism, in regards to their war against the British, because it was the point at which all their attempts at gaining visibility and support for their grievances reached a climax. It represented a high point in Yoruba women's negotiation of gender and power relations. Until this point, they negotiated with the British using tactics that consisted of less to more severe actions. They first sought a conversation with those in positions of power by seeking meetings to air their grievances. Next the women engaged in civil disobedience to gain visibility for their cause. Then they began to mobilize and organize mass demonstrations to pressure the rulers to help them fight this burden of taxation or step down from office. Lastly, the women gathered to sing abusive songs that both told of their frustrations and the poor leadership of their ruler. Throughout each level of their protest, it is evident that the severity and acerbity heightened gradually. They became less peaceful and orderly at each level but they gradually became more extreme in order to pressure those in power to listen to their concerns. Culturally, as in the example given by Dr. Awe (on page 158 of this document, footnote #284), it is highly shameful when women begin to sing these abusive songs. In Yoruba culture, where personal image and having an upstanding

[295] Funmilayo Ransonme Kuti, *Women's Union Song Book* (Ibadan, Nigeria, c.1945)

character are important, it is something very embarrassing, insulting, and dreadful for people to make accusations and give a negative portrayal of another person. The final stage of the protest that helped the woman to claim victory was a serious instance of cultural and political activism that exemplified the culmination of their nego-feminist actions.

Even with this victory there were still significant struggles occurring in the community. During his exile the cases dealing with women's taxation issues and arrests were not publicized and so they do not appear in many court records from this time in Abeokuta. The officials wanted to hide the hardships of women imprisoned in Oshogbo which is where Ademola was exiled. To this Chief Ijaola said, "*Alake* was exiled in Oshogbo. This is why I think there were some cover ups. Before they went to Oshogbo where were they jailed? Was it not here?....as a way of getting her [Mrs. Kuti] off her balance they say that even those [women] who have said this thing have gone to Oshogbo to say *kabyesi* to *Alake*."[296] The women who were arrested for not paying taxes were taken to a jail out of town and the people were told that even Mrs. Kuti's followers have gone to beg Ademola for forgiveness as a means to weaken support of her movement. Even so Mrs. Kuti maintained: "I didn't really attack Ademola," during the women's war, "I attacked imperialism."[297] Another judicial council was developed on which women were appointed. The first act of the Egba Interim Council was to ensure all taxation on women was repealed immediately.[298]

However, problems arose once again when Ademola was reinstated in 1950 by the British who found him a favorable ally.[299] There was a polarization of groups in the society. Chief Ijaola said that "To be true, it was during the time of Mrs. Kuti's agitation for those

[296] Chief Olugbolahan Ijaola, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. March 15, 2015)
[297] Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 72
[298] Ibid
[299] Ibid, 112

women that they formed the Majobaje and the Olu."[300] The Majobaje supported Mrs. Kuti while the Olu supported Ademola. Both groups were comprised of men and women. Ademola brought a woman from Itoku to form an opposition to Mrs. Kuti. The Majobaje called Atupa or a bright lamp, as a taunt, due to her very fair complexion. According to Chief Ijaola both male and female supporters of Kuti sang abusive songs about Atupa as well.

Although political divisiveness polarized the women of Abeokuta, especially with the arrival of Atupa, the AWU continued to grow. It experienced physical and ideological growth within their more. Mrs. Kuti received letters from women throughout Nigeria and the Cameroons who hoped to begin organizations for women's rights. By 1949 the AWU became the Nigerian Women's Union (NWU) in order to accommodate all of the groups of women throughout the country who wanted to join the fight for equality and gender awareness.[301] In the same year Nigerian women began to expand their philosophy and develop a transnational and Pan-African concept to inform and strengthen their brand of anti-colonial gender centered nationalism.

The NWU began to articulate an early transnational philosophy that centered Black consciousness as a means of fighting against global sexism, racism, and oppression when the organization reached out to African American women . In 1949 Mrs. Kuti wrote letters to both Amy Ashwood Garvey and Mary McLeod Bethune.[302] The letters discussed possible collaboration among these Black women leaders and their organizations. This outreach to Black women abroad signals the beginnings of a transnational Black consciousness in the NWU. In the

[300] Chief Olugbolahan Ijaola, *Dissertation Interview* (Abeokuta, Nigeria. March 15, 2015)

[301] Cheryl Johnson-Odim, *'For Their Freedoms': The Anti-Imperialist and International Feminist Activity of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria.* Women's Studies International Forum 32 (2009), 56

[302] I have not come across evidence that Mrs. Kuti was able to meet them in person because she never travelled to the U.S.

letter to Mrs. Garvey on August 9th, 1949 she asked for a copy of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) constitution so that she could interrogate whether the philosophy of the two groups aligned.[303] She wrote to Mary McLeod Bethune December 5th, 1949 via Channing Tobias, the director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, a New York City foundation concerned with securing educational opportunities for African Americans. He replied to her saying that Mrs. Bethune would surely be interested in hosting her in America.[304]

Mrs. Kuti's letters to African American women shed light on the Black consciousness of the NWU. Their ideology of collective action was a nego-feminist principle (organizing based on shared interests) likely facilitated their outreach out to other Black women even outside of the continent due to its affinity towards gender solidarity among women who had experienced trauma or were fighting against oppression. In addition, their organization's foundational commitment to preserving the respect of womanhood warranted action on behalf of any women under pressure irrespective of their location. This is why women in pre-colonial and colonial Nigeria would call on the assistance of women from various neighboring towns to help defend any insult to womanhood locally.[305] One means of ensuring that respect of womanhood was preserved for all women was to form strong bonds of solidarity among women from far reaching areas by which they could build a more formidable force to fight for their equality. This historical and cultural commitment of Nigerian women to solidarity by rallying of women from various areas was a factor in their decision to reach out to Black women abroad, outside of Africa. This principle of gathering women from afar in support of a concern that affected women caused the organization to organically begin to look at transnational possibilities of

[303] Funmilayo Kuti, *Hand Written Letter to Amy Ashwood Garvey* (Abeokuta, Nigeria; K.O. Dike Archives, August 9th, 1949)
[304] Funmilayo Kuti, *Hand Written Letter to Mary McLeod Bethune* (Abeokuta, Nigeria; K.O. Dike Archives, December 5th, 1949)
[305] See discussion of women's activism in chapter three for more on this occurrence.

connecting with Black American women who were also fighting for the respect of their womanhood in the U.S. These types of transnational connections to Black women are important because they highlight the struggle of Black women against white supremacist institutions that existed globally. African American women understood the intersectionality, convergence of multiple oppressions, which is characteristic of the experiences of women of color in colonized societies.[306] Allying with African American women would have allowed the NWU to garner new perspectives and approaches with which to strengthen their movement for freedom from the British and gender equality. The Pan-African outreach of the NWU was a glimpse of the foundations of a global Black women's movement that was in its nascent stages in this era.

The outreach to specifically Black organizations in the U.S. signaled that Mrs. Kuti saw a connection between her goals and those of African American women and it also symbolized her Black consciousness.[307] When she wrote Mrs. Garvey and requested her organizational constitution it was clear that Mrs. Kuti was very serious about aligning with groups that had similar principles and goals. The fact that she carried on conversations with Garvey and Bethune meant that she saw possible connections between what their objectives and her own. Although they were from different parts of the world, they had in common the fact that they were Black women who faced racial oppression. These commonalities cannot be ignored in her decision to reach out to Black women in the African Diaspora. Those factors of having a common African origin, being of the same gender, and having experienced hardship due to racial oppression were obvious and important connections between Nigerian women and their African American counterparts. Those connections were undoubtedly realized by Mrs. Kuti as she chose to ally

[306] For a discussion of the theory of intersectionality see Patricia Hill Collins *Black Feminist Thought* (2000)
[307] As stated in chapter one, Black consciousness in this chapter refers to 1) the awareness of racism and its use as a tool to subjugate groups and 2) a sense of solidarity with people of the same ethnic origin or heritage according to the words of Steven Biko Bantu in a 1971 paper for the South African Students Association, which defined the term.

with them to support Nigerian women and Black women transnationally. Her attempts to align with African American women signified her awareness or consciousness of their commonalities as Black women in that era.

In August of 1953 the NWU grew to become the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations (FNWO). Four hundred delegates from women's groups all over the nation came together in solidarity with them for the first Nigerian Women's Congress.[308] The FNWO was also involved with or linked to a significant amount of African women's organizations outside of Nigeria. Some of these include groups in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Liberia, South Africa, and Tanzania among others. Mrs. Kuti was lauded by the All Africa Women's Conference (AAWC) for her service to women in a letter of May 22, 1972. The AAWC invited her to the 10th anniversary meeting of the association in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In the letter the general secretary of the AAWC, Jeanne Martin Oladele, recognized Mrs. Kuti for her role in the founding of the organization and leading of the women of Nigeria to "work ceaselessly for the rehabilitation of African women" and effect change in the "national independence, development, and social progress of our continent."[309] The development of the FNWO, and the network of women's societies it fostered, highlights the ways in which African women articulated their Pan-African transnational sense of feminism within the continent through Black consciousness, self government, and addressing of gender issues.[310]

[308] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Minutes of the First Nigerian Women's Congress* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, August 1, 1953), 1

[309] Jeanne Martin Cisse, *Letter of Invitation to the All Africa Women's Conference* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, May 22nd, 1972)

[310] For more information on the Pan-African transnationalist construction of Black feminism by African women see Maria Martin *"More Power to Your Great Self: Nigerian Women's Activism and The Pan-African Transnationalist Construction of Black Feminism"* Phylon vol.53 no.2 (winter 2016)

Developing a Gendered Ideology of Nationalism

The nationalist ideals of the FNWO continued to be refined throughout the 1950s. Early on in the organizational history of the group, there was a definite anti-colonial ideology of nationalism that was diversified with their stances on gender equality and solidarity, Black consciousness, and transnationalism. After the founding of the FNWO their intellectual development of nationalism evolved. The minutes of their meeting at the Centenary hall in Abeokuta on July 3rd 1953 exhibits their theorizing of the intersections of womanhood and nationalism.[311] There were delegates from fifteen provinces at the meeting. Some could not attend because it was too long of a distance for them to travel. The absent parties were acknowledged and members were told of the messages of solidarity that were sent in by groups who could not attend. There was even one women's group who had sent cablegrams from as far as America expressing support of the FNWO.[312] The meeting began with a statement of their purpose: "This meeting is not a political meeting. We come together to learn; to know one another; to know we are friends; to know that we belong to one country."[313] The group was adamant that it was not a political meeting and this is one of the early iterations of its non-political stance. The language of friendship, understanding, and learning about one another was purposed to create an atmosphere of bonding while the end of the statement expressed a sense of nationalism among women. The women of the FNWO were from many ethnicities, religions, classes, and areas within the country. The idea that they are all from one country signals a nationalist orientation to relating with other women in the country. The language of one country does not allow for separation along any divisive lines. It reinforces a philosophy of solidarity,

[311] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Minutes of the Meeting at Centenary Hall in Abeokuta* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, July 31st 1953), 1
[312] Ibid
[313] Ibid, 2

unity, and oneness. Mrs. Kuti went on to say that it was clear that women in Nigeria were still behind and that they wanted to take their rightful place with other women in the world in the ability to make strides for themselves and care for their homes and contribute to their country. This imagery communicates a sense of urgency in the need for Nigerian women to catch up to other women in the world but it also connects the status of Nigerian womanhood to the progress of the nation. The insinuation here is that once Nigerian women have a better status in society they will be able to offer even more in support of their homes and service to their country. If the women are developed, autonomous, and have a strong sense of self determination, then the whole nation can benefit from their ingenuity, perspectives, and work. The FNWO leader indicates that solidarity is key in resolving the collective issues that women and all Nigerians were facing when she said that "If we know ourselves we will be able to sit together and solve our problems like a family."[314] It was at this meeting that the name Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations was devised and its purpose to be a "Parliament of the women of Nigeria."[315] The tone of the meeting was one of building solidarity and articulating ideals of the connections between womanhood and national progress.

Gender awareness, self determination, and solidarity were at the helm of women's articulation of nationalism in the FNWO. On September 30th 1953 the executive committee of the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations met to shape, refine, and share their ideas on ways that women could fight against their exclusion from the process of nation building. This particular meeting focused on women's right to shape the writing of the new constitution. The meeting was held at Benin City and opened at 4 o'clock pm.[316]

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[314] Ibid
[315] Ibid
[316] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting in Benin City* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, September 30th 1953), 1

The meeting opened with a word of prayer by Mrs. Apata followed by a word by Mrs. Kuti. She said, "My sisters, we meet together to make decisions and to discuss matters. We meet together to be wise and understand ourselves, we could all be free to speak our minds and not go behind and talk other things."[317] Mrs. Kuti wanted to set the tone of the meeting and reinforce the idea that they were there to grow in awareness and understanding of issues pertaining to women in and this warranted that each person feel free to speak their mind. She went on to say that,

> This organization we are making together is being organized by God Himself and we must know that God is with us in spirit and will guide us in our speeches and in our homes. I beg each and every one of us to be plain and speak the truth, we should take ourselves as children of the same parents and I don't think any of us will wish her sister ill. So I ask God Himself to come down now and be with us all.[318]

Again she appealed to everyone to speak freely so as to garner more complex perspectives on the issues at hand as the nation moved closer to independence. She invoked the power of God to encourage the women to be bold and to speak with honesty. Mrs. Kuti was also building a sense of sisterhood and solidarity among the women as well in telling them to see themselves as siblings of the same parents.

The first item on the agenda was the recent constitution. Mrs. Kuti brought it to the attention of the committee that, "…practically nothing was said about women during the London Conference for the amendment of the McPherson Constitution, so we will have to demand our own right."[319] This language of "demanding" insinuates a radical and vociferous approach to gaining more representation for women in discussions and decisions that will affect the future of the nation in which they are citizens. It was unanimously agreed that the group would be assertive and proactive about their right to be consulted in the development of any version of the

[317] Ibid
[318] Ibid
[319] Ibid, 2

national constitution. Then the women began to speak about adult suffrage and how this has been denied to women because of the stipulation that they must be taxpayers in order to have voting rights.[320] Oftentimes, men would comment about women's right to vote saying that they did not pay taxes and thus did not have a right to be involved in the electoral process. In the *Daily Times* newspaper on September 12th 1953, Mr. Okusanya said that women should not get the right to vote unless they are ready "to pay for what they ask".[321]

The executive committee decided to move forward with a plan to gain more visibility for their resolutions on women's right to be more involved in vital processes of national governance. In a letter dated December 28th 1953, the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies wrote to John McPherson, the British Governor of Nigeria, to assert that women should have representation in the meetings designed to develop a new constitution for Nigeria:

> … As women in Nigeria have no direct representation in either the Houses of Assembly or the House of Representatives, we would be grateful if it would please Your Excellency to grant our Organization representation in the forthcoming conference in Lagos, when the constitution of Nigeria will be further discussed.[322]
>
> We women feel that as a distinct class of the citizen of Nigeria, whose problem can better be discussed by ourselves. We believe that also such representation on the Conference will be of great advantage to our sex, and it will also further the advancement of womanhood in Nigeria.[323]

The group called for attention to the fact that they were disenfranchised by having no representatives in the colonial government system. They spoke to the importance of women having a voice in the shaping of the new constitution. What is significant about this letter is the ideological intersection of feminism and nationalism. They describe themselves as a class of citizen of Nigeria. This language exudes the idea that women are one singular class group,

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[320] Ibid
[321] Ibid
[322] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Letter to the Governor* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives December 28th, 1953)
[323] Ibid

irrespective of socio-economic status and other distinctions. The FNWO saw its women as a collective of Nigerians, instead of Igbos, Yorubas, Hausas, Fulanis, Urhobo, Efik, and so on. This letter is evidence of their notion of nationalistic solidarity both by gender and ethnicity which was also an important factor in their non-political ideology. It also highlights the fact that they saw themselves as experiencing common issues which can only be articulated by women. The FNWO believed that women's empowerment was inextricably linked to national development and that they should be allowed to be informed as to political happenings that will undoubtedly affect their lives. This letter exemplifies their theoretical and practical approaches to garnering gender awareness through collectivism and an intrepid push for inclusion in the process of the development of the new nation.

As women were struggling against taxation, the denial of political rights, and exclusion from decisions on national governance the work that was ahead of them seemed insurmountable; however, they had been making steady and significant progress over the years. In order to communicate thisthe FNWO sent out a list of its accomplishments to its member organizations saying, "…we are waging war against our foes and we are progressing."[324] The list covered a 10 year period of organizational history from 1946-1956 to report major successes. In 1946 Tariffs were being charged on transported food items which made it harder for people to move, sell, and also buy different varieties of food that were not locally produced. The group was able to get the food law removed that prohibited the free transport of food from one province of the country to another.[325] Taxation was a significant burden on women. The masses of poor women had to steal, sell clothes and pets, and borrow money in order to pay their taxes. Some of them were jailed in groups up to 60 people for non-payment of taxes. In 1948 the tax mandate was removed

[324] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *List of Organizational Accomplishments* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O.Dike Archives, February 9th 1957)
[325] Ibid

from women in Abeokuta. In 1950 the organization fought against market fees levied on sellers who built their own shops and stalls. They said that fees should only be charged by the government if the government built the market stalls. The group was successful in setting this stipulation on market fees. In 1951 they won the battle against marriage dowries so that they were reduced in all regions of the nation although the goal was eradication of the practice. In 1952 the women joined Nigerian men in shaping the constitutional revisions for that year. Women won the right to vote in 1956.[326] There was also the passing of equal pay for equal work in government departments with paid maternity leave in 1956. Some of the issues that the group cited as ongoing struggles were those of mass illiteracy among women and the lack of property rights among the illiterate masses.[327]

In 1959, however, there was a more somber tone in the FNWO as Mrs. Kuti wrote to the affiliated organizations about her absence from the group and its inactivity. She said that she had been facing persecution in her hometown of Abeokuta due to her convictions that all people should be treated equally.[328] This was the reason that she had not been as vocal in the organization and had not been corresponding with the different branches. In addition, she added that the collective had not been as active or progressive as it had in the four or five years prior. Mrs. Kuti did say that the position of the organization at that point was not able to be compared with what their male counterparts were doing. Sharing responsibility of necessary tasks promotes progress in the society and ensures that every group is contributing to the collective. Mrs. Kuti felt that women in the FNWO were not contributing towards national development and gender solidarity and empowerment at the capacity that the men were and she wanted women to

[326] Ibid
[327] Ibid
[328] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Nigerian Women Must Organize and Be Strong* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, June 18th 1959), 1

change this dynamic. The reasons for this "unhappy situation" were "varied and many."[329] She did not give specific reasons but did say that it would be too shameful to go into those reasons in her letter. However, she did say that it was time to reunite all of the women's organizations throughout the country and prove that once given the chance, women could be valuable partners to men in the development of the nation. To this end their plans for re-configuring included having, "…every Nigerian woman, educated or not, Muslim or Christian, Ibo, Hausa, Yoruba, Funlani, in short all tribes in the country, to play their own part."[330]

In light of this the collective planned a special conference to be held July 24th-27th 1959 in Lagos at Glover Memorial Hall. The branches were directed to send one to five delegates. If there was no FNWO branch in their area the women were advised to start a Women Conference Committee to mobilize women, select delegates, and raise funds to send them to the conference. The objective of the conference was going to be to "discuss the place of women in an independent Nigeria which comes up in October next year, franchise rights, that is the right to vote and be voted for by women, the place of women in the church and state, educational problems of women, health problems, and last but not least the question of our children."[331] With this plan to re-strengthen the FNWO Mrs. Kuti felt that women could "begin to get together that we may be ready to take our place in the free Nigeria" and that "we be able to contribute our quota for the upliftment of our motherland."[332]

The FNWO was committed to ensuring that women would not be left behind in the nationalist movement, that they knew their importance to the movement, and that they worked

[329] Ibid
[330] Ibid, 2
[331] Ibid
[332] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Letter to the Branches* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, June 24th 1959)

together as one to achieve the freedoms and development they needed. In the opening address to the annual conference at Foresters Hall in Lagos Mrs. Kuti said that,

> It is very important at this time when Nigeria is looking forward with pleasure towards independence that we women should get together; that we may be able to get ourselves ready to fit into the responsibilities that will be involved in the stability of the future of our country. We all know that a country can never get anywhere without her womenfolks. We should not therefore allow ourselves to be dragged while our men are marching forward.[333]

She alluded to the fact that gender solidarity and self determination among women were both important to raising the status of womanhood in Nigeria so that women could take their rightful place in the nationalist endeavor for freedom and a stable independent nation. In addition it was imperative for women to be actively addressing issues of gender inequality. This would ensure that they could have a voice in the shaping of the nation and its political, economic, and social systems and would not be dragged into independence without a unified front. She went on to say that,

> There are so many ways that women can contribute to the progress of an independent country because their minds, feet, and hands, would be freed from chains of slavery to be used to greet advantages without any handicap or barrier whatsoever. In many other countries there are women directors of works, chief engineers, architects, motor, factory directors, lawyers, doctors, ministers of state, even the queen of a nation. These women get to these important positions because they made themselves fit and worthy for them, so we have great tasks before us.[334]

Her message was that women were an asset to the nation and that self determination was a central element of women's progress because they had to "make themselves fit" or prepare themselves to be able to take on positions of significant distinction. In order to achieve these feats of feminist nationalist empowerment their "aim should be to work as one Nigerian family. We should not allow difference in language, mode of living, religion, custom, or even

[333] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Presidential Address to the Third Annual Conference at Foresters Hall in Lagos* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, August 29th-30th 1959), 1
[334] Ibid

regionalization to separate us. We must all live together as brothers and sisters belonging to one parentage, one country, one God."[335] Again she draws on the imagery of one nation from one parentage under one God to enforce ideals of solidarity. In a later document listing the resolutions that had come out of this conference the group maintained that "women, by virtue of their population which represents more than half of the whole population of the whole country….should be recognized when anything of national issue is to be decided."[336] The women of the FNWO were constantly building a feminist awareness of nationalism and solidarity with a goal of women's empowerment and development.

Summary

As shown above, women's nationalism is the fight, led by women, against colonialism and policies that suppress their economic, social, and political enfranchisement. The history of the FNWO supports the idea that women's nationalism is constitutes their agency, intellectualism, and self-determination as expressed through their *leadership* of nationalist movements. The FNWO was a large umbrella organization with an extensive history of activism which centered their ideas of gender solidarity and respect of womanhood as a part of their unique nationalist stance. The group began as a ladies' club which taught marriageable skills to upper class women but was radicalized when it realized the plight of the masses of women. The group's fight against taxation further radicalized its ideologies and principles and it became an anti-colonial nationalist organization. The women employed methods of activism by calling on some pre-colonial principles of gender solidarity and music radicalism. In addition, Black consciousness and transnationalism were foundational to shaping the organization's outreach as

[335] Ibid
[336] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Resolutions Unanimously Adopted at the Third Special Conference of the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, August 28th-30th 1959), 1

it matured. As the women became more aware of their exclusion from conversations on national development and independence they demanded participation and a voice in these matters. This struggle for autonomy caused them to grow ideologically and articulate a form of nationalism was distinct in that the collective always centered the respect of womanhood through cultivating a consciousness of gender issues within nationalist conversations. Mrs. Kuti and other women in the FNWO routinely spoke on the connections between womanhood, feminist self determination, nationalist enterprise, and political rights. In addition, the collective supported gender solidarity as a means by which all women could come together across class, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and regional lines and form a concerted effort to resolve pervasive issues for women. In their pursuit of coming together in this way they articulated an early iteration of their non-political nationalist stance.

Chapter Five:

*Kini Nsele: Non-Political Nationalism, Women, and the Mainstream Political Climate in Nigeria

Nigerian women were very active in politics during the nationalist era of the 1940s and 1950s and it was these experiences with the major political parties that seemed to have led them to articulate a non-political philosophy. Non-politicism among these women refers not only to an active disengagement from party politics but to an ideology that supports the construction of congenial non-coercive spaces for women to develop a political consciousness and an agenda for gender awareness and social welfare. As the founders and leaders of the women's wings within the mainstream nationalist parties, women had a close relationship with the politically elite male nationalist leaders and the organs of the mainstream political parties.[337] This involvement in partisanship played a role in shaping women's non-political articulation of nationalism, and their limit of engagement with politics, in their own independent organizations. In light of this the following chapter discusses the engagement of women and their issues by the major nationalist political parties, such as the Nigerian National Democratic Party, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, and the Action Group, and their leaders Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Each of these leaders realized that the support of women was essential to the achievement of their broader political goals as well as implementation of their plans for independence. However, being active in these political spaces seems to have had an impact on women's solidarity and their development of the intellectual strategy of non-politicsm.

*This is a Yoruba phrase where *kini* means what and *nsele* means happening in an ongoing present tense. The phrase can be interpreted What's Happening.

[337] Any mention of nationalism here in this chapter refers to the endeavor to build a stable self governed/self determined territory through intellectual thought (theoretical) and physical (practical) movements that lend to the establishment of a collective awareness among, and allocation of resources to, the masses. This definition is not only rooted in the shared vested interest of citizens in self rule but also gender equality.

This chapter is arranged thematically and addresses the research questions *how did women articulate nationalism in Nigeria?* and *how does Nigerian women's articulation of nationalism contribute to understandings of nationalist theory and practice in Nigeria?* The premise of this chapter is that Nigerian women in umbrella organizations articulated nationalism through a non-political ideology. As a result their intellectual development, not practice (which is handled in the next chapter), of non-politicism is centered and analyzed here. In reference to the second question, this chapter leads a discussion of the state of Nigerian politics in the 1940s and 1950s to speak to the divisiveness and gender inequality therein as a means of building a rationale for women's intellectual development of non-politicism. The theory and practice of non-politicism was in no way a part of the mainstream nationalist arena. As a result, a consideration of women's intellectual developments in umbrella organizations brings to the fore a different type of nationalism, non-political nationalism, which nuances the mainstream political nationalism of the colonial era.

Nigerian Politics in the 1940s-1950s

During the height of the Lagos Market Women's Association (LMWA) activism Lagos provided an environment that was conducive to not only the LMWA but to many other groups, especially the mainstream political parties in Nigeria, in the founding their protest movements. The city was the administrative and economic center of the nation and had long been a hub for cultural diversity as many other Africans settled there as well as western missionaries. Many Africans were employed by the government in Lagos. Some of the foremost journalists, lawyers, and professionals worked and resided there. It was home to some of the intellectuals and activists behind early nationalist thought in Nigeria such as politician and journalist Olayinka

Herbert Samuel Heelas Badmus Macaulay also known as Herbert Macaulay.[338] He helped indigenous chiefs to fight against British land grabbing, the water scheme of 1908 which made the Lagosians pay for clean water for the British, and the Sedition Act of 1909 which limited freedom of expression. Macaulay later founded the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) on June 24th 1923 and its objectives were to 1) establish self governance for Lagos, 2) build up the educational infrastructure of Nigeria, 3) introduce mandatory grade school, 4) institute non-discriminatory private economic enterprise, and 5) promote the Africanization of the civil service.[339]

In 1937 Nnamdi Azikiwe (Zik) returned to Nigeria from the U.S. and began to help mobilize the youth. Azikiwe was given his nickname "Zik" while attending school in the U.S. His stay in the U.S. was very trying as he worked multiple jobs and experienced the horrors of racism and poverty. Zik attempted to commit suicide by lying across the train tracks in Pittsburg when a stranger pulled him to safety and told him, "Only God can take life away."[340] The conductor of the train told his alarmed passengers that "it was just a nigger who wanted to die."[341] This person gave him five dollars and told a White minister about the situation. The minister came to visit Zik in the YMCA where he was residing and helped him to find a temporary job. Zik worked as a dish washer, coal miner, mill hand, and road gang laborer before going to Howard University and finally Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. Upon his return to Nigeria he worked with a group of college students who were vying for reform in higher

[338] Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 41
[339] Ibid, 43, 46

[340] Ibid, 50
[341] Ibid, 50

education in the Lagos Youth Movement (1934) which became the Nigerian Youth Movement (1936).[342]

In 1942, Zik wrote a 15 year plan to achieve independence in West Africa which came about as a result of the conversations of a small think tank called the Nigerian Reconstruction Group which advocated for multi-ethnic national solidarity. This plan incited the Ojokoro Youth Rally which brought together the Nigerian Youth Movement, Nigerian Youth Circle, the Nigerian Reconstruction Group, and Nigerian Union of Students who were all in favor of producing a national front against colonialism. Following the famous King's College Strike, wherein students protested the commandeering of their dorms by the army for three years, many students were expelled and some sent into military service. This caused the youth to come together with Macaulay and form the National Council of Nigeria August 26th 1944. The National Council of Nigeria had a drastic affect on the political climate in Nigeria as 87 groups came to affiliate with the council. The name changed to the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) when three Cameroonian organizations joined by January 1945.[343] The NCNC created a new energy that encouraged Nigerians to come together to protest the schemes and controls of the British and even to protest those Nigerian statesmen who supported British mandates.

In the post WWII era, the spirit of nationalism grew strong and posed a threat to colonial control in Nigeria. Even the young school children were developing a nationalist consciousness. Professor Awe recounted a memory of her experiences with nationalist ideals when she was in grade school:

> The beginnings of resistance….I saw it as a young person. I remember when Zik came to talk. My parents were working in Ilorin and he came to talk. I had heard about him on

[342] Ibid, 49, 51
[343] Ibid, 56-58

> the radio. So but my father was a very straight laced person and he didn't want to get involved in that. But I slipped out and went to hear Zik talk. There was a lot of excitement in Ilorin when he was talking….In school in Lagos when Herbert Macaulay was having his whatever, we use to hear about it but we were not allowed to go because we were in the boarding house. [344]
>
> I argued with the teachers and they were mostly missionary teachers, English missionary teachers. And, of course, some Nigerian teachers who had trained abroad and also came back to teach us….I remember somebody from South Africa came to talk to us, came to visit the school, and they were showing him around. But our teachers had been telling us about the situation in South Africa. He gave us a glowing picture of what South Africa was like. So outside his talk then I got up and said 'Well, if you say South Africa is so nice, why is it that they are still treating Africans the way they are treating them?' Everybody was shocked because he had given a beautiful talk. The teacher, an English woman, just looked at me. I wasn't popular but I just thought that I should ask. This man painted such a glowing picture of South Africa…Some of our teachers had made references to newspapers that we could read occasionally and I knew that all was not well with South Africa.[345]

Even as a grade school child Professor Awe recognized the gravity of the situation that colonized Africans found themselves in. She was aware of the nationalist movement and went to hear a fiery speech that Zik gave while also developing a broader consciousness of British colonialism in other parts of Africa, namely South Africa. It was a bold and defiant act for her to make the remarks that she did to her teacher, a British woman, but even as a child she was protesting the manufactured messages school children were being told about how Africans were living well under British colonialism. The growing tide of nationalist consciousness swept across all groups of people in the Nigerian nation.

The various calls for self government that came from the NCNC, Nigerian Youth Movement, and other groups prompted the British to form a plan of action to combat further support of nationalism.[346] In 1945 Sir Arthur Richard, governor of Nigeria, produced what was

[344] Bolanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. February 2015)
[345] Ibid
[346] James S Coleman, *Nigeria, Background to Nationalism* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1958), 271

known as the Richards Constitution.[347] This new constitution was meant to consolidate British power in Nigeria under the guise of "responsible government" or the inclusion of more Nigerians. It sought more directly to link all of the governing bodies, which already served colonial interests, to the central colonial authority. To that end the native administrations were linked to the Northern, Eastern, and Southern regional assemblies and then the assemblies were linked to the colonial legislative council. The new regional assemblies and expansion of the legislative council purposed to bring more agreeable Nigerians into government outside of the native authority courts. However, only the chiefs who had been working with the administration previously were considered for the regional assemblies and legislative council. Moreover, the governor reserved the most power in the government. Lastly, the constitution did not expand suffrage and no Nigerians were consulted during its development.[348] The NCNC protest of the Richards Constitution gained even more popular support for their criticisms of the British.

The NCNC sent a delegation to London to meet with Arthur Creech Jones about a plan for independence in 1947. Mrs. Kuti was one of the delegates of the NCNC that attended the meeting. They were denied their demands to have British-Nigerian rule for 10 years and then Nigerian rule for five years before the granting of full independence. Upon their return to Nigeria the NCNC began a tour of the country to educate the masses and incite fervent anti-colonialism among them.[349]

Although the NCNC saw growth of their popular backing, disagreeable factions in the party seemed to have led to a major rift among its members. In 1945 Obafemi Awolowo, who was a Yoruba, politician, journalist, and former member of the Nigerian Youth Movement,

[347] James P. Hubbard, *The United States and the End of British Colonial Rule in Africa, 1941-1968* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc., 2011), 106
[348] Ibid, 106
[349] Ibid, 106

founded the Egbe Omo Odudwa or Clan of the Children of Oduduwa, the mythological founder of the ancient Yoruba city of Ibadan.[350] The Egbe Omo Oduduwa served Yoruba interests toward self government although it was first said to be a non-political organization. The Igbo members of the NCNC separated from the Yoruba members and established their own party and made Zik, a fellow Igbo, their president. The Egbe Omo Oduduwa ran the *Daily Service* while the NCNC ran the *West African Pilot*. These newspapers of the two parties began to run columns that attempted to discredit the other.[351]

While ethnicism was infiltrating the mainstream nationalist organizations and diverting attention from the call for self governance, a new movement formed. The Zikist Movement was comprised of younger Nigerians who were extremely displeased with the way that the other groups had begun to quarrel with one another instead of their common enemy in the British. The Zikists were not named after Zik, the leader of the NCNC; their name was developed by A.A. Nwafor Orizu who was a Nigerian student in the U.S. He studied political theory at Harvard and Lincoln Universities. Orizu used the name Azikiwe because of its meaning which can be translated as "The youth is overwhelmingly indignant" or "The new age is full of revenge." The term Zikism was an embodiment of Orizu's theory of *African Irredentism* which advocates for a return of African land to African hands. [352] The Zikist movement was founded in 1946 and by 1947 had gained nationwide popular support. In 1948 the leaders of the group devised a plan to revitalize the NCNC by staging a takeover of the organization. They plotted to remove Azikiwe but were unsuccessful in doing so.[353]

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[350] Mutiat Titilope Oladejo, *Ibadan Market Women and Politics, 1900–1995* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), 58
[351] Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 68-70
[352] Ibid, 72-73
[353] Ibid, 73-75

The Egbe Omo Oduduwa flourished into a political party in the period of 1948-1951 as the NCNC became highly inactive due to its inter-party issues and rivalries. In 1951 Chief Obafemi Awolowo turned the Egbe Omo Odudwa into the Action Group (AG). It was housed in Ibadan, western Nigeria. This new organization was one of the most influential governmental organs of the 1950s era. Even so, in 1952 the NCNC pulled itself together to combat the dominance of the AG.[354] The NCNC re-emerged as a powerful political party in eastern Nigeria during the 1950s.[355] The British sought to demonize Awolowo and Azikiwe, who represented the west and east respectively, in London while favoring the Northern region of the country. The Northern Nigerians, under leaders such as Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafewa Balewa (who would later be the first Prime Minister of Nigeria), were still amicable to British governmental involvement in their area. The colonials contrived a strategy to keep the country divided by being most accommodating to the northerners so that they would not unite with the other two regions in the call for self government. The British did not support reforms for local government in the north while they did so vehemently in the other regions. The northerners kept their own electoral system until 1957 and women in the north were not given the right to vote until 1970.[356]

Women and the Political Parties

In the 1940s and 1950s Nigerian women were pressing their way into the mainstream nationalist movement. Their associations gave them leverage and influence in the society because their collective methods of protest brought visibility not only to women's but also men's issues under colonialism. They used their power and influence to perform a nego-feminist negotiation with male leaders in terms of addressing their issues. Dues paying members also

[354] Mutiat Titilope Oladejo, *Ibadan Market Women and Politics, 1900–1995* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), 58, 91
[355] James P. Hubbard, *The United States and the End of British Colonial Rule in Africa, 1941-1968* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc., 2011), 207
[356] Ibid, 207

provided economic support for suffering male and female workers long boycotts and strikes. The politically elite male led nationalist organizations recognized the power and necessity of having these women as allies. The 1945 General Strike was one of the most significant episodes in Nigerian labor history and the Lagos Market Women's Association (LMWA) supported the strike by coordinating anti-colonial protests with the workers. Macaulay and Azikiwe both worked with the LMWA to support the Railway Workers Union to organize a welcome rally for Michael Imodou, a civil servant, freedom fighter, and leader of the Railway Workers Union who had been jailed.[357] Imodu, in May of 1941, wrote to Pelewura, the leader of the LMWA, to ask whether she would be willing to have the market women support the boycott his group was planning. He said:

> The Yoruba have a common adage which says. 'That there is nothing that affects the eyes of that which will not affect the nose.'……The monthly income that we are earning now is hardly sufficient for our wives to engage in trade and also cook, much less to buy clothes and pay our children's school fees…..There is no language that the Europeans understand more clearly than that the workers should go on strike. We know the implication of this for the people throughout Nigeria. God help us unless we unite our voices to enable the Europeans to increase our monthly pay as they should. It is your cooperation that we seek in this matter and the co-operation of our wives, children, senior and junior siblings and our relatives, many of whom are members of the Women's Marketing Association in Lagos and all its evirons. We are asking you to devise a means by which our mothers can make the white men realize that their workers did not just descend from heaven……our strike is also your own strike.[358]

It is clear from his logic that he saw men's and women's plight under colonialism as intertwined. Even more readily apparent is the utter importance of women's aid, specifically, in this endeavor to fight European oppression of the indigenous workers. Imodu reached out to Pelewura because of the strategic and decisive power of women's activism which had the power to shape the political, economic, and social milieu through applying the right amount of pressure to even

[357] Mutiat Titilope Oladejo, *Ibadan Market Women and Politics, 1900–1995* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), 1
[358] Ibid, 2

more powerful entities. Since women's work was absolutely pivotal to the stability of the society their organizations were extremely valuable. Women had the ability to affect a degree of change in policies and institutions through withholding their work which would cause systemic disarray within a power structure that was already threatened by long festering anti-colonial sentiments. This has been exemplified in the tax revolts of the Abeokuta women with Mrs. Kuti and other anticolonial movements of women, such as the LMWA, that called for closing the markets.

Women's organizations also benefitted from their relationship with male led groups. It was in the best interests of the market women in the LMWA to support the General Strike and the Railway Workers Union because these laborers were the ones who would use their earnings to purchase goods from the market women. The workers provided economic vitality for the market women. In effect there was a complementary and mutually beneficial relationship between men and women wherein they created a stable economic situation for one another. In addition to this, some of the workers were related to the women as husbands or family members and so there was a deeper and more meaningful interest in helping them beyond money, the wellbeing of the family unit.[359]

Herbert Macaulay supported women by virtue of his overwhelming concern for the quality of life of the masses. Although he was a conservative, he did speak out against the racism and taxation of the colonials. His writings always highlighted the issues, experiences, and realities of the struggling masses as well. Macaulay was particularly interested in colonial taxation and price control schemes. His activism in this area inherently brought him into alliances with women's organizations in the markets because these issues were central to their

[359] Ibid, 1

protests and had serious implications as to their livelihood.[360] Abibat Mogaji, a leader in the LMWA who succeeded Pelewura, led fifty representatives of market women to court to sue for damages of 1.5 million Naira due to the damages incurred as a result of colonial taxation mandates. The women also protested collection practices and some of them were even stripped naked as a means of terrorizing them and elicit tax payment.[361] When asked about Macaulay she said,

> Herbert Macaulay was a teacher of politics because he taught many women of those days. He encouraged them to form an association embracing all the market people in Lagos with one overall leader. He was always supporting the market women and this made Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo to describe Herbert Macaulay as the champion of native right and liberty.[362]

Macaulay spoke to the women in Yoruba, as not all of them could speak English, and he allied with traditional chiefs to whom the women were devoted in addition to supporting the Jamat congregation which was a fast growing Muslim sect in Lagos.[363]

By 1925 Herbert Macaulay had enrolled 1,000 women in the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). This was significant in a time where there were many obstructions to women's involvement in politics. Women's fathers and husbands had a direct impact on whether they could be active in politics. If a man did not send his daughter to school or her husband was not supportive of her political aspirations these factors would limit her ability to be consciously involved in politics. In addition, early on politics was seen as an arena for the educated and not the common people.[364] This added an element of complication for market women. To add another layer to women's experience in entering politics, men viewed women

[360] Ibid, 56
[361] Ibid, 132
[362] Ibid, 56
[363] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 197
[364] Adebisi Sowomi, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. 2015)

who wanted to be involved in politics as aberrant or "freaks".[365] However, Macaulay had more liberal views when it came to women in the NNDP because he understood that: "The women were in the majority anyway and once there was the right to vote for everybody, and the women were in the majority, they [male politicians] better carry the women along…"[366] The male politicians were aware of the numbers that women had, after women were granted the right to vote in 1954, and thus their power as a voting bloc so male leaders accepted the masses of women into their parties as supporters. The market women performed a nego-feminist negotiation of the power relations between themselves and the male political leaders by bringing their grievances to the NNDP meetings and received the support of the party. For example, the party protested the harassment and arrests of market women and child street sellers in Lagos because this was a concern of the market women members. The NNDP constitution supported feminist principles, those which affected the livelihood of both women and men, such as universal voting rights and adequate educational facilities. Even with the favorable attitude towards women's issues in the NNDP, there were no women holding office in the party. The women supported the campaigns of the party and in doing so helped to secure political victories.[367] In 1938 the NNDP experienced difficult times as upwards of eighty percent of the members left due to their dislike of Macaulay's one man rule. At this point some of the market women went to the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) while others went to the Nigerian Union of Young Democrats (NUYD). In 1944 the NNDP revitalized itself by allying with the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). When the NYM and NUYD became defunct in 1941 and 1950 respectively market women seemed to come back to the NNDP once again. In 1950 Mrs. Adebisi Adebiyi, the first Yoruba woman lawyer, ran for office in the NNDP/NCNC

[365] Ibid
[366] F.A. Ogunsheye, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. March 2015)
[367] Ibid, 198-200; 204-205; 209

in ward A and lost though she was made treasurer. The other female candidate, Henrietta Lawson who was the niece of Herbert Macaulay, ran in ward H and won 1,807 to 1,788 votes. She went on to set up the first women's wing of the NCNC. The market women did attend the inaugural meeting of the women's wing which named Lawson president but they remained loyal to the NNDP. Later in 1958 there was an NCNC market women's wing and an NCNC non-market women's wing.[368]

It is clear that the party politics were fracturing to the women's movement. This is exemplified in their migration to different camps of opposing parties. The women became fragmented with the downfall of the NNDP. Some went to the NYM while others went to the NYUD. When these latter two parties became defunct the women went back the NNDP. Even during the time in which the NNDP and NCNC formed an alliance, it was hard for women who backed the NNDP to work with those in the NCNC. Some were loyal to the original NNDP while others supported the NCNC. Their preference for different political camps created tension. The non-market women founded a women's wing of the NCNC and market women showed support at its inauguration however there was a political rift among those who had always supported the NCNC and those women who had been incorporated into the NCNC from the NNDP. The migrations between political parties caused contention that had implications as to the ability of women to maintain solidarity in their movement. In the city of Ibadan the leaders of market women themselves were divided as some supported the NCNC and others supported the Action Group. Humani Alaga and Humani Alade supported the Action Group while Humani Apanpa followed the NNDP.[369] This The degree of separation among women due to party politics caused staunch divisions and disagreements between market and non-market women as

[368] Ibid, 206-208
[369] Mutiat Titilope Oladejo, *Ibadan Market Women and Politics, 1900–1995* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), 113

well to the point that there had to be a non-market women's wing of the NCNC and a market women's wing of the NCNC.

In comparison to the NNDP and NCNC leaders, the Action Group (AG) leader Obafemi Awolowo was different from Macaulay in his engagement with the people because his views were more elitist. He thought that only the educated were equipped for this task of building an independent Nigeria: "It is a matter of indifference to them [the masses] how they are governed or who governs them so long as they are not disturbed in their normal economic pursuits. They bestir themselves politically only when they are severely oppressed. Even in such event they invariably ascribe the cause of the oppression to the evil nature of individual chiefs."[370] He believed that the elites in society could set the tone for the people and that the people would willingly follow because their initial concern was for daily survival. By this logic Awolowo believed that the people were not truly invested in the actual decision making as far as governing the nation; they would be content if things were taken care of for them. He went on to say that,

> It must be realized now and for all time that this articulate minority (the educated elite) are destined to rule this country. It is their heritage. It is they who must be trained in art of government so as to enable them to take over the complete affairs of their country. Their regime may be delayed, but it cannot be precluded. The educated minority in each ethnical group are the people who are qualified by natural rights to lead their fellow nationals into higher political development.[371]

His form of nationalism was more of benevolent paternalism. He supported the idea that the elites must help the masses but remain the ultimate power in the nation. For this reason, when he did see fit to engage with women (when the AG went on a campaign to Britain to seek independence for Nigeria) and have some female delegates, he reached out to educated women leaders such as those in the National Council of Women's Societies.[372] As one can imagine, this

[370] Ibid, 57
[371] Ibid, 57
[372] Adebisi Sowomi, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. 2015)

ideology would relegate some to certain spheres of engagement while others could experience mobility depending on the level of education they were able to secure. For this reason it brings about a serious question of agency. This type of thinking is inherently separatist in that it could easily disengage the masses of working class poor women who were illiterate in English and not formally educated but still able to articulate their political consciousness through anti-colonial activism.

Awolowo seemed to engage women only to gain the support of the masses of women which proved valuable to party campaigning, economic stability, and to successful protests of colonial mandates. He supported those whom gave him allegiance such as Humani Alaga and Humani Alade. However his interaction with Mrs. Adekogbe, suggests that he only wanted a female liaison to create a space in the AG wherein women's productivity and labor could be controlled and used to support party interests. In 1952 Mrs. Elizabeth Adeyemi Adekogbe, one of the few female civil servants in Nigeria, established a group called the Women's Movement. It was to

> organize and educate the women population of Nigeria so that the women of Nigeria may accept the leadership of the Movement on all matters political, economic, and educational……The Movement shall remain an independent party in order to preserve its identity and dignity. But in future it shall form an alliance with any party whose aims and objects are identical with its own.[373]

Their statement of independence from the political parties is an early declaration of non-politicism, as defined in this dissertation, in that it aimed to be independent from other political parties in order to maintain its own "identity" and objectives. When the Western House of Assembly decided to have a special woman member to be the voice of women in the council they informed the AG for guidance in this endeavor. Upon hearing about this opportunity to

[373] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 181-182

increase female representation in politics Mrs. Adekogbe contacted Awolowo and said that any woman appointed outside of the auspices of the Women's Movement would not be supported by the organization and would not be accepted as the representative for women of the western region. She felt strongly that women should have a voice in choosing the person that would represent them in the corridors of power. Mrs. Remi Aiyedun was chosen for the job and Mrs. Adekogbe responded "It is highly undemocratic, grossly unfair, and very insulting to the women of this country when the men have to nominate who should represent women in the legislatures."[374] Awolowo showed Mrs. Adekogbe that he would not engage her or entertain her advice, even in serious matters (such as choosing female representatives in politics), unless she met his demand to align with the AG which subsequently meant that all of her followers would become supporters of the AG. In light of Awolowo's failed attempt to coerce the Women's Movement to align with the AG, it seemed that he engaged women from the perspective of self gain as if they were pawns in his overall efforts to gain more followers.

The Women's Movement leader met with Awolowo to discuss matters at which time he told her to disband the Women's Movement in order to form a women's wing for the AG. She said later said "In vain did I convince him that this would mean failure of women to organize themselves. He said that he would not support us if we remained independent."[375] In 1953 she articulated women's ability to be individually linked to a political party but to be in an non-political organization: "Whilst the NCNC, NPC, or AG Women's Wings are political, ours is not. We are demanding the rights of women through a united effort of women. The problems of women are above party politics, that is why we do not propagandise for any special party

[374] Ibid, 184-185
[375] Ibid, 185-186

although we have our private leanings."[376] In spite of her theorizing as to the divisiveness that politics would bring to women's fight for gender equality and her rejection of his proposal, Awolowo refused to support Adekogbe's group with funding and he went on to demand that all wives of AG members leave the Women's Movement. Then he harassed the group by having the Tribune newspaper to print misleading information about them while also telling the Nigerian Broadcasting System not to allow Adekogbe to do her weekly radio show. Next the market women were bribed to leave the Movement, though unsuccessfully. After enduring for some time Adekogbe joined the AG in 1954 but maintained the independence of the Movement. By 1954 the majority of the Movement leadership were members of the AG which shows that Awolowo's tactics to gain support from Movement adherents, even if not the organization itself, were successful.[377]

Azikiwe, the NCNC leader, engaged women in much the same way as Awolowo and the AG. According to Professor Awe "Zik was not a gender sensitive person."[378] Women had representation on many of the committees in the NCNC however their numbers were paltry in comparison to male leaders and the women that did get onto the committees were from a small cadre of elite women and few of them had origins in the markets but had risen to a high status due to business acumen. Even so, women did attend conferences as delegates of the NCNC when they met with British officials to discuss the various constitutional changes of the 1950s. For example, Margaret Ekpo attended in 1953 and Mrs. Ekpo Young participated in 1958. Women Provincial Organizing Secretaries were introduced into the NCNC in 1961 and did not have the same resources as the male Provincial Organizing Secretaries. These women were given cars and car advances but not mileage and were paid slightly less than men. Their jobs were

[376] Ibid, 185
[377] Ibid, 186-187
[378] Professor Bolanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. February 2015)

tedious and made more difficult by the attitudes of men in their own party. They toured the country, which was hazardous, to register voters, increase membership, and collect dues. Women did complain that they were not given the same financial support, transport, and facilities as men.[379]

Women of the NCNC Women's Association fought an uphill battle when they attempted to run for office in the party. Male members felt that women were not a 'safe bet' in areas other than urban centers such as Enugu, Calabar, and Aba. The NCNC men argued that these towns were more progressive than other areas and were prepared to accept a female candidate. In 1957 there were no women candidates because Azikiwe told the NCNC Women's Association that he supported female candidates but that the political situation in the country was too precarious and that it would be risky to the party's stability and support among the masses to add female candidates. It was true that the political situation in the country was very contentious, the masses were not very progressive, and that the male dominated leadership of the NCNC may not have favorably received a female candidate; however these were not solid reasons to deny women the right to run for office. Party politics were often acrimonious and the masses, along with male leaders, also disliked other male candidates. In 1959 Mrs. Ekpo did run in Aba against Felix Okoronkwo who chaired the Aba branch of the NCNC. Okoronkwo used bribes and his politico-social capital to win. Ekpo felt that she lost because she was a woman.[380]

In a scathing letter from the FNWO to the Premier of the NCNC Eastern Region analyzing the treatment of women in the NCNC, the Sapele Branch of the FNWO said that Mrs. Kuti ran for office in 1954 but was later asked to step down.[381] In 1956 the party apparently

[379] Ibid, 236-239
[380] Ibid, 240-241
[381] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Scornful Fingers on Nigerian Womanhood* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, circa April 1958), 2

sought to appease her yearnings for an official political office within the organization as Mrs. Kuti was elected as treasurer of the NCNC Western Nigerian Working Committee. In 1959 Kuti ran for office in Egba township and was rejected on the grounds of being a woman. She decided to run as an independent which caused the vote to be split between her and the male candidate and both to lose. Kuti was expelled from the party for this bold action. She then founded her own party, the Commoners' Peoples' Party, but it was short lived.[382]

Women had considerable power during this period regardless of their status and education because they performed a nego-feminist negotiation of their relationships with male leaders. Although each male leader engaged the masses of market women with difference approaches, they all had to respect the power the women wielded. Even though Azikiwe was not a gender sensitive person, he still had to have women in positions of power in the NCNC or he risked losing the support of all the women voters. Market women eventually formed women's wings in the major political parties as a means of institutionalizing their foothold in the political dealings of the groups. Even so, they were disenfranchised as they were secluded in these women's wings and not given the right to run for higher offices in the party. They negotiated this in various ways. Margaret Ekpo and Mrs. Kuti attempted to heighten the severity of their actions towards achieving more equality for women in the NCNC by running for office. Mrs. Adekogbe left the AG to start her own movement. She waited quite some time before returning to the AG and she never did dissolve the movement she started for women. From these examples throughout the history of women and the mainstream Nigerian political parties, there is compelling evidence that women led nego-feminist negotiations of the power relations that existed between them and male politicians.

[382] Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong and Henry Louis Gates, *Dictionary of African Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Women and the Impact of Partisanship

Women's solidarity was affected by unabated and unfettered allegiance to political parties. Adherence to opposing parties contributed to women becoming polarized. As an example, they were split between parties instead of maintaining a united front in their market associations. With the death of Herbert Macaulay in 1946 women's groups that were unified by their support for him were divided between the mainstream nationalist ideologies of Azikiwe and Awolowo. In 1951, when the Action Group (AG) formed, Pelewura died. She had previously been a unifying force for market women. Her death caused even more of a rift between women's groups in the markets. Some women went with the NCNC while others followed the AG.[383] This unforeseen circumstance, the breakdown of solidarity among market women, undoubtedly coincided with the growth of political parties in Nigeria.

As the women separated into political camps their initiatives and agendas suffered and were subverted as a micronarrative to the interests of the parties by virtue of the fact that members were to vehemently support party goals above all else. According to Professor Awe (when discussing whether she and her husband should join a political party), "When it came to joining the political parties we discussed it and said well there is a three line whip. You would not have freedom of thought. If a party decides this is the way it should go, you can't [go against it]. And it was on that basis that we kept out. We wanted to comment on issues as we liked."[384] She alluded to the fact that joining a political party meant that one, man or woman, would have to align with its principles, objectives, and ideologies. Indeed, Funmilyao said as well that, "Women in different political parties can only express their party's views but not the views and

[383] Mutiat Titilope Oladejo, *Ibadan Market Women and Politics, 1900–1995* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), 63
[384] Bolanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. February 2015)

opinions of all women in Nigeria."[385] The parties did not allow for women to develop political consciousness outside of the purview of that party and this made it hard for women to collectively support the issues of all Nigerian women. This was especially difficult at points which the actions of the party were counterproductive to women's empowerment. One example of this conflict of interest between the parties and women's agency was the issue of female leadership in the parties. The NCNC failed to back female candidates and even rallied against Mrs. Kuti but the women's wings did not quarrel with the party on her behalf. They had to choose between supporting her cause for women's right to run for office and the broader goals of the NCNC to win elections. Mainstream politicians needed women, and all of their constituents, to serve the party and to follow set standards and not to challenge the rules at all. The parties were enlisting women to help with campaigning and to use the leverage that women's economic activities in the markets afforded them but they did not allow these women the platform necessary to speak to women's issues collectively and affectively.

The major parties only allowed few women to become elected officials as a means of appeasing the yearning of the masses of women to have female officials. In addition, the AG and NCNC used women's mobility as a function of their organization's liberality; they used female enfranchisement in their parties to compete with one another in hopes of showing the public they were more progressive than their rival. Even so, the NCNC institutionalized the women's wing and made provisions in their constitution for it to be represented in the main organs of the party. In the AG women did not have the same protections. However, both parties did support voting rights for women. The AG later passed a law that mandated for women to be involvement in the Western Region Local Councils while the NCNC nominated women for

[385] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *The Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies and the Political Parties* (Ibadan Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, circa 1954), 1

positions in the Eastern House of Chiefs.[386] The FNWO congratulated Azikiwe on his support of "Womanhood in the Eastern House of Chiefs," they articulated further, "We advocate for your support for women LEGISLATORS in Independent Nigeria. May God Bless You."[387] Their message to him was that securing female representation in the Eastern House of Chiefs was essential but that he must continue to be progressive and support female *legislators* in the more influential offices of the party.

Women were generally very committed to their parties (and worked harder than the men by virtue of their passion for the work and the fact that they had to show themselves capable to operate in the corridors of power). In a speech of the Ila Women's Branch of the NCNC given to welcome Mrs. Kuti, the NCNC Women's Section President, in September of 1956:

> It is indeed a great and festive day for the Ilas to be among us today. Mrs. Funmilayo Kuti, our big political Leading Woman, has thought it wise enough to extend her visit to Ila Orangun. We do hope that this your august visit will be fruitful and eventful. All the NCNCers here whole-heartedly say LONG LIVE THE NCNCers, DR. NNAMDI AZIKIWE OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT, AND THE HONORABLE ADGOKE ADELABU, THE VICE PRESIDENT. We know that the enemies of right, the Action Group members, day in and day out prepare to molest your [Mrs. Kuti] God given popular reputation but Alas! you triumph daily and jubilate in your glory. Our daily prayer is that "May God make your enemies your foot-stools" All being well, you will see the end of your enemies. Your enemies will be as chaff before the wind and the Angels of the Lord shall chase them. Destruction is sure to come upon your enemies at unawares and they shall be Sodom and Gomorrah……Therefore, we must be armed and prepared to fight the battle and win majority seats. We must however point out that we too have political enemies here, the Traditional Chiefs and the District Council officials are our chief enemies as Action Groupers who daily work towards the sabotage of the council.[388]

The Ila Women's Branch of the NCNC Women's Section exhibited a very militant ideology about their political rivalry with the AG in which they envisioned themselves as involved in

[386] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 278
[387] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Letter to Nnamdi Azikiwe* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, Date unknown)
[388] NCNC Women's Section Ila Branch, *Happy Welcome For the Great Day* (K.O. Dike Archives: Ibadan, Nigeria, September 1956), sections 2, 3, and 5

battle. This was very warlike in tone. The Ila women positioned the AG as enemies who were sure to meet destruction and become footstools. They supported the NCNC whole-heartedly and even with religious fervor as they invoked Christian scripture to protect their women's section president, Mrs. Kuti, against the AG onslaughts to her character. They were convinced that the AG was trying to do all in its power to "sabotage" the NCNC and that they had to be ready to defend their party against all persons in the AG, even fellow Nigerian women. Even so, there was still a general consensus that women should work together across party lines, and they did ultimately under non-political collectives, in order to address the issues of women in the broader context of the country.

It is imperative to recognize that there was a high level of commitment to feminist causes among leaders of women but there was no agreement or consensus on whether one should champion women's issues through the auspices of political parties or not. This question did create an issue of whether it was positive for women's organizations to align with political parties or remain separate from them. Mrs. Adekogbe, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, and Mrs. Kuti had different approaches to this issue. Mrs. Adekogbe attempted to fight against Awolowo to preserve the solidarity of the Women's Movement for as long as she could. Margaret Ekpo vehemently supported women's interests but stood behind her party when she was forced to choose between working with women's groups or endorsing party objectives. Mrs. Kuti never did compromise the FNWO for any of her individual political aspirations by linking her organization to any political entity.[389] In fact records show that, since its founding in 1953 FNWO decided that it would be non-political.[390] This resolution was directly linked to the fact that Mrs. Kuti, as a result of being involved in the NCNC personally since the early 1940s, was

[389] Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized* (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1982), 280-281
[390] See the section on articulating non-politicism for an explanation of this stance.

able to experience firsthand all of the contention and divisiveness that went on between and within the political parties and how this impacted women's ability to achieve collective empowerment.

Coercion and Contention: FNWO and NCNC Relations

Due to the fact that Kuti was both a leader of the FNWO and a member of the NCNC the party attempted numerous times to coerce the FNWO to affiliate with the NCNC. This was an endeavor to solidify votes and support for party goals among a great number of women's organizations, and the masses they served, throughout the country. Prior to her campaign loss in 1959 it is apparent that relations between the FNWO and the NCNC were substantially less conciliatory. In a hand written letter from the NCNC Secretariat, dated February 24, 1958, S.A. Osubojo tried to compel Mrs. Kuti to appear at an NCNC rally on Saturday March 1, 1958 at Otta at four in the evening. He told her:

> Madam everybody, both members and supporters of this party here desire you to come and allay the fears in their hearts that, if anybody votes for the NCNC, such persons or villages will be dealt with and it has been proclaimed by Awolowo. All these nonsenses is the campaign of the Oba of Otta. He goes to the Districts to frighten the villagers in the Districts that, as the Oba of Otta, he would not tolerate the NCNC in his town because he is an Action Group [member] and everybody should do likewise. We have extended invitations to the districts against that Saturday. And your presence on that day would surely give us victory to the Otta District Council. And your absence would mean a ruin to the party. Yours for the people, S.A. Osubojo.[391]

This letter is indicative of a coercive ideology which stipulates that unless Kuti attends, the party will face certain defeat. The urgency may be overstated but the reality that her presence as a representative of women, not only as president of the NCNC Western Women's Section but leader of women throughout Nigeria across class and ethnic lines, who were a part of the FNWO, was powerful. As had been seen early on in the nationalist movement, women were a force that one could not do without when attempting to secure leadership in the nation. Kuti had the

[391] S.A. Asubojo, *Hand Written Letter to Mrs. Kuti* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, February 24, 1958)

ability to galvanize very substantial support for the party in their campaign in this area. This is why the secretariat reached out to her in such an urgent manner. The tone of the letter recognized her imminent status in Nigeria.

In April of 1958 the Sapele branch of the FNWO penned a very scathing letter to the Premier of the NCNC Eastern Region and the Secretary General of the NCNC in Lagos refusing tolerate the contentious treatment of women in the party silently.[392] The letter was entitled *Scornful Fingers on Nigerian Womanhood* and was sent to warn the party of the "ill-activities of some of the leaders of the Egba NCNC" and how they were "assassinating" women's civic rights. The Sapele branch of the NCNC denied Mrs. Obea, the secretary of the Western NCNC, and Mrs. Alhaji, a land lady in Sapele, the right to contest elections for "no just constitutional reasons." Both of the women were qualified to run for office, were active in the organization, and were voters. Mrs. Obea was not a landowner in Sapele but Mrs. Alhaji was. Even if land owning was a requirement, the latter could not be counted out.[393] The letter goes on to say that the handling of this issue was "tactless and provocative."[394] The point was made that the:

> …organization authoritatively condemns such statement that goes to prove that this party branch deliberately refuses to put up women for the elections and believes in enslaving Nigerian Motherhood……Nigerian womanhood's civic right is on trial in Nigeria and scornful fingers have been pointed at Nigerian womanhood in Sapele……Nigerian motherhood has been told that she can only be used as a political tool and be enslaved. This is the fate of Nigerian womanhood in a state aspiring to national independence in 1960. Those who want freedom must give freedom to their slaves. The Sapele NCNC executive requested me to tell my organization that only the NCNC has consideration for women in this country and has respect for them. I refuse to accept such a statement as Nigerian womanhood now understands her right and will no more be used as a tool.[395]
>
> Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome Kuti was only used in London to fill space and make the English man believe that Nigerian mothers understand their rights in 1947……In 1954,

[392] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Scornful Fingers on Nigerian Womanhood* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, circa April 1958), 1
[393] Ibid, 1
[394] Ibid, 1
[395] Ibid, 1-2

> she requested to stand the Federal elections under the platform of the NCNC which the party agreed to but one week to the poll, her own party ordered her to step down for a man because she is a woman. She contested the election as an Independent Candidate and her party was proud to campaign against her. That's the regard for women in Nigeria. Mrs. Margaret Ekpo was at one time made a special member of the Eastern House of Assembly, little did this country know that she was going to be thrown out maybe because she was unable to force the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations to declare for the NCNC……All Nigerian political parties must give room to women to contribute to the progress of the land of their birth.[396]

This correspondence leads an analysis of the contentious treatment of women in mainstream politically elite male led nationalist movement citing that women were "used as tools." The co-opting of Kuti and Ekpo are used as strong evidence to this end as they were both seemingly discarded and no longer supported by the NCNC after they could not or would not help the party achieve certain objectives. The most interesting part here though is the ideology of women's solidarity. Women together are many times referred to as one entity using either womanhood or motherhood. The latter draws off of the importance of mothers in the worldview of many African cultures for the mothers give birth to and nurture the people who become the leaders but without the mothers ensuring the health and stability and growth of the people, there would be no nation. In this way she establishes the utter importance of women to society as a whole but also juxtaposes this imagery with that of slavery to portray the idea that these most important assets to society are being forced into the lowliest and unproductive of statuses. They had been manipulated and used by the parties that they so courageously defended and campaigned for and this was definitely a substantial point of contention between the party and women. The letter concludes by saying:

> Mrs. Obea and Mrs. Alhaji, because they are women, they can be treated anyhow but they, the women, are good to campaign in the Eastern Region during political crisis and to run up and down to campaign in the west. The appeal that my union has made to your party was extended to other leaders of political parties without leaving one out. Since the NCNC claims to be democratic in her move, she must remember woman, and have them

[396] Ibid, 2

> encouraged in the struggle for their motherland. Remember that woman is the mother of the nation.[397]

When an agitator approached Mrs. Kuti at the FNWO conference at Enugu and asked her to show her NCNC card if she was dedicated to that party, Mrs. Kuti remarked that:

> I was then obliged to tell the lady it was I who should have asked for the membership cards of every member of the NCNC, whether in the Eastern, Western, or Northern Region, by right because this party –the NCNC-which you all are so proud of was founded by the Nigerian Union of Students when there was a disturbance at King's College Lagos during the last war. The late Mr. Herbert Macaulay was then made the President of the Nigerian Union of Students which was headquartered in Abeokuta Grammar School. I hope I would then be given the honor of saying that the Abeokuta Grammar School begets the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons. The Action group was founded and grandfathered by Doctor Akanni Doherty, another old boy of Abeokuta Grammar school. Doctor Chike Obi, who was the founder of the Dynamic Party, was….in the Abeokuta Grammar school and it was the school that gave him scholarship to Yaba College. He is a very good friend of the Kutis.[398]

Later in the document she proceeds to tie other political parties and their leaders to the Abeokuta Grammar School and to the Kutis. She said that the Sardauna of Sokoto, head of the Northern People's Congress, was a great friend of the Reverend I.O. Kuti and that the Nigerian Elements Progressive Union and the Hausas pledged their support to one another.[399] This was a very eloquent means of grounding the relationship between the political parties and the FNWO as one between equals. The NCNC was co-founded by Macaulay and Zik. Since Macaulay was head of a union that began in the school where the FNWO originated, both groups were on the same level as outgrowths of the Abeokuta Grammar School where she had been the first female student, a head teacher in the early 1920s, and that her husband served as principal of beginning in the early 1930s. The FNWO was not at all subordinate to the NCNC, or the other parties, as its founding preceded the development of the parties in question. Indeed, the Abeokuta Ladies

[397] Ibid, 3
[398] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *The Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies and the Political Parties* (K.O. Dike Archives: Ibadan Nigeria, circa 1954), 1-2
[399] Ibid, 2

Club and the NCNC were also both founded in 1944. With this line of intellectual reasoning Kuti demonstrated that women in the FNWO should rightfully be able to maintain a non-partisan stance (which is an iteration of non-politicism) and that coercive measures to force them to affiliate with the NCNC were improper as they are equally autonomous entities. Both were nationalist organizations with common goals for the independence of Nigeria from the British. However, they had different agendas, especially where gender awareness and politics were concerned, and this is why Kuti had vociferously defended her decision never to affiliate the FNWO with a political party. In doing so, she asserted that the FNWO was not a political pawn and would remain an organ that supported development and self determination for women and the nation.

Articulating and Analyzing Non-Politicism

It is important to clearly define non-politicism as it relates to African women but first one must define political and non-political. Painter and Jeffrey make the case that politics involves making decisions for the group and also organized control over the community.[400] The FNWO did not seek "organized control" in Nigeria whatsoever. Although they did make decisions for the group, the way in which they made those determinations is important to note. The FNWO saw politics as coercive and for this reason, as evidenced in a great many of their meeting minutes, the leaders and supporters were encouraged to speak their mind on issues whether their thoughts were agreeable or disagreeable to the majority. This constituted a more democratic and objective process of decision making for the group. According to Rabin and Bowman non-political is to consider facts with the freedom of objectivity which means that people are able to form their own opinions and speak openly on issues without being silenced, having their loyalty questioned, and distanced from the collective by their non-acceptance of certain organizational

[400] Painter, Joe and Alex Jeffrey. *Political Geography*. New York: Sage Publications, 2009

ideals. In essence, it is freedom from control and coercion. Robin Judd views non-political as a disavowal and complete separation from national party politics.[401] This rejection of politics involves a disinterest in gaining political power and non-alignment with the parties in terms of offering loyalty. Both of these iterations of non-political shaped the rhetoric of the women's organization studied here.

Nigerian women were blatant about their non-political stance and that it espoused solidarity among women to advance important issues. For instance, one invitation to a Nigerian Women's Union (under the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations) fundraiser read:

> THE NIGERIAN WOMEN'S UNION (NON-POLITICAL) respectfully invites……..to a grand Bazaar under the Chairmanship of Fasola President Customary Court at 2pm in Mrs. F. Kuti's School Compound on Saturday the 29th June, 1960.[402]

This is one of the many blatant and explicit statements of the non-political stance of Nigerian women's organizations. The constitution of the Nigerian Women's Union states that it is an non-political organization and remains a friend of all political parties in the nation. The group announced this so that women could be brought together to achieve common goals irrespective of their *personal political affiliations*. In another document from the Ransome-Kuti collection, which is an announcement of the revival of the Nigerian branch to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Mrs. Kuti writes that the aim will be to: "….bring together all women in Nigeria irrespective of language, political views, or religion to work together with one determination to study ways and means by which political, social, economical, and psychological

[401] Rabin and Bowman in *Politics and Administration: Woodrow Wilson and American Public Administration* (1984); Robin Judd in *Contested Rituals: Circumcision, Kosher Butchering, and Jewish Political Elite in Germany 1843-1933* (2007)
[402] Nigerian Women's Union, *Invitation to Grand Bazaar* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, June 1960)

causes of war could be abolished and constructive and lasting peace established."[403] In this quote it is evident that she aimed to advocate for women to come together across various lines to work toward peace in their nation. In a hand written copy of a statement on the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations and the political parties Mrs. Kuti wrote: "The aim and object of the Federation is to liberate women socially, educationally, culturally, economically, and politically."[404] It is clear from this statement that this collective or *federation* of women was purposed to address the important cause of gender equality. In an earlier paragraph she wrote: "The organization ought therefore to support and be supported by all political parties in the country whenever they work for the uplift of progress of Nigeria."[405] This meant that the political parties and women's organizations *ought* to have a congenial relationship and that the FNWO would support *initiatives* of parties that coalesced with their own objectives for social welfare and progressivism. It was expected that any assistance that a party received from the FNWO would be reciprocated. In this same document she also said:

> We would like to make it clear to our different political parties in the country that the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations is the only organ through which the women of Nigeria could express their views on any matter affecting the interests of the women of Nigeria or the interests of Nigerian citizens as a whole, and it would be wrong of any individual or party to attempt to deprive women of this civic privilege and right. Women in different political parties can only express their party's views but not the views and opinions of all the women in Nigeria.[406]

This statement was very explicit in communicating that the FNWO was a space where women could freely *express their views on any matter* and that to deny this right would be wrong. She drew distinction between the FNWO and political parties by saying that women in the parties

[403] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules of Orders of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Nigeria Branch* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, c.1960)
[404] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations and the Political Parties* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, July 1954)
[405] Ibid
[406] Ibid

could only express their party's views but that women were free to develop objective consciousness and express themselves openly in the FNWO. This indicated that the FNWO was purposed to be a respectful non-controlling space that respected the thoughts of all women.

In essence she made a case that if the women's organization was politicized, by being linked as a supporter of any party, it would have to ascribe to that party's doctrines and beliefs and would not have the freedom of choice to champion certain issues and lead critiques of others. However, according to documents presented in this study, the organization remained non-political or unaffiliated with any one political party so that it would be a place where women could speak their minds and discuss issues without fear of misrepresenting the ideologies of their affiliated party. It was necessary for her to make this statement because she was personally a delegate of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons which was one of the most well known political parties of the time. However, as a partaker of women's collective activism she left her political affiliations aside from her work in the women's organization. It may seem confusing for a person to be highly active in politics and profess that they are non-political if one views political and non-political as mutually exclusive. A person can be both. Mrs. Kuti was very political in her personal life but she never wanted to link her women's movement to any political party or doctrine so that the women who followed her had the freedom to speak and develop and grow without the pressure of political allegiance. It is the equivalent to supporting Black Lives Matter and also believing that police are valuable to the society. A person can do both.

Considering the words of Mrs. Kuti, non-politicism, in regards to Nigerian women's collective activism in the FNWO, can be defined as:

- Non-conformity or a non-controlling means of promoting conscious development in a safe space

- A shared responsibility, connected to their cosmology of gender, to be committed to social welfare, gender equality, and community development
- A method of maintaining solidarity across ethnic, political, religious, and class lines
- Not seeking the power to control the nation or government
- Not seeking influence through support or endorsement of any political party
- Not having loyalty to any one political party but a mutual friendship with each one

Non-politicism generally goes against some of the core actions that politically charged organizations might take. Non-politicism is more about building consciousness and then equipping women to become agents of change instead of constricting them to proscribed doctrines and calling for their unwavering support. It is more liberating and is tied into the fabric of African women's cultural historical realities.

In order to understand this declaration, one must account for the construction of gender relations in the West African context. Yoruba gender ideology has long been rooted in dualism which supported the idea that men and women were a complement to one another and performed different duties but were both essential to the building and maintenance of a stable society. Historically in pre-colonial Yorubaland, as a result of their importance to the community, women experienced political, social, and economic autonomy and reserved the right to contest men. In the event that even one woman was being discriminated against or treated unjustly, other women would come from neighboring towns, regardless of ethnic, social, and political affiliations, to form protests in defense of her and, moreover, to protect the status of womanhood in the region.[407] These women would form pressure groups and force men to treat women fairly. This is essentially what women's organizations were doing during the nationalist movement in Nigeria. They self-identified as non-political to form pressure groups to convince the male led government to address the issues of women and the broader society. Their collective

[407] Shirley Ardener. *Sexual Assault and Female Militancy* in *Perceiving Women*, (New York: Halstead, 1975) speaks to women's pre-colonial collective action in West Africa and some of the tactics used to maintain fair treatment of women and also to shame men in assuming proper relations with women.

demonstrations in the colonial and post-colonial eras were an extension of their activism in the pre-colonial period which was woman centered and privileged women's rights, and those of the community at large, over ethnic and political ties. Although women in pre-colonial West Africa held important positions in government and were political actors, their collective activism was not always attached to the exercising of political power.[408]

In terms of understanding non-political ideology, the question must be asked as to who defines politics for non-western (in this case African) women. In the west, the 1960s were pivotal years for defining the relationship between feminism and politics. The mantra that says 'the personal is political' was proclaimed by many during the second wave of feminism and it shaped western ideas of politics in the coming decades.[409] However, to these West African women's collectives, even well-known political figures such as Mrs. Kuti, could, and in fact did, profess their non-politicism. These women saw their collective fight for equality as separate from the goals of the political elite that led the mainstream nationalist movement because they were not interested in holding the power to rule the state but the *power to affect change*. This transformational power had always been a right they expressed vehemently for centuries prior to the advent of colonialism.[410] Women did not see their power as inextricably linked to politics. Instead, their power also existed in their culturally sanctioned ability to impact societal development through mothering, community building, balancing gender relations, contributing to the economy and infrastructure through entrepreneurship, and many other ways. Nor did they

[408] Oyeronke Olajubu, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2003)

[409] Angela Harutyunyan, Kathrin Horschelmann, and Malcolm Miles *Public Spheres After Socialism* (Chicago: Intellect Books, 2009)

[410] Filomina Chioma Steady, *Women and Leadership in West Africa: Mothering the Nation and Humanizing the State* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Toyin Falola and Adam Paddock, *The Women's War of 1929: A History of Anti-Colonial Resistance in Eastern Nigeria*, (Durham, NC: Carolina University Press, 2011)

think that politics were beneficial for progress of their collective women's movement.[411] The most salient among the reasons for declarations of non-politicism in Nigerian women's collectives was a desire to cultivate consciousness among women in a non-controlling space and to distance themselves from the political divisiveness that could subvert their goals for female empowerment. Western scholars may view Nigerian women's nationalism as political due to the fact that nationalism is never seen as extricable from political action, however respect must be given to the fact that these women were situated in a non-western context and cultural philosophy which mandated a unique definition of political and also the construction of nationalism and women's empowerment as non-political endeavors. The broader purpose for Nigerian women's nationalism was not to control politics through majority support or to hold power to rule in the nation but to affect changes that would prove beneficial to the communal good of all citizens.

Their cosmology is important to note here in terms of their non-political expression of nationalism because it prepared women not to see themselves as diametrically opposed to or unequal to men, but mandated to work in a concerted effort with men to build an independent nation. In pre-colonial Yoruba culture and cosmology (worldview), men and women saw themselves as a part of a complementary relationship.[412] This philosophy of being and doing informed their ways of life even into the colonial and post colonial era. Women's activism in the nationalist era complemented men's efforts in achieving self-governance. For example, evidence from this research suggests that Yoruba women's collectives during the nationalist era declared a policy of non-politicism so that they could focus on building infrastructure through social

[411] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti , *Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations and the Political Parties* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, July 1954)
[412] Nkiru Nzegwu, *Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture* (State University of New York: Albany, 2006)

activism while men collectively led the political campaign for government control. Women did not need to collectively fight for something that men were already working on and so they focused their efforts on preparing the society for independence through improving consciousness toward education, health, and economic stability among the people. Amidst the colonial allegations that Africans could not run their own countries coherently, this work that the women undertook provided a fundamental basis for men's efforts in proving that indigenous people were indeed progressive, had plans for national development, and thus were capable of controlling their own nations.

The grassroots campaigns that the women led helped to develop a mindset of self-determination among the people. They also imparted practical skills that would improve people's standard of living. This has been evidenced in the Igbo Women's War, Lagos Market Women's Assoc. protests, and the activism of the Nigerian Women's Union.[413] They did this through gendered humanitarian agendas which centered the needs of the marginalized (men and women), building infrastructure through campaigns to better education and healthcare, and creating equality through gender awareness initiatives.

Non-political ideology was influenced, I believe, by Yoruba cosmology through relative perception, women's desire to maintain solidarity in their movement, the need for direct addressing of social welfare issues, and a disinterest in ruling the nation. Relative perception (which borrows from Yoruba pre-colonial cosmology or worldview) is that sense of shared responsibility among men and women where groups choose work relative to what the other

[413] Cheryl Johnson-Odim, *Grassroots Organizing: Women in Anti-Colonial Activity in Southwestern Nigeria.* African Studies Review vol. 25 no. 2/3 (June-September, 1982): 137-157; Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Toyin Falola and Adam Paddock, *The Women's War of 1929: A History of Anti-Colonial Resistance in Eastern Nigeria* (Durham, NC: Carolina University Press, 2011)

group has done. It opposes the use of biological determinism in delegating work among groups. Women's nationalism represents relative perception in their expression of nationalism as non-political. Men were engaged in political struggles for self determination and so women engaged in the non-political fight for self governance by developing communities through progressive agendas, not through seeking political power. In this way women's nationalism, in collectives, was formed relative to men's nationalism, in political groups. Women strayed from the divisiveness of politics, which they saw firsthand in the mainstream nationalist movement, in order to maintain solidarity among the women's movement. This left them with more of an ability to focus on social welfare issues. In light of these factors of non-political ideology and expression it is not completely sound to solely view Nigerian women's collectives as political organizations. These women should be analyzed in *their* terms and how *they identified* themselves, as "non-political" or non-political, rather than imposing an outsider perspective as is often done.

In Women's Words: Non-Political Ideology Explained

Adherence to non-political ideology did not mean that individuals did not take personal and public stances on political issues but that they governed their collective activism with a philosophy of non-alignment. This also means that they rallied themselves across class, ethnic, and political lines and fought for the acknowledgment of certain issues regardless of government support and impact on future or current political parties. They acted in the interest of what was expedient and were not engaged in a battle with other groups to gain supporters or followers. According to Professor Ogunseye, one of the founders of the National Council of Women's Societies,

> Well we always said we were non-political. We have always established that we were non-party political. But it doesn't mean that we did not take up political issues. Like

> making demands for day nurseries. We made demands that the government should even support day nurseries, but they didn't. But the women themselves started day nurseries….We demanded that women should be nominated to stand for political appointments….Sometimes we said we didn't want a market somewhere or we needed a market somewhere and women protested about it….Social issues as it were….It wasn't a political organization.[414]

The reference to non-party political reveals that women did not seek to be involved in political rivalries. But this did not mean that they did not become political actors when the occasion called for it.

The statement in total highlights to the ways in which women navigated the spectrum between political and non-political. The examples she listed of instances that did mandate political action range from arguing for women's right to run for political offices to social welfare issues. *Ojo Nro* argues that Nigerian women's construction of non-political encapsulates a focus on social welfare issues which was rooted in a philosophy of non-political alignment. However, from her words above, one can deduce that social issues could also become political causes in certain instances. This signifies that there was a fluid line of demarcation between political and "non-political" issues. The defining factor between the two was the element of coercion or "demand" as she refers to it. She said that they were "non-political" *but* she followed this statement with examples that all included a demand for something which indicates a definite stance and unwillingness to negotiate. This means that women could enforce an non-political ideology but also be political at any given time. This political action was related to unyielding authoritative calls for resources and not alignment with any one party. Even so, non-political agendas were more frequently enacted in order to maintain a focus on social needs and

[414] F.A. Ogunsheye, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. March 2015). In my earlier article, *More Power to Your Great Self*, I mistakenly misquoted Professor Ogunsheye as having used the word apolitical. She used non-political and not apolitical. As an aside, in the same article there is a letter that I quoted that was sent to Mrs. Kuti from Amy Ashwood Garvey which was dated March 11, 1949. In the introduction to the article I wrote that the letter was dated March 14, 1949 which is incorrect.

development as well as to preserve solidarity in the women's movement from the deleterious rivalries that existed in political spaces.

In light of this realization that politics was contentious and divisive the FNWO, as well as other women's organizations such as the National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS) which came to prominence during the late 1950s, began to articulate an ideology of non-politicism as a means to protect solidarity, across political as well as class, ethnic, and religious lines, within their movement of women from the same divisions that men experienced. In fact, women were better able to maintain solidarity in their movement than men which signifies the favorable result of the non-political approach that women took. This is highlighted by the fact that women from different backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, political groups, and even religious groups were able to work together in umbrella organizations like the FNWO and its successor, the NCWS, for the issues of women. For example, the NCWS brought Christian and Muslim women together, regardless of religious affiliations, in the interests of women as a whole:

> Well it [NCWS] was a conglomerate of different associations. Some of them were religious associations like the YWCA or Muslim Women's Association. For example, the core four members that started the National Council of Women's Societies, one of them was a Muslim women's organization. The others were mixed, Christians and Muslims. Like the Women's Improvement Society. And then there was also the YWCA, they were all Christian women.[415]

In part, the pre-colonial ideology of collectivism which was a product of the dual sex system aided women in their ability to work together in this way (as established in chapter three). Non-politicism was developed in the colonial era as a function of ideology of collectivism. Women's groups largely espoused non-political stances as a means of maintaining that collectivism that had long been an central tool of their protests. This non-political stance helped them to avoid the kind of divisions and ethnicism that the mainstream nationalists faced. When asked about the

[415] Ibid

reasons that women developed this ideology of non-politicism Professor Sowomi took into account more contemporary experiences of women in politics with those of the past asserted that:

> The women who have been very much involved in politics as far as I know, and I'm being very cautious here, I have not seen how their being involved has advanced women's causes as such. Especially in more recent times I found that they were just there for maybe as compensation for what they contributed to the person getting into office and so they didn't owe any allegiance to women, they didn't get on the platform for women or so to speak. The only woman, was it eight years ago, who wanted to be a presidential candidate---none of the women voted for her. She was the only one who voted for herself. So, I think women's causes have been fought outside of politics a lot. So, therefore I don't think they had a women's platform to go on so that it could not be their priority to fight for women. That is one. The second point is unfortunately women who have been very active in politics tend to get absorbed in the general milieu of politics and looking after their own interests and maybe immediate family and so on. I am yet to see any female politician who has stood out to champion the causes of women. In other words, in my own opinion, I haven't seen activism in politics as such as a vehicle for advancing the cause of women. The cause of women has been advanced through social platforms or women who are *really* interested. You see because these women will get into politics, apart from these early ones such as Mrs. Ogunlesi or Mrs. Adekogbe who were already were involved with women's movements, the other women in politics are there, as I said, because of what they contributed for campaigning as a kind of compensation for them. There are so many but I am yet to see the impact that they have made on women's causes. What is even worse now is this NCWS [National Council of Women's Societies], which is supposed to be an NGO [non-governmental organization], has now been sucked into politics which is very very disastrous. So you have it linked with the wife of a chairman of a local government and so on. To me it's lost its vision, its lost its purpose. That is why there is this attempt to reform it or start a new one.[416]

She contended that "women's causes were fought outside of politics a lot" and that, even at present, there is no solid platform for any female candidate to run on which addresses women's collective issues. She mentions later in the interview that there was and still is an heir of tokenism in regards to women in Nigerian political spaces. This tokenism presents an issue because those who are used to meet diversity quotas are usually never in the majority or even close to having the numbers that the majority. This ensures that an entity is able to maintain the hierarchy of power behind the façade of change. In essence women who wanted to succeed in politics had to do so by helping current politicians and as compensation for their aid they would

[416] Adebisi Sowomi, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. 2015)

receive positions. Outwardly this appears to be a progressive move towards more gender diversity in the party. However, according to female politician Titi Akosa, these women do not have the same resources as men, who have long founded networks, financiers, and campaigners, or the power in numbers behind them to address issues important to women. They also have to make a choice to keep working in the manner that the party approves of and wait for raises and a higher position or to turn their sights to focus on women's issues which the party may not want to support in light of other objectives.[417] Mrs. Kuti tried to run for higher office and also champion the issues of women in the NCNC and the party turned on her and essentially helped a male candidate to run against her. This means that fighting for women's issues to be placed in a position of priority on the party agenda could quite possibly mean being black listed, becoming a political pariah, sacrificing positions, financial security, and family subsistence. Often times, when faced with these choices, it is not likely that one will choose the less safe option and so, over time, women in the party became estranged from women's causes to maintain stable socio-economic mobility. This had its costs as well because the masses of women would not support a female candidate whom they do not perceive as a champion for their issues and whom they do not have a knowledge of or association with. Professor Sowomi mentioned a recent female candidate of one political party who could not get the support and votes she needed because of this issue. This is what Professor Sowomi identified when she said that women who become very active in politics get absorbed into politics and then begin to serve their own interests and those of their families. For this reason she says that she has yet to see a contemporary female politician that champions the causes of women and that she does not see politics as a feasible means of addressing women's issues. She then gives an example of the NCWS which began as an non-political entity (as stated by Professor Ogunsheye, a founder of the group) but has now

[417] Titi Akosa, *Interiview* (Lagos, Nigeria. 2015)

been absorbed into politics and has "lost its vision." Professor Ogunsheye confirmed in an earlier conversation that she was indeed trying to reform the NCWS to save it from the divisiveness of partisan politics and refocus the group on agendas involving community development. Women in the political parties have historically and presently not been able to find their voice and stride in the same way that women have been able to outside of these political organs. In addition to the staunch hardships that women in politics faced, there was an even more pressing issue at hand for them, the question of maintaining solidarity in the women's movement.

The nationalist era was rife with political battles but women found a means of vying for important issues and maintaining solidarity. Women needed to ensure that their call for gender equity would not be lost in the politically charged atmosphere and subsequent transition of Nigeria from colony to independent nation. They knew that if women's voices were not represented in the new constitution and in the resulting institutions of the new nation then women would find themselves living in a perpetually disenfranchised status even in a newly free country. This is the reason that they protested the absence of women on the council for the development of the constitution after Nigeria won its independence. Women staged a press conference to denounce the drafting of a constitution without women.[418] In terms of maintaining the solidarity that they needed, Professor Ogunsheye, a founding member and secretary of the National Council of Women's Societies, said that women in the nationalist era wanted to be able to come together across political lines: "Party politics divided the men so violently. And we wanted an organization that will run across political parties, political divisions, of whatever type because we were more interested in the economic, educational, and social development of the

[418] Bolanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. February 2015)

society, of the community, cutting across party politics, you know."[419] In her comment Professor Ogunsheye highlighted that women developed a different approach to self determination in that they were "more interested" in community development and social welfare than partisan politics. In addition, she highlights the imperative nature of solidarity across lines which mandates that the issues of the populace be of utmost importance rather than loyalty to and rivalry with any of the political parties. This is one of the major differences between mainstream, politically elite male led, nationalism and women's nationalism. Men were enthralled with the political battles necessary to win independence while women were concerned with the social and economic vitality of the society.

This ideology of non-politicism among women's collectives was practically enacted through pressure groups. When speaking of the NCWS she said that "It wasn't a political organization….Actually, we started the National Council of Women's Societies to bring women together to form a platform to pressure the government to do things for women and those needing it in the society."[420] Professor Ogunsheye attested to the fact that women formed pressure groups to develop a platform that centered a gendered analysis of issues and to then urge the government to address certain issues that would help men and women. She also highlighted that there was a relationship between the use of the pressure model and being non-political. One is used to enact the other. The NCWS umbrella organization was a non-political group that brought different women's collectives together from across the nation to form a pressure group. This act of separate women's organizations coming together requires the cultivation of solidarity among them. The necessity of this collective sense of unity was a central principle of non-political ideology and was achieved by establishing a non-controlling

[419] F.A. Ogunsheye, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. March 2015)
[420] Ibid

space that allowed women to speak freely and by championing shared objectives for social welfare.[421] In essence the solidarity made possible through adherence to non-political philosophy was needed to form and strengthen the pressure group. When asked about the methods that a pressure group would use Professor Ogunsheye replied, "Dialogue. Petitions. We sent petitions if we wanted something corrected in the society. We sent petitions with a delegation to the appropriate minister, somebody who was in charge, anyway, and could have a meeting with us. That's what we did, yes, most of the time."[422] The pressure group model was more about diplomatic negotiation of issues through petitions and the like. In accordance with the pressure group model, non-political philosophy mandated a more diplomatic model of leadership in women's organizations wherein women from all backgrounds were treated as equally important. In addition, they were all encouraged to develop stances and speak freely on important issues. In a matter of comparison, the political parties were required deference and un-objective submissiveness from their supporters, women and men, to the ideals handed down by the elite leaders.[423] This element of diplomacy was a common bond between non-political ideology and the practical actions of pressure groups. Professor Ogusheye later noted that there is a difference between pressure groups and being *political*:

> When you are political you are working for a political party. We just worked in the area of the status of women. We worked in the area of anything that has to do with development, anything that has to do with markets, anything that has to do with health. And education, you know. We worked in the area of equal education for the girls. Then we worked in the area of equal pay for equal work which didn't happen before. Then we sent a group for asking the government to appoint women to posts to create even the Women's Affairs Commission. It was our idea that there ought to be a commission for women's affairs. They created one both at the federal and state level. We asked for that. One of the things we were interested in was seeing what were the differences between the

[421] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations and the Political Parties* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, July 1954); F.A. Ogunsheye, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. March 2015)
[422] F.A. Ogunsheye, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. March 2015)
[423] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations and the Political Parties* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, July 1954)

> customary court laws and the secular laws, the rights of women and the rights of inheritance and all that, you know.[424]

In her view, the dividing line between being political and being a part of a pressure group is the freedom to pursue resolutions to gendered social issues. This reinforces the continuity between non-politicism and the pressure group. In her comment she mentions that they were interested in customary courts and secular courts and how both handled women's rights.[425] When ask why women were interested in those issues highlighted in the statement abaove she said:

> Why? Because it impacts our society. We wanted development. We wanted an opportunity for our children to evolve. We wanted a better life. We wanted electricity. We wanted markets in the right places. We wanted security for improvement in life. You are asking me what is political. When you go into politics you are beginning to say I have the right to govern. We were not looking for the right to govern. We weren't even asking for the right to govern, although we expected them to allow us to stand for elections and all that, but we weren't pursuing that [the right to govern]. First we felt that we needed to gain more power. More women with education, with skills, with a better life and better standards of living for them. Its only when you get to that stage that you can say that I want to be a part of governance. We didn't reach out to be part of governance. Although, all the political parties had women's wings and any woman that was interested joined those women's wings.[426]

Women wanted to ensure that development was happening at every level of society and not only in politically elite spaces. They wanted fair adjudication of women's issues in the court systems, better education, amenities, opportunities for all people. Women's collectives realized that these things needed to be in place first before women as a group could make a strong push to enter

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[424] F.A. Ogunsheye, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. March 2015)

[425] The secular courts were non-religious courts that did not deal with Sharia (Islamic) law. The customary courts were those that enacted the traditional principles and rules of pre-colonial Yoruba society. The issue with customary courts was (and still is) that during colonial times the British used them to solidify their hold on Nigeria by exacerbating patriarchy and allowing men only to be judges and thus to hold the power in the courts. These courts were used as a means to disenfranchise women and control their productivity and labor. There are now some female judges but not many. Also, the current female judges are working with laws that were not shaped with women's voices and concerns since women were not a part of the colonial developments in these courts, which has added some considerable degree of difficulty to their task. For more on customary courts see Mary Hallward-Driemeier and Tazeen Hasan *Empowering Women: Legal Rights and Economic Opportunities in Nigeria (*2013) and Adeola Babatunde *Women's Rights in Nigeria* (2014)

[426] Ibid

governance. They knew that they needed to help build upon the capabilities and assets of women, through advocating for widespread access to education and heightened political awareness, before more women in the general public would be seen as qualified to be active in political spaces. In essence, women's organizations expressed non-politicism through the pressure group model of activism. Both the ideology of non-politicism and the pressure group mode of activism were organic intellectual developments of women's nationalist groups.

Professor Awe, who was active in the Nigerian Association of University Women (NAUW) which was not an umbrella organization but a singular group within the NCWS, also identified the meaning of non-political as an overwhelming emphasis on community development and breeding gender awareness. When asked if she could give an example of non-political she said:

> Well I think if one could go by the NAUW there was this insistence on education for girls that something has to be done to give the girls the same opportunity for education. In fact, that was the emphasis for the Nigerian Association of University Women. I'm not sure that enough attention was paid to women's health which would probably interest groups now. Facilities for women so that they have medical care and have attention at childbirth and all that. I don't think that there was enough emphasis on that. Though, well, some of the women did stress that. For instance, Mrs. Esan. Chief Wuraola Esan and I think Mama Alhaja [Humani Alaga] was also a member. There was a group of them in Ibadan. And they started their own association and they had a place where they made provision for women, to look after women. That was one of the objectives of their own association, to give medical attention to women…Two of the moving spirits there were Chief Wuraola Esan and Alhaja Humani Alaga….Primarily the issue of the education of women was the primary agenda. It wasn't just a question of the government providing the facilities, which was also considered important. But also making an appeal to parents to make sure that they sent their girl children to school as well as the boy children. And of course there was a question of looking at the text books and the syllabai to reflect the interests of the girl children and the boy children. Their interests were taken into consideration. For instance the textbooks shouldn't talk about the boy going to school while the girl is home helping her mother to grind pepper. That sort of thing. And you would have pictures in the textbooks with the boy marching to school, as if that's a done thing, the girl is at home grinding pepper. Also discouraging parents from…sending them out to trade, to hawk things when they should be at school.[427]

[427] Bolanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. February 2015)

There is continuity among women's statements as to what non-politicism was. It centered societal and infrastructural issues that impacted women and the community as a whole. As Professor Awe noted, there was a move to support girl child education as well as women's health centers. These were issues that raised gender awareness and also enfranchised women and girls but also the community as a whole by ensuring better survival rates for babies and women.

Although women articulated their nationalist goals with an non-political philosophy of activism they did become involved in political issues at times. As stated previously, Mrs. Kuti was both an non-political leader in the FNWO and she ran for political office in the NCNC. This was a common paradigm among female nationalists. Singular persons were able to be active in partisan politics with the understanding that their personal affiliations and leanings must not interfere with their commitment to the women's movement as a whole. In terms of women's collectives, whole groups that espoused an non-political ideology would, at times, take up political causes. Professor Ogunsheye asserted: Well we always said that we were non-political. We've always established that. That we were non-party political. But it doesn't mean that we didn't take up political issues.[428] When asked which political issues her group fought for she said:

> Like making demands for day nurseries. We made demands that the government should even support day nurseries, but they didn't. But the women themselves started day nurseries….We demanded that women should be nominated to stand for political appointments. Sometimes we said we didn't want a market somewhere or we needed a market somewhere and women protested about it. The government wanted to put a market somewhere. I remember they protested they didn't want a market there. They wanted the market moved elsewhere. Things like that. Social issues as it were.[429]

It is interesting that the examples that she gave for political actions are very similar to those given for non-political agendas. This means that even those non-political social welfare

[428] F.A. Ogunsheye, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. March 2015)
[429] Ibid

objectives can potentially become political causes. In addition there are two other important ideas that she raised. The first was that she said that the group she was a part of established that they were non-political and she reinforced that by saying non-party political. This means that they did not seek support from or give support to any specific party. The second concept that is of significance is the way in which she described their political actions. In the end of her statement she said that what she had described were like social issues. The difference, then, between these and other gendered social welfare issues of the non-political agenda is *the way* in which women pursued resolutions to their problems. She used words such as *demand* and *protest* which signal that coercive model of striving to obtain certain resources. Coercion is that deciding factor that can change the dynamic from non-political to political. In fact, the *amount* of force or coercion applied in any situation seems to have been the indicator for the change from non-political to political. In the interview, Professor Ogunsheye juxtaposed the self defined pressure group tactics of her organization and those of Mrs. Kuti and her group. She said that Mrs. Kuti was "more political" in that she was more of a direct protester who used civil disobedience and protests. Although she did not force anyone in the government to support her group's objectives Mrs. Kuti was quite bold and relentless in her methods of voicing women's needs, although she proclaimed her group non-political. Meanwhile the NCWS was more bureaucratic in their approach of developing petitions and scheduling meetings to discuss issues with the government officials. The dichotomy Professor Ogunsheye identified in her juxtaposing of the NCWS and Mrs. Kuti lends credence to the idea that these two very prominent umbrella organizations articulated non-political and political in different ways. The fact that both the NCWS and FNWO saw themselves as non-political but had very different techniques of supporting gendered social issues also highlights the fact that women viewed non-political and

political on a spectrum where the level of coercion propelled the transition from non-political to political.

The ability to transition, temporarily, from non-political to political was another unique characteristic of women's articulation of nationalism. Women articulated nationalism in a more flexible and fluid way in terms of the relationship between political and non-political. While men were strictly focused on political issues and the rule of the country women allowed for different iterations of the relationship between non-political and political at any given time. When asked to distinguish between non-political and political action among women during the time of Mrs. Kuti, Professor Awe, of the Nigerian Association of University Women, responded that:

> Her organization was political to a certain extent. But within the context of her own period of existence you couldn't really not be political. You remember that her greatest battle was with the British government, as well as the local government, as well as the traditional rulers. What could be more political than getting the Alake of Abeokuta, the most senior traditional ruler in that area, to go into exile? You know she succeeded in doing that. And it was because of the way the administration was carrying on and because the men, who should have spoken, did not. The men didn't really show their guts and she felt she had to do so. At that time it wasn't a question of belonging to a formal political organization. It was the issue of asserting your political rights. You know, asserting your political rights if things are not going the way you want them to go.[430]

This is interesting in that it highlights another way in which women defined being political. Women could also be political when they were involved in a protest that directly engaged political bodies. In essence, working with or against the government directly was a classified as political among women's groups. There are times in which women had to take up political stances, *namely when government action or lack thereof egregiously affected the welfare of persons in the society as a whole, both men and women*. Mrs. Kuti saw that there was corruption among the traditional rulers and that this was causing hardship for the masses of men and women

[430] Bolanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. February 2015)

and her battles to force the Alake to resign were deemed political ubiquitously among persons interviewed. Professor Awe went on to give another more personal example, from the mid 1970s of how non-political women's collectives could be political:

> The organization of University Women, I think I was telling those people who came, if you look at our aims and objectives you will see that there was nothing really political there. We were more interested in opportunities for girls and women, better education and all that. But, it came to a point where we had to be political. When the government decided to draw up a new constitution and when they were drawing up a new constitution they chose 50 men. Not one single woman. The Association of University Women met and said we must protest. I wasn't even at the meeting but they came to my house and said, 'Look, you have to help us to organize a press conference and also a speech which we will read at that press conference to protest the situation whereby we were left out. That you cannot be drawing up a new constitution for a country to which we belong and you wouldn't even allow one of us to have a voice there. Because that was what it amounted to. And when we looked at the people that were there, there were a few politicians-I mean chief Awolowo was there but in the end he opted out, but there were lawyers, there were doctors, there were even academics. There were people like us but they were men. So we decided to call a press conference and we invited women from all associations to come. I remember Mama Alhaja Humani Alaga, even though she couldn't read or understand English, she was there! We had that press conference in the senate of the University of Ibadan. Chief Mrs. Bolarinwa, you must have heard of her, she was there. And people like that. They were all there. And market women as well as university women and so on. But it was a protest. And it was a political protest. If you are saying that the constitution is going to be drawn up and you are not there you are protesting about your political rights. The NAUW will not say that it is a political organization but when it comes to the situation when you have to speak out, then you do so…..At that point too, I think it was the National Council of Women's Societies, also decided we were now going to insist that a certain percentage of the people in government must be women. That, again, is a political decision.[431]

Again she highlighted the fact that fighting for political rights was a political act but in order to understand these methods of political protest one must realize that they are rooted in Nigerian women's pre-colonial activism and political autonomy. What is interesting here are the parallels between women's pre-colonial methods and those mentioned in this story from the mid 1970s. She said that women were fighting for their voice to be heard in government through having representation on the committee for the new constitution. This is exactly what the pre-colonial

[431] Bolanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. February 2015)

office of the *Iyalode* or 'king of women' was created for, to ensure that women's issues would be heard in the king's court during governmental decision making. When she said that they called women from all other organizations it is reminiscent of the pre-colonial Igbo institution of 'sitting on a man' when women from all surrounding villages would be called upon to come and protest even the slightest of insults to womanhood. In addition women from different backgrounds were represented at the press conference. There were Muslim women such as Alhaja (a person who has performed the Hajj to Mecca) Humani Alaga, illiterate women, chiefs such as Chief Mrs. Bolarinwa, Christian women, market women, etc. They all came together to support the best interests of women which is reminiscent of their pre-colonial philosophy of collectivism which was a driving force for their expression of nationalism.

When considering the organic intellectual development and articulation of non-politicism among the FNWO and other women's groups it is clear that women envisioned and enacted nationalism in a way that was distinct from the politically elite male led mainstream variety. Men centered political action and governmental control and women did not. In addition, women's nationalism permitted the mixing of non-political and political organizing and action, while men concentrated overwhelmingly on self determination through political parties. When asked about the difference between men's and women's expressions of nationalism Professor Sowomi said:

> I think that when it comes to nationalism, there's no difference. I mean, because, in the fight for independence, as I said, there were a few women in the delegations that went to England to discuss the constitution. I think their approach was the same for those who wanted independence for Nigeria. Even after independence, Mrs. Ransome Kuti for example and Margaret Ekpo, they wanted to fight anything that was unjust, not only for women because the so called Aba Women's Riot was not just for the women-they were even fighting for the men. So, if anything I will say women's approach was even broader because they were catering for both women and men *consciously*. So, I think their approaches to issues that were national were not too different. If anything I think that

> those of women were *deeper* and I think this comes from the traditional concept that the woman is the mother, you know, and the woman is like the earth from which things grow. So I think women to that extent have that dual responsibility, not just in general, to make sure that people can be themselves, can be free. So I think that comes from the concept of womanhood and motherhood….I think, if anything, their views were very similar but women's stand and activism went even deeper…They were fighting on two levels so to speak[432]

It is interesting that she says that women's and men's approaches to nationalism were the same but later in the comment she says that women's approach was even deeper. This latter statement indicates that she feels that women's expression of nationalism surpassed men's. In the beginning of the comment what she actually expressed was that men and women shared the same *desire* when it came to nationalism, not the same methods of working towards self determination. In the second and third sentences she says that women went on delegations to England, which were to demand freedom, and after this she asserted that the approach was the same for those (men and women) who wanted independence for Nigeria. In essence, she feels that women and men had the same goal for nationalist expression, winning independence and developing the nation. She does take into account that women's nationalism was always a gendered affair. They fought for both men and women as far back as the Igbo Women's War of 1929 and even after independence. Professor Sowomi also highlighted that principle of motherism in her discussion of women's responsibility to cultivate freedom for the people. She said that this responsibility of women comes from the traditional concept of mothering. As mother, the woman nurtures a seed and sees it through to fruition. The man is necessary to plant the seed. Even in this analogy of mothering as a responsibility to cultivating freedom and bringing it to fruition, it is possible to recognize the way in which women's and men's roles are shaped relative to that of the other. One nourishes while the other plants. The one who nourishes does not need to plant and vice versa. The only point at which these roles would overlap is if an

[432] Adebisi Sowomi, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. 2015)

important job is not being done adequately (just as when Mrs. Kuti had to step up and fight the Alake because the men in the traditional government were not adequately addressing corruption). Even with the shared responsibility of relative perception, Professor Sowomi asserts that women have a dual responsibility because ensuing that people can live freely, as she says is one duty of women, mandates that the woman must first free herself in addition to others in the society. This is why women were "fighting on two levels" and their own approach was even "deeper" than that of men.

Both men and women were working toward national independence for Nigeria but men were fighting for self governance through political means while women grounded their struggle for the same cause in non-political terms. Women targeted aspects of nation building that were not political, although essential and necessary, because they saw that men were largely focused on the political. Women's collectives chose to shape the ideology of their movement in non-politicism so that they could speak to the issues of the masses that were not being readily served in that politically based struggle for governmental control. Women went on to address other important issues that would inevitably need to be resolved in order to build a strong foundation and a stable new nation once Nigeria won its independence.

The women had the foresight to realize that in order for Nigeria to be a successful new nation the people would need to be prepared to accept more progressive and sustainable institutions, some of which were universal adult suffrage, equal pay for equal work, girl child education.[433] The changes that women's collectives advocated for were often derived from a gender analysis of issues and were those that, if instituted, would have benevolent affects for the community as a whole. They understood that women's work was essential to national stability and that women contributed in no small part to the economy and society and that heightening

[433] F.A. Ogunsheye, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. March 2015)

awareness of gender issues as well as educating and caring for women would have a positive impact on national development. Women's collectives such as the FNWO took into account gender as a primary factor of analysis in the building of their agendas because their underlying philosophy, that was influenced by dualism, enforced the idea that any successful and productive society must be supported equally by all groups in the nation with competence and respect for one another.

Summary

The foundations of the FNWO ideology of non-politicism had its roots in the experience that women had in the political parties. During the 1940s and 1950s, political parties in Nigeria overwhelmingly engaged women from a framework of interest convergence. The parties created women's wings so that women had a space to discuss their issues while they campaigned far and wide for the parties; meanwhile topics important to them did not feature prominently in party agendas. Even so, it is important to note that not all parties took this approach as Herbert Macaulay and the Nigerian National Democratic Party (which was later absorbed into the NCNC) seemed to be more genuinely concerned with women's issues. Nonetheless, the two major parties during this time, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons and the Action Group, allowed mostly educated women to serve in different mid-level positions in the parties so that these few could rally the masses of women to join the party. The politically elite male nationalist leaders understood that women had the numbers to push any party to victory at the polls if they voted in a bloc. Although women were recognized as an important source of voters and supporters, they were not allowed to run for any leading political candidacy within the parties for quite some time following this period. In fact, the parties had no problem supporting a male candidate in his campaign against a female candidate of the same party. When the major

parties were experiencing fractioning and inner rivalries due to ideological and ethnic differences the women who had previously worked together under market women's associations were divided sharply. In order to spare the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies from this fate of division and dissolution Mrs. Kuti fought to keep the organization separate from political parties. This resulted in her many exchanges with the NCNC, the party that she personally affiliated with, but refused to allow the FNWO to support. Mrs. Kuti supported the idea of non-politicism as a means of protecting solidarity among women in order to work towards communal welfare of the society. Even so, women could be political at times when necessary, when their right to be active and have a voice in important governmental decisions was being infringed upon.

It was not biological determinism that decided women's activist path and ideology of non-politicism during the nationalist era but their assessment of the work that needed to be done and their communal responsibility to do that work. While men were fighting for self determination on a political front women were fighting in another way. Theirs was a "non-political" battle that centered preparing the populous for independence through development of education, infrastructure, and gender awareness which are all essential to establishing a functional and stable new nation. Thus agendas of women's collectives were more concerned with community development, gender relations, and an aversion of the strife caused by partisanship and the political struggle for self determination.

Chapter Six:

*Wetin Be Dis?: Unpacking the Non-Political Agenda of the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations

As I have shown from various sources in chapter five, women in the FNWO articulated nationalism through the lens of a non-political ideology (as did women in other contemporary organizations) which was expressed practically through their activist agendas and the stances that the group took on certain issues. Non-politicism as designed intentionally by women's nationalist groups, especially the FNWO, was an endeavor to create the solidarity which would create a sense of collective self determination, nationhood or national belonging, and progress for both women and the nation at large. In order to do this, they created an agenda which centered issues focused on social welfare rather than politics. The primary concerns of the FNWO nationalist agenda were social welfare, infrastructure, economic development, and socio-political consciousness raising.

Women's nationalism is not only comprised of intellectual currents but also practical application of those ideas and so the focus of this final portion of the research project is on women's non-political praxis as a distinct and complex iteration of nationalism. This chapter does not center the theoretical but the practical expression of nationalism among women of the FNWO. The non-political ideology of nationalism espoused by women, as defined in the previous chapter, was enacted through a specific agenda that supported national self determination. The nationalist expression of FNWO women, through various means of praxis, is assessed here to ascertain the ways in which they defined and advanced their agenda. As a result, this chapter analyzes initiatives for social welfare and community development, efforts at consciousness raising, gender equality, and the cultivation of gender awareness in society to interrogate the notion that, when considered, women's articulation of nationalism adds nuance to

the mainstream narrative of Nigerian nationalism. Even so, this chapter *does not* focus at any length on a comparison of mainstream and women's nationalism. Mainstream Nigerian nationalism and its core goals of governmental rule and political power have been established in the previous chapter's overview of Nigerian politics of the 1940s and 1950s. This chapter relies on an investigation of the distinctness of women's nationalist through the diversity of their agenda and attendant practices. This chapter focuses on the issues that formed the FNWO nationalist agenda and the stances that the organization took on these issues. Some of the matters that the group spoke out on often included women's rights, education, voting and political rights, mother-child healthcare, environmentalism and war; therefore, the FNWO stances in regards to these topics will be discussed here as a means of highlighting their practical contributions to and work towards self determination in Nigeria.

Women's Plight, Women's Rights

The FNWO acknowledged that the masses of Nigerian women constituted an underdeveloped class. The organization also attributed the degraded position, in which Nigerian women of the 1950s and 1960s found themselves, to the continuation of the underdevelopment that they experienced due to colonialism and the exacerbation of patriarchy that accompanied it. In the words of Mrs. Kuti:

> Before the British advent in Nigeria,…Women owned property, traded, and exercised considerable political and social influence in society. With the advent of British rule,…..instead of women being educated and assisted to live like human beings their condition has deteriorated…Even though they are the main producers of the country's wealth.[434]

In this early speech, the FNWO leader asserted that Nigerian women were not living a life that was commensurate with their worth in and contribution to society. This notion is further

[434] Funmilayo Kuti, *We Had Equality Til Britain Came* (Nigeria, 1947)

corroborated by other FNWO statements on women's status in Nigeria. One document from the organization entitled "Women's Plight in Nigeria" begins by saying: "The Nigerian women in the past and up till a very few years past have been relegated to the background without freedom of speech and freedom of movement after marriage."[435] The group even went so far as to characterize women as slaves of the Nigerian family:

> They are being spoken of as slaves of the family…A married wife is used as a servant to any and every member of her husband's household, any of them could order her to run any errand for him or her while he sat down doing nothing. Sometimes women have got to work very hard to earn their living to feed and clothe her children and herself, sometimes she has to be responsible for the husband's needs herself. A woman's working hours in many cases starts at 5a.m. and ends at 12 midnight [during which time she will eat little if she can afford it]. In the midst of all these hardships she is again asked to pay poll tax and rates of some sorts. The ranges of work these poor women do are selling of firewood, they have to walk for eight miles to fetch and carry the fire-wood and the heavy load, she could make at most 9d profit and this job would last at least seven hours, and at the end of it she is tired and worn out. Others carry sand for brick layers, or break big lumps of granite into small sizes with hammers; this is surely a very difficult task to make a livelihood.[436]

Women worked extremely hard and often times took on a disproportionate amount of work than men of the same household as they were expected to care for children, contribute to the household, and also obey those who were at a senior rank to them in the family. Women did grueling work outside the home and tedious work inside the home to the point that there was hardly time for them to eat. Under conditions like this there was likely no room for them to develop themselves intellectually and educate themselves on political, social, and economic issues that affected them. This lack of awareness only aided the perpetuation of their state of living because they did not know what measures they could employ and avenues they could take to fight for a better life and freedom from their current position.

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[435] Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies, *The Plight of Nigerian Women* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, Date Unknown)
[436] Ibid

Even well into the 1960s, after Nigeria won its independence on the first of October 1960, women were still experiencing a considerable amount of hardship in society. In a letter to the Secretary of the Women's International Democratic Federation (an international women's umbrella organization founded in Europe) in Germany Mrs. Kuti replied to a query to give an overview of the condition of the masses of Nigerian women. She said that the masses of women (market women) were illiterate and that this condition "makes life very difficult for them, they are easily exploited, suppressed, and cheated."[437] These women had many hardships in providing daily subsistence for themselves and their children. Mrs. Kuti went on to say that "this class of women are peddlers, laborers, farm workers, firewood sellers, palm oil sellers and makers, and petty traders."[438] She asserted that these women wake up at five in the morning to walk four miles to neighboring villages and towns to get the fruit and wood that they need to sell. On average these women made "nine pence to one shilling" and they had to use this paltry money to feed their families because the responsibility to feed the children was cast on the mothers and women. When they could not get other items to sell, these women would acquire small things like cigarettes and a few yards of material and attempt to sell them along the roadside. Mrs. Kuti questioned how feasible it was for one to be able to make a living off of such an aberrant enterprise. The selling of petty items was not largely profitable or sustainable for every woman because it was not easy for them to obtain things to sell. In addition to this the women did not have the materials that they needed to produce items to sell. According to Mrs. Kuti "The potters have no moulders, no machinery, the farmers do not use any kind of tractors or farming mechanisms, the traders do not get their wares from manufacturers but middle men, the

[437] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *Letter to WIDF Berlin* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, March 25th 1964)
[438] Ibid

firewood cutters and sellers have to do all their work by hand and to walk on their feet from village to town."[439]

Pregnant and nursing women had an especially hard time with earning a living in this way. These expectant mothers did not take any maternity leave because they were self employed and if they did not work then their family may not have been able to eat that day. According to the FNWO leader "they have very little nutrition and through this the mother becomes anemic and suffer from different kinds of diseases."[440] These women would usually eat more starchy food like cassava meal, rice, and yam which provided them with energy and carbohydrates to do the physically demanding work required of them. In the letter Mrs. Kuti made the point that Nigeria was an agricultural nation, however food prices were not at a rate that was affordable to women *and men*.[441] She was concerned about the welfare of all low wage earners, and not only women, because both men and women's income and their access to good nutrition affected their family stability substantially. She primarily wanted a better standard of living for her people. It is also important to note here that the survival of the family was important to the survival of the community as a whole. The family is the building block of the community which is the foundation of the nation in a collectivized culture. Even so, she understood that without healthy women the society could not grow and progress at any steady rate.

She was also concerned about the hardships that children faced. In fact the children also suffered from poor nutrition because the mother could not make enough to buy quality meats, fruits, and vegetables or milk for them.[442] To add a gendered analysis to this issue Mrs. Kuti pointed to the fact that female children were expected present gifts, clothes, and food to their

[439] Ibid
[440] Ibid
[441] Ibid
[442] Ibid

fathers as signs of appreciation. [443]This situation mandated that they had to go to work as "a wood seller, hawker, a potter, or a seller in the market."[444] In the end of the letter Mrs. Kuti stated that the situations she spoke of had improved but that there was much work to be done.

The FNWO continued this work with an announcement to the press, entitled *The Plight of Nigerian Women*, highlighted another reality for the masses of market women who formed the bulk of the membership of women's federations. It says:

> Now, women are struggling to see how they can better their condition; many of them are very strong in their organizations. Many of them had to fight with anyone who would attempt to discourage them from standing firm with their Women Organization policy. Many of them had been jailed politically to obtain their ends. Women are ready to be victimized, oppressed, and tortured in any way whatsoever to make the world a better place to live in.[445]

These women faced dire consequences to carry on the struggle for equality. As the statement reveals, some of them were jailed. In other instances, women were fined, beat by husbands for causing trouble as well as not being able to devote as much time to home duties, and coerced in various ways to stop their support of women's radicalism. For these reasons women sought solace in the ranks of the organizations to which they were affiliated. The organizations were more than outlets for activism. In one instance Professor Awe stated that she was approached by the governor to take a job as a commissioner on the executive council in the government. She said that the women had just decided that more women need to be in the government and she did not want to accept the position without consulting the older women in the organization first. She did not want to take the position if it would go against the collective aims of women in any way. The governor asked for a meeting with her with the other women present. The older women

[443] The gendered analysis here comes in the fact that I have highlighted a way in which a child's gender affects their position in life in tangible ways. I have pointed to the fact that specifically female children were expected to present these gifts to their fathers. If they had no means of buying them, they had to sell items and take up jobs that school age children should not have to do.
[444] Ibid
[445] The Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies, *The Plight of Nigerian Women* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, Date Unknown)

came and counseled Dr. Awe and the younger women at which time the decision was made that Professor Awe would not take the job. The governor asked to meet with all the women and explained that he would add another woman on the cabinet of 10-12 people. After this battle many other states in Nigeria adopted the rule that there must be two women on the cabinet. Although this was not much, it was an improvement and a move towards more representation for women in government.[446] Although Professor Awe was approached alone, she did not have to make the decision alone. She had immense support and mentoring from the women in the organization. Women wanted concrete changes to their daily situations and solidarity was an important aspect in their pursuits. The nationalist era presented women with the chance to actually create visibility and a platform for gendered issues and infuse their needs, voices, and perspectives into the fabric of institutions being developed in light of the fight for self determination and subsequent development of the independent state. Their agendas allowed them to speak on issues important to them, and that were in the best interests of the masses of men and women, in meaningful and direct ways.

Education

One of the most central and consistent issues on the FNWO agenda throughout the history of the organization was girl child education. As early as 1949 they were creating awareness of the gendered issue of education rights for girl children.[447] The organization took the stance that girls deserved the same access to education as did boys. In an article released under the Nigerian Women's Union, prior to changing its name to the FNWO, the organization publicly appealed to parents and guardians in the populous to encourage the development of girl children through supporting their right to obtain an education. The article begins,

[446] Bolanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* Ibadan, (Nigeria. February 2015)
[447] Nigerian Women's Union, *A Talk on Women* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, June 24th 1949)

> How beautiful would it be if our women could have the same opportunity with men. A parent who had means to educate a child would rather education his or her son, because he believed that he would be receiving big salary when he left school and took up a job either in the Secretariat or Post Office General or in one of the big Railway offices, or in the big U.A.C. offices in Lagos or Ibadan.[448]

Later in the document it is mentioned that the parents rather not educate girl children because they believed that it would not be fruitful to do so. It was this decision that left girl children "neglected." The parents thought that any resources and funds spent on girls' education would be wasted "in the kitchen" because all girls were destined to be in the domestic sphere supporting husbands and children, not working in the public sphere. The article drew a parallel between the status of adult women and the lack of education they received as minors saying that these girls became women who were "relegated to the background, enfeebled, uneducated, ignorant, and absolutely silenced and suppressed in obscurity. They are overworked and underfed, yet they don't complain, because they are unconscious of their right."[449] This article further suggests that the organization built a rationale that women were suffering due to a plight caused by intellectual underdevelopment and that this trajectory began in their childhood. This is a quite feasible conjecture as it is well known that the level of education that one receives has direct affects on not only their cognitive abilities, which impacts consciousness and analytical thought, but training and skill development which impacts their career trajectory and livelihood. The article continued to craft the image of wives as slaves and to say that, "As there is no country that can rise above her womenfolk," they were "appealing to the parents in this little article to give their daughters equal opportunity with their sons."[450] This is an interesting statement because by saying that no country can rise above the status of its women, the organization connected women's empowerment to national growth, stability, and development. If half of the population

[448] Ibid
[449] Ibid
[450] Ibid

is not able to contribute directly to the processes of governance and development in the nation then the rate of progress would definitely be impacted as one group would have to shoulder the task of nation building virtually on their own. This could not be a sustainable paradigm for self determination and independence in Nigeria.

The FNWO further discussed girl child education at the first Nigerian Women's Congress which took place on July 31st 1953. In the minutes of the meeting Mrs. Walker, the government advisor on women's education, commented on the state of female education in Nigeria.[451] She said, "women['s] education in Nigeria is very backward. This should not be so as God allowed us to beget men.…"[452] Mrs. Walker then posed the question, "What is our position as women in Nigeria today?"[453] She answered her own question saying that the situation is difficult because girls do not have equal access to education and, in regards to college age ladies, very few were in the University College. In order to address these issues she said that a new "Women's Education Society had been inaugurated all over the country."[454] She gave a report on the number of schools that had been created for girls at that moment and exclaimed that progress had been made in this pivotal area as 2,500 schools for girls were in existence. Although this was not at all enough to suffice for the whole population, it was an improvement from years prior.

Mrs. Walker went on to speak about the necessity of female teachers in their fight for girl child education. In order to have the increase in schools there must be an increase in teachers to work in the schools. There was a teacher shortage. Mrs. Walker appealed to the women at the meeting by saying that, "We all know the importance and pride of becoming a teacher, as a

[451] It is unknown whether Mrs. Walker was a member of the FNWO or not but she was likely there because she was in the government working on the same issue (of girl child education) that interested the FNWO.
[452] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Minutes of the Meeting of First Nigerian Women's Congress* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, July 31st 1953), 4
[453] Ibid
[454] Ibid

teacher is the mother of doctors, lawyers, engineers, secretaries, etc."[455] In this way she crafted the ideology that the mother-child relationship is applicable to and replicated within other relationships. A mother teaches and trains a child in the same way that a teacher would do a student. When that proverbial child-student becomes mature he or she would not only be a responsible adult but one who is deemed successful in the public sphere due to skills and knowledge acquired from the teacher-mother. This teacher-mother paradigm is indicative of the central principle of motherism wherein women use the skills and endurance that they gain as mothers to shape their communities in concrete ways. In this example, the influence of the mother is in how she raises the child who is the future of the community. In order to remedy the situation in regards to the teacher shortage, she suggested that girls be exposed to the opportunity of becoming teachers and told that they could continue this profession after marriage. The government in Nigeria was working on free education throughout the nation and Mrs. Walker exclaimed that, "We women must be at the forefront as God has created us leaders."[456] She followed this by saying that in order to obtain their rightful position as leaders, they would need a sound education and that since they are caretakers of the home and nation, they must be at the forefront of this education battle. The Congress discussion on education came to a close with Mrs. Adekogbe who said that women should not be begging for their legitimate rights and that they should "demand" more girls schools from the government.[457]

The issue of adult education was also central to the FNWO agenda. Girl child education was just beginning to be addressed and this meant that there were large numbers of uneducated adult women from prior generations who never had the ability to be educated. The situation was particularly difficult for northern Nigerian women. The women in the north of Nigeria who lived

[455] Ibid, 5
[456] Ibid
[457] Ibid, 7

under strictly repressive Islamic traditions were overwhelmingly uneducated, even more so than the women in the eastern and western regions. The organization secured monies from the Ford Foundation to help remedy this issue. Their document on conference resolutions stated that "an American agency known as the Ford Foundation made a grant of 68,000 dollars £24,000 to assist an experimental project for the development of women['s] education in the Northern Nigeria."[458] The FNWO resolved to demand that a commission be set up in the northern government and that FNWO delegates serve on the commission to oversee the use of the funds from the Ford Foundation. The FNWO also sought to address the need for adult education in the eastern and western regions by developing a mass adult education campaign to serve women in the villages. They planned to work with Extra-Mural Studies at the University College as well as other private entities in order to bring this adult female education program to fruition.[459]

Voting and Political Rights

The FNWO fought valiantly for universal suffrage.[460] According to Professor Ogunsheye

> I remember in 1958 when I went to a conference, I think it was the International Alliance of Women's conference. We had a meeting in eh, was it in France? I am not sure whether it was in France or Vienna. We had then won the battle for the right to vote, for women to vote, and there was still one or two European women's organizations that had not had the right to vote in their countries. And I remember they were surprised that we came from Africa and we said that we had already got the right to vote and the lady burst into tears. So the women did a lot of work in gettin'….I remember there was a time that we had it [right to vote] but they didn't have it in the north [of Nigeria]. Then at the next election all of us had it. Mrs. Ransome Kuti and this women's organization [led by Mrs.] Adekogbe, they were at the forefront of those rights.[461]

In light of the fact that northern women still did not have the right to vote, in 1954 the group resolved to "demand the introduction of universal adult suffrage to all three regions" before the

[458] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Conference Resolutions* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, 1959), 3
[459] Ibid
[460] To read more information on Nigerian women's enfranchisement see *Children's and Women Rights in Nigeria: A Wake-Up Call* (UNICEF Nigeria Planning Office: National Planning Commission, 2001) by Tony Hodges
[461] F.A. Ogunsheye, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. March 2015)

next federal election.[462] They also stipulated that voting rights should be given on a "non-taxation" basis, as this will give students and men and women from the age of 21 the advantage of participating in the setting up of their country's legislatures."[463] In other words, they advocated that people should not have to pay taxes as a prerequisite to having the right to vote. The right for young people to vote was a part of their stance on universal suffrage in all three regions being the north, east, and west. The greatest battle that the FNWO fought was that of suffrage for northern women. Women in the eastern and western regions of Nigeria had the right to vote since 1954 while those in the North did not have this right until 1970. The FNWO felt that the northern government did not respect "human dignity and social equality" as did many other nations around the world who had give women the right to vote.[464]

The FNWO cited the patriarchal ways of the Premier of the Northern Region, Sir Amadu Bello the Saudana of Sokoto in regards to his views on women's suffrage. The FNWO minutes circa May 1959 record a conversation between the Premier and a new reporter on the question of women voting. The reporter met the Premier at a self government celebration for the pending independence of Nigeria. When questioned about granting northern women enfranchisement he said, "the duty of a woman was to look after the home, not after politics."[465] He followed this statement with a prerequisite upon which he might grant women in the north voting rights. He said that, "If 50% of northern women signified their intention to exercise their civil rights and responsibilities" his government would "take the appropriate steps to implement the same."[466] In response to this the FNWO made a radical statement that it rejected the idea that women could

[462] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Resolution Notice* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, August 7th 1954)
[463] Ibid
[464] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Franchise for Women in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, circa May 1959),5
[465] Ibid
[466] Ibid

only gain the right to vote through "plebiscite by our women."[467] The group then posed the question as to whether the northern government had to conduct a referendum before it demanded freedom from the British. The answer was certainly not and they felt that women should not have to do the same as this was a ploy to slow the advance of women towards voting rights under the guise of liberalism and progressivism.

The group cited the United Nations *Resolution on the Political Rights of Women* to reinforce their stance on women's voting rights. On December 20th 1952 the United Nations (UN) adopted resolutions in regards to women's political rights. The first resolution stated that the UN was committed to ensuring the equal rights of men and women. The second was that an International Convention on the Political Rights of Women will be a vital to establishing a practical means of creating a universal realization that men and women should have equal rights. The UN Charter on the same issues stated that,

> Recognizing that every person has the right to take part in the government of his country and has the right to equal access to public service in his country, and desiring to equalize the status of men and women in the enjoyment and exercise of political rights, in accordance with the provision of the charter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" agrees that:
>
> 1. Women shall be entitled to vote in all elections on equal terms with men.
> 2. Women shall be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies, established by national law, on equal terms with men.
> 3. Women shall be entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms with men.[468]

The FNWO upheld these resolutions because they believed that women should be a part of the conversation when anything of national importance was being decided.[469] In doing so they

[467] Ibid
[468] Ibid
[469] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Resolutions Unanimously Adopted at the Third Special Conference of the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, August 28th-30th 1959), 1

defined their call for women's voting rights as a human rights initiative. The group wanted to affect change so that their "northern sisters" could achieve their desires and aims to exercise their rights. In the same document the FNWO recognized the Eastern House of Chiefs for their addition of two women members. The organization also expressed hope that other government bodies in the nation would do the same.

In much the same way as voting rights, the ability of women to be involved in shaping independence initiatives was pivotal to the FNWO objectives towards women's empowerment. To this end, the group made a statement at their Third Annual Conference that it condemned the actions of the federal government in its complete lack of support for women's initiatives. The federal government completely left women out of the construction of the Independence Program Committee. However, the FNWO pointed to the fact their conference "maintains that women, by virtue of their population which represents more than half of the whole population of the whole country, and our organization which embodied many women['s] organizations in the country, should be recognized when anything of national issue is to be decided."[470] The FNWO asserted that women were the majority population in the nation and for them not to have a say in the development of the nation after independence would be reprehensible. This would ensure that women remained in the same plight that they experienced under colonialism because their issues would not be included in the new political agenda. Gendered perspectives would not be considered in the shaping of the institutions and governance practices of the new nation if the women were left out of the bodies and committees that were making decisions that affect nation building practices.

Although FNWO women were fighting for the political freedoms of women they reinforced their stance as a non-political organization. At the third special conference in August

[470] Ibid

of 1959 the group stated that it reaffirmed "its policy of non alignment to any political party in the country."[471] Although they were becoming involved in explicitly political issues of governance and institutional influence, they still identified themselves as a non-political group. It was necessary for them to make this statement so that no one could confuse them for a political group. However, among women, this ideology of non-politicism warranted temporary involvement in political matters as necessary. In urgent circumstances women needed to speak out about political issues such as being left out of the conversations, committees, and processes that would ultimately form the foundations of the newly independent Nigeria. This would have serious implications as to women's standing in the country in coming decades.

Mother-Child Healthcare

Remaining non-political was important for the FNWO and in keeping with their non-political ideology, which supported social welfare initiatives, the women vehemently supported the issue of mother and child healthcare. The women spoke out about the neglect of women and children through denouncing inadequate spaces and resources for ensuring quality care and also by founding their own healthcare centers. Their stance was that the health of women and children is central to their growth, prosperity, and happiness, and development. In addition, their stance on women and children was also one for national good because without the health of this population guaranteed, Nigeria would not have a strong population to build the independent nation and to be responsible and capable contributors to society. Toward this end, in 1959 the FNWO demanded that the government put more effort into building "hospitals, natal clinics, recreation grounds, community centers and nurseries, and modern medicinal and educational facilities for Nigerian women and childre[n]."[472] Women in the community began to address

[471] Ibid
[472] Ibid

their own healthcare needs in the best ways they could. According to Dr. Awe: "Some of the women, the older women, saw the importance of women's health. Women who were not particularly educated. They started this center near Mapo where women could go for attention. To look at them, to look at their health."[473] Women were very concerned about healthcare.

On the 26th of November in1960 the FNWO President Mrs. Kuti wrote an appeal on the status of child healthcare to draw attention to the issue of preventable child diseases that too often led to death. She said that women were going through the daily "pains of motherhood" just to lose their babies in the end.[474] Mrs. Kuti referenced the story of Dr. Gans to make the point that an outsider had come into the country to care for Nigerian children in ways that their own medical officers would not. There was a doctor, Dr. Gans, who came to treat women and young children in Nigeria but the medical authorities did not take too kindly to him. She does not specify his country of origin but that he did not come with intent to be paid for his work. Dr. Gans sought to use his medical skills "in a way that would please God his maker."[475] He exhibited the empathy and compassion that she felt doctors should have towards these suffering populations. Instead of helping him in his endeavors, the Nigerian medical authorities threatened him with dismissal. She hoped to use this illustration as a means of shaming and pressuring the government to do more for children's health. She compared the low infant mortality rate in London with that rate in Nigeria saying that mothers in London "bear their children to live, while Nigerian mothers bear their own children to be buried."[476] Mrs. Kuti went on to say:

> I have visited children's hospitals in various countries and saw how priority was given to the care of their babies. I do not expect that Nigeria can yet afford the luxurious attention, care, and money lavished over these hospitals but it is only right and necessary

[473] Professor Bonlanle Awe, *Dissertation Interview* (Ibadan, Nigeria. February 2015)
[474] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *Please Help to Make Our Babies Live* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, November 11, 1960)
[475] Ibid
[476] Ibid

> that more sympathy and considerations are shown to the poor Nigerian children that they live and grow to become healthy and robust citizens of tomorrow. The women of Nigeria who carry these babies for nine months and went through the ordeal of motherhood implore the Medical Authorities in the Federal of Lagos to listen to the appeals of Dr. Gans and thereby reduce the tears in the eyes of hundreds of women who lose their babies daily…[477]

Mrs. Kuti continued to lead the FNWO campaign to gain visibility for mother-child healthcare issues in 1966. She typed a four page appeal that further described the precarious situation of women and children due to a lack of healthcare and critiqued the government for their inaction in this area. In the very opening of the document she said, "And since almost everything here is not directly looked after by the government, women and children could be no exception."[478] She pointed to the fact that the government was not fulfilling its primary duty which was to see to the welfare of the populous. In addition she analyzed the ways in which the socio-economic status and level of education of the parents affected the children's healthcare. The quality of healthcare that a child would receive was contingent upon the resources of the parents and their ability to pay for a certain level of medical attention. She called childcare in Nigeria "a lasses-faire affair" because "there is no national plan for the welfare of children before they are five years old."[479] In order to add another dimension to this situation she said that illiteracy and lack of education among women has created a situation whereby women do not even utilize even the inadequate resources that are available to them. She went on to highlight the fact that the government had not moved to create any child labor or education laws to protect children.[480]

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[477] Ibid
[478] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *Women and Children Welfare in Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, September 8th 1966), 1
[479] Ibid, 1
[480] Ibid, 2

Later in the document she further analyzed the infant mortality rate with figures from Lagos. Statistics from the whole country were not available but in 1963 in Lagos the infant mortality rate was "67.8 per 1,000 live births and in 1964 58.3 per 1,000 live births."[481] The causes of death among babies under one year of age was attributed to pneumonia and bronchitis which killed 19% of babies in 1963 and 20% in 1954. Other diseases included dysentery, diarrhea, malnutrition, and avitaminosis, and measles. [482] Mrs. Kuti critiqued the nation's practices saying that a part of the issue was that their healthcare is more curative than preventive. In addition, hospitals, health centers, and maternity homes were not sufficient to handle the demands of the population.[483] According to her, there was

> only one children['s] hospital in the whole country and this is in Lagos and it only has 85 beds. There are 228 general hospitals and nursing homes and these contain 16, 848 beds. There are 2 teaching hospitals with 747 beds, 15 infectious disease hospitals with 532 and 2 orthopedic hospitals with 307 beds. There are 10 other hospitals however that deal with other diseases like mental troubles. Children can be treated in any of these hospitals.[484]

She used quantitative data to support the FNWO stance that the government must develop more means of addressing the healthcare issues and needs of mothers and children.

In terms of literacy and child health Mrs. Kuti said that there was no move to introduce family planning. Most of the people in the nation at that time were poor and living well below the poverty level. It was very difficult for them to care for their children after birth. Even so, some people would continue to have children due to lack of awareness of contraception benefits and methods. Mrs. Kuti revealed that "even the houseless and unemployed rear children."[485] Her position was that people who did not have the means of caring for children would be greatly aided by knowledge of family planning. In June of 1959 Mrs. Kuti wrote to C.F. Boush in New

[481] Ibid, 3
[482] Ibid
[483] Ibid,3
[484] Ibid, 4
[485] Ibid, 1

York to express her interest in the services offered by the Planned Parenthood agency.[486] She expressed that family planning was one of the biggest problems faced by people in her part of the world. Her request was to have Planned Parenthood bring a person from Nigeria to the U.S. and train them in family planning practices so that this person could come back to Nigeria and train others to teach the masses about family planning. She further explained to Mrs. Boush that "Our organization feels that before we can come forward to tackle the problem publicly we should have a trained person who could present it in a non-offensive way."[487] Mrs. Kuti went on to suggest that her daughter, a trained nurse with six years experience, be the one to be trained in the U.S. and bring that knowledge back to Nigeria. It is not known whether this arrangement ever came to fruition however, what is sure is that this attempt to bring knowledge of family planning to Nigeria was a very progressive stance taken by the FNWO.

In the end of her appeal on healthcare Mrs. Kuti noted that the government should be rectifying these issues. She said that her organization was of the belief that the government should start to address healthcare disparities and that it should also be ready to "give direction" to any group that wished to help. In addition she added that organizations could not build concrete programs to address these issues without financial aid from the government.[488] The FNWO sought a solution to the problem of government intervention through a platform of educating the masses through "lectures, meetings, and social activities."[489] They also planned to develop nurseries near the markets so that market women could have their children cared for while they worked. These initiatives were purposed primarily to help alleviate the hardships of

[486] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *Letter to Planned Parenthood* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, June 16th 1959), 1
[487] Ibid
[488] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *Women and Children Welfare in Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, September 8th 1966),4
[489] Ibid

mothers and children but also to garner gender awareness by creating visibility of the dire nature of the situation for women and children. The organization also sought to speak out on the inactivity of the government on the subject as a means of pressuring them to respond favorably.

Environmentalism

Another area of national development that lacked the necessary level of government intervention and that the organization was concerned with was agriculture. The FNWO believed that "Nigeria could be one of the major food suppliers in the world" but that its arable land was not being properly managed and properly cultivated.[490] They felt that,

> the basic obstacle to efficient agriculture in Nigeria is the presence of stumps in the fields. Stumps prevent ploughing and obstruct the systematic employment of all future operations, planting, weeding, and reaping. Sprouting stumps are superweeds and take most of the fertility from the soil….Only removal of the stumps followed by systematic ploughing allows the green matter to be returned and thus enrich the soil.[491]

In April of 1953 the group joined forces with the Egba Farmers Association to give a demonstration to farmers on how to clear their fields of bushes and tree stumps which would make their land use more efficient.[492]

The organization aimed to teach farmers how to use mechanized farming techniques to ensure that their land was free from brush and tree stumps which could affect the growth of the crops they were planting. The demonstration consisted of teaching farmers how to operate tractors and use them to uproot tree stumps. Additionally, the farmers were taught how to chop the tree stumps into firewood that could be sold, or stored, because firewood was in great demand and, as such, was costly. For the latter part of the demonstration the FNWO women planned to have professionals show farmers how to plant, sow, till, weed, and reap using tractors

[490] Nigerian Women's Union, *Agricultural Demonstration: Press Handout* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, April 24th 1953), 1
[491] Ibid
[492] Ibid

and trailers.[493] There was no illusion as to the realization that these poor farmers would not largely be able to afford tractors or mechanized means of crop cultivation. In response to this the organization said, "We are fully aware that the millions of small farmers which represent the backbone of the present farming community of Nigeria, will not be able to buy tractors."[494] Their "intention therefore" was "to employ proficient teams in the best and fastest methods of stumping…by means of tractor…" to remove stumps and to fulfill all other requirements of small farms so that they could build a business model wherein their agricultural teams would be contracted out to the farmers for fees they could afford. The FNWO was very enterprising and wanted to enact this business model in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture so that together they could "foster the introduction of better seeds and seedlings."[495] Their ultimate goal was to have inculcated these mechanized skills to small farmers who could form collectives and combine their funds from their increased output to buy and share their own tractors among themselves. In essence the women wanted to increase the prosperity of farmers while increasing the rate of production and quality of food in Nigeria.

Mrs. Kuti and the FNWO also fought to save the environment from manmade destruction through the testing of atomic bombs.[496] The group released many statements and held press conferences on condemning the use of the atomic bomb.[497] The whole world saw the destruction of the atomic bombs that had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during WWII in 1945. The French, who were experiencing considerable trouble from the nationalist rebellion in their colony in Algeria, considered the possibility of dropping an atomic bomb in Algeria prior to their

[493] Ibid
[494] Ibid
[495] Ibid
[496] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Special Conference on the Atomic Bomb Test in the Sahara* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, July 23rd 1959), 1
[497] Ibid

expulsion from the country by the rebels.[498] This would have ensured complete destruction and devastation in the area as a reward for the fight for self determination. Toward this end the French decided to move forward with testing the atomic bombs in the Algerian Sahara.

In a debate with a colonial officer in 1945 Mrs. Kuti vociferously said that the bomb would have never been dropped on Germany "because Germany is a white race, the Germans are your kinsmen. While the Japanese are just a dirty yellow people. I know you, the white mentality: Japanese, Chinese, Africans, we are all subhuman. You would drop a bomb on Abeokuta or any of your colonies if it suited you!"[499] She highlighted the fact that a racial dichotomy was inherent in colonialism. This is one of the ways in which she articulated the Black consciousness that existed among women in the FNWO. In her view, people of the colonies were people of color whom the colonials, who were from European nations, did not value and whose culture they did not respect. The European colonial regimes only worked with people of color as far as they could siphon resources and labor from them. When the people of color began to express their right and desire to be free from the colonial relationship, the European colonial regimes had no problem destroying the infrastructure in their former colonies or maiming and murdering whole ethnic groups who rebelled against them.[500] This is most definitely treatment that one gives to another who is invaluable, dispensable, and subhuman.

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[498] Ibid, 2

[499] Wole Soyinka, *Ake: The Years of Childhood* (London: Rex Collings Ltd., 1981), 244; Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 41

[500] Some famous cases of this type of sabotage and genocide that colonial regimes used in African countries are those of the Belgians in the Congo, the French in West Africa, the British in Kenya, the Germans in East Africa, and the Portuguese in Mozambique. For more on colonial methods of terrorism and suppression see Stepahnie Urdang *And They Still Dance* (1989); Ruth Blakeley *State Terrorism and Neoloberalism: The North in the South* (2009) chapter 3; Adam Hochschild *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (1998); Caroline Elkins *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (2005); Jergen Zimmerer, Joachim Zeller, and Edward Neather *Genocide in German South-West Africa: The Colonial War of 1904-1908 in Namibia and its Aftermath* (2008); Mahmoud N. Musa and Adebayo E. Adeyemi *Terrorism and Political Violence in West Africa: A Global Perspective* (2015); Dorothy Pickles *Algeria and France: From Colonialism to Cooperation* (2015); Sven Lindqvist *A History of Bombing* (2003)

On Thursday July 23rd 1959 Mrs. Kuti led a press conference voicing the FNWO stance on the atomic bomb. She aimed to alert the press to the "attitude and policy of the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies on the very important question of the French government's decision to test the atomic bomb in the Sahara."[501] At this special press conference Mrs. Kuti first read a cable sent to Queen Elizabeth which said that the FNWO "on behalf of millions of Nigerian mothers and children protest vehemently the French government's decision to test the atomic bombs in the Sahara…"[502] The statement concluded by asking Queen Elizabeth to step in and protect Nigeria from the fallout of the tests "as leader of the commonwealth." This statement was a clever rhetorical device in two ways. First it both radically demanded an end to the tests through vehement opposition while also remaining affable by appealing to the queen as the "leader of the commonwealth" which reminds her of her position and responsibility to be a servant-leader and "protect" those under her jurisdiction. Secondly, it sought to have someone more influential than them to the French. They wanted the British, who were equals with and could talk with the French, to appeal to their European neighbor to stop the tests because Nigerians wanted to take their independence in October of 1960 without being "maimed and rendered useless."[503] The cable concluded by saying that the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should be stopped from happening again and that the Nigerian women appeal to the queen as mothers. With this wording the FNWO attempted to connect to the queen with a shared sense of womanhood and also motherhood as to invoke in her a sense of compassion, especially for the impact that this would have on children and their futures.

[501] Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations, *Special Conference on the Atomic Bomb Test in the Sahara* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, July 23rd 1959), 1
[502] Ibid
[503] Ibid

The organization also sent a message to several other groups in the United Kingdom which said that as Nigeria raises its standard of living and begins to cultivate its resources for itself the women, "believe that the French government's decision to test the atomic bombs in the Sahara is to destroy the natural resources and lives of Africans, terrorize the people's demand for national independence, and intensify the dying colonialism in Africa."[504] They urged the groups that received this message to use their protests to help prevent the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that still presents a challenge to mankind. The FNWO understood that the fallout from the bomb would have definite consequences at the detonation site but would also bother surrounding areas as the radiation traveled and settles in the land and water. They drew a parallel between the desire for self determination among Africans to control African land and resources and the colonial goal to horde ultimate control of and continue the siphoning those same resources without regard to socio-economic impact among the indigenous people. Their calls for a cessation of the atomic bomb tests were to no avail. The French led a devastating bombing raid on Algeria to fight the nationalist army there and also tested three atomic bombs in the Sahara desert.

War

The FNWO realized that war and the tools of war can be devastating to the physical environment but even more so to the inhabitants of any given war zone. Another very important part of their agenda was to fight against war and the causes of war. This is one of the causes, among many others, that linked them to the Women's International Democratic Federation

[504] Ibid, 2

(WIDF), an international umbrella organization founded in Paris in 1945.[505] The first four objectives of the WIDF signal their staunch stance on war and militarism:

1. Continuously expose the policies of war and aggression of the imperialists headed by the United States; heighten our vigilance; prevent imperialism from launching a world war; defend world peace.
2. Oppose imperialist arms expansion and war operations; abolish aggressive military treaties and military blocs; dismantle foreign military bases; withdraw troops stationed on foreign soil; strive for the realization of general disarmament through tenacious struggle.
3. Completely ban the use, stockpiling, manufacture, and test of nuclear weapons and destroy all existing nuclear weapons; oppose the U.S. imperialists' policy of nuclear blackmail
4. Liquidate militarism; oppose the revival of West German and Japanese militarism fostered by U.S. imperialism.[506]

Since the FNWO was an affiliate of the WIDF these four objectives undoubtedly influenced and strengthened the FNWO stance on war and their analysis of the issues that women, as well as men and children, faced as a result of war. In a lecture on war and peace from 1967 the FNWO leader drew vivid imagery as to the fear and costs of war. She said that daily mothers were in a state of panic, not knowing what tomorrow would bring. Mrs. Kuti went on to describe Nigeria as a place "in turmoil" like "an expectant mother about to give birth to a new baby."[507] She went on to say that the very "surgeons called upon to help in bringing out the new baby, (a new Nigeria) are working at cross purposes to the detriment of both mother and baby."[508] Then these questions are posed: "Will the expected child arrive alive or will it be a still-born babe? Will the mother herself survive the agony in the present circumstances? This portrayal of Nigeria as a mother who is in travail and does not know if she and her child will live was another rhetorical device meant to enforce the precariousness of both women's plight and that of the country. It

[505] Women's International Democratic Federation, *Pertinent Information Concerning the Women's International Democratic Federation* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, c.1964), 1
[506] Women's International Democratic Federation, *WIDF Bureau Meeting* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, June 18-19th 1963), 2
[507] Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, *Lecture on the Fear of War* (Ibadan, Nigeria: K.O. Dike Archives, 1967)
[508] Ibid

was meant to be provocative and to create sympathy for women's calls for a resolution to the looming conflict. Mothers and motherhood have always been revered in African societies and so invoking motherhood as a symbol for the nation has a strong resonance. The introduction ends with "We the representatives of Nigerian womanhood are genuinely worried about the future---the future of the country and the future of our children and that of the coming generation."[509]

The message was clear that Nigerian women desired peace at all costs. The FNWO leader argued that it was only through peace that Nigerian national issues could be addressed and that if there was no peaceful atmosphere the economy as well as the populous would suffer tremendously. Mrs. Kuti also stated that the Aburi meeting did not do much to allay the fears of civil war sparked when the Igbo peoples of the Biafra region of the country resolved to secede from the rest of the country due to political and economic disagreements. The Aburi meeting was a peaceful gathering of Nigerian military leaders in a neutral area of Ghana that had recently taken place in 1967 prior to this lecture. Since the meeting peace had been fading and this led Mrs. Kuti to remark that, "Sanity appears to have given away to emotion, sentimentalism, and chauvinism."[510] Then she asked "Whither Nigeria, once the hope of Africa and bastion of democracy? Whither Nigeria, once reputed to be inhabited by mature people? Whither Nigeria, the giant of Africa? Whither Nigeria, the leading light of the Organization for African Unity?"[511] This line of questioning was interesting in that it induced introspection without blaming specific persons but it also situated Nigeria as a leader in Africa with more at stake than the short-sighted disagreements over governmental control of the country. It had a continental and global image to protect. Quite possibly the most interesting question was that of the Nigeria's place in the Organization of African Unity (OAU). This was an organization founded by Kwame Nkrumah

[509] Ibid
[510] Ibid
[511] Ibid, 2

the first president of Ghana to increase cooperation among African countries and coordinate their forces to help one another expel the colonials and to rebuild their countries. The OAU was a group that was founded upon Pan-African principles and mutual respect of life. Mrs. Kuti posed the question of Nigeria's status in that organization, in light of the looming civil war, to hold the military leaders accountable for their fraudulent behavior in comparison to the ideals of the OAU.

The lecture continued to appeal to intellectual reasoning. She proclaimed that the people of Nigeria were under colonial rule together at which point many ethnicities were made to live amongst and alongside one another without this manner of incident. The people suffered the horrors, terrorism, and indignities of colonialism and experienced some of its benefits such as a better infrastructure without waging war on one another. The FNWO leader also said that "Civil war will not solve our problems; it will create new complex ones and make the solution of the old ones impossible. Why then embark upon a suicidal exercise that will (mutually disruptive) to all concerned?"[512] Next she emphatically stated that "We the women folk of Nigeria do not want another Congo here. We do not want to live in another Vietnam. We fear another Korea in the heart of the African continent."[513] She cited these other countries to exemplify not only the tragedies that took place but also to say that although conflict, inner wars, and turmoil have consumed other nations they survived and Nigeria could do the same "with determination, goodwill, tolerance, and love."[514] However, it would be necessary to mobilize against the few who would gain something from causing instability in the nation and the "self appointed few with vested interests who lobby out military leaders…These few are enemies of Nigerians…We shall root them out from their dens." She continued by saying that the responsibility for

[512] Ibid, 2-3
[513] Ibid, 3
[514] Ibid

restoring peace rested on the military leaders primarily because peace could only truly be recognized if the Nigerian army settled its differences to give united leadership to the country.

The lecture ended with a bold statement that the country is larger than any one citizen. The FNWO wanted cooperation, conversation, unity, and to remain one country. They did not want "apartheid among Africans in an African country."[515] They wanted a country where no group was oppressed and where people were protected by constitutional rights.

Summary

The FNWO expressed nationalism through an non-political agenda which overwhelmingly centered socio-economic, although at times political, objectives that included education, voting and political rights, mother-child healthcare, environmentalism, and war. They sought to enhance gender awareness through bringing visibility to the plight of the masses of women being overworked, undernourished, and lacking the skills and resources necessary to make a living wage. One of the factors that contributed to the oppressive state of women was the lack of girl-child education. Women who were not educated did not have the consciousness to articulate the underlying causes of their underprivileged situation and the knowledge of ways in which they could address their situation. It was not difficult to keep the masses of poor women in a politically disenfranchised state with no education, no awareness of their right as citizens, and the stipulation that voters must pay taxes. A number of these elements kept them from performing at a level wherein they would be considered capable to navigate political spaces as did men. Environmental issues only exacerbated the situation for women as they kept the poor farmers from reaping quality produce that the market women could sell on the roadside and in the market stalls. War only exacerbated the environmental problems as life and land is always threatened and lost in armed conflicts.

[515] Ibid, 4

In addressing these issues the FNWO took stances that exhibited underlying tenets of gender awareness, community building, and Black consciousness. The group sought to ensure that both girl children and women had access to quality education through creating visibility of this gendered issue among the general population. They established their own adult literacy programs and pressured the government to become involved in establishing schools for girls. The group did the same type of consciousness raising for women's voting and political rights as a step towards gender equality in the nation. Their plans for environmental renewal through agriculture and healthcare reform were developed in such a way as to directly affect the livelihood of the masses in the surrounding communities where the women's groups resided. They sought to build the communities of self sufficient and healthy people through better farming practices and better maternity care. The testing of the atomic bombs had a large impact on the environment where they were dropped and the women spoke out vehemently against the tests. Then Mrs. Kuti even articulated a stance that racism was central to the decision to use the bomb on and test the bomb near the homelands of people of color and not in Europe. This was one instance of Black consciousness from the FNWO. During the Biafran War the women took a stance that centered community building through peace, cooperation, development, and Pan-ethnicism among military rulers and publicly called upon the military leaders to bring stability, safety, and order to the country. Through these means the FNWO not only articulated but practiced a unique brand of nationalism that was attached to their distinct ideology of non-politicism.

Conclusion: What is Women's Nationalism?

Women's nationalism, I have argued (in this dissertation), is women's agency and self determination as expressed through their *leadership* of nationalist movements. This is the difference between *women's nationalism* and *women in nationalism*. The latter phrase identifies women as helpers and supporters of male led nationalist movements which inherently limits the consideration of women's actions to one paradigm, that of the willing assistant. Nigerian women articulated nationalism in a way that was distinct from the mainstream, politically elite, and male led forms of nationalism that were prevalent during the colonial and post colonial eras. These forms were rooted in governmental control and amassing political power which caused much divisiveness and ethnicism. In order to recognize this it is necessary to use a model that situates women during the nationalist movement as autonomous and not only dependent actors. Recording their intellectual history will give insight into the ideologies and philosophies that shape their complex articulations of nationalism and the resultant agendas that they championed. In light of this *Ojo Nro* (Its Raining) represents a reinvigoration (as does the rain) of perceptions of women and nationalist enterprise through its analysis of Nigerian women's contributions to nationalist theory and practice through non-political ideology and agendas/initiatives.

The Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations (FNWO) articulated nationalism through their intellectual and practical stances that centered gender awareness, community development, transnationalism, Black consciousness, music radicalism, and especially non-politicism. The combination of these several factors in the expression of their nationalism made it highly distinct from mainstream forms of nationalism. Their goal was to cultivate a progressive society, gender equity, and national self determination. They worked toward this by developing an ideology and agenda that highlighted social welfare, women's leadership and

empowerment, collective consciousness raising, and strategies for achieving solidarity across political, religious, class, and ethnic divisions. The aspects of gender awareness, music radicalism, Black consciousness, and transnationalism first appeared in their anti-colonial nationalism during the early days of the organization when it was known as the Abeokuta Women's Union. At this time in the organizational history of the FNWO Mrs. Kuti utilized transnationalism as a tool for women's empowerment. She strategically forged strong bonds with women's groups in Britain who could publicize and gain support for Nigerian women's calls for equality and national freedom. It was through her contacts in Britain that she met delegates from the Women's International Democratic Federation and built a long lasting relationship with them in pursuit of shared goals for peace, gender equality, and national freedom. Their transnationalism was a means for them to gain visibility and backing, outside of Africa, for their nationalist aims.

In terms of gender awareness, music radicalism, and race consciousnsess, these elements were expressed in the early history of the FNWO as well. Gender awareness was an underlying factor of their famous anti-colonial tax revolt. Their use of music as a weapon of protest during the anti-tax campaign helped to radicalize the message of their opposition. Also, Mrs. Kuti's use of Yoruba culture, language, and dress as a show of solidarity and also as a means of combating the hierarchy of race that coincided with British colonialism was a marker of their early development of Black consciousness. This understanding of the importance of race also became apparent in the FNWO positions on the atomic bomb tests in Algeria when Mrs. Kuti analyzed race as a factor in the decision not to drop the bomb on the Germans but on the Japanese and Africans. Nigerian women's nationalist expressions, as exhibited in the early history of the FNWO, were complex and multifaceted in their combination of gender awareness, music

radicalism, and Black consciousness. However, this can only be ascertained by examining their *leadership* of nationalist movements in Nigeria.

Non-politicism and community development/social welfare were two of the most prevalent means by which women in the FNWO expressed their nationalist aims in the late 1950s and into the 1960s. One of the most interesting intellectual stances of the FNWO was that of non-politicism. This was a philosophy of non-conformity to mainstream political doctrines that proved divisive. But it was moreover a means by which women of the FNWO could create a safe space in their organization to cultivate a collective consciousness in their objectives towards women's empowerment. Non-politicism mandated that women be allowed to develop a collective consciousness about political and economic issues that affected them and the nation away from the controlling gaze of the major political parties of the era. Therefore gender solidarity was a key component of the non-political philosophy. At the center of this idea was the notion that women had a shared responsibility (with men) to community development/social welfare per the terms of their cultural cosmology of gender which required cooperation among men and women. In their adherence to non-politicism the FNWO did not want governmental control nor did they support, endorse, or seek alliance with any political parties even when they were asked or expected to do so. Non-politicism, by virtue of being a more objective means of assessing the state of the nation and society, championed the building of an attitude of progressiveness among the people, both men and women. As a result, community development was at the center of their progressive agenda for change and national development. The FNWO knew that the masses of men and women in Nigeria needed to have certain skills and consciousness in order to do the work of nation building after independence. They also understood that a society can never be truly progressive if half of its members were

underdeveloped and so they brought visibility to gender issues and Nigerian women's plight in their speeches, writings, and press releases. It was through addressing mother and child healthcare, education for women and girls, political and voting rights, environmentalism, and the Biafran War that they both empowered women and also helped to garner solidarity and a sense of nationalism among the people. Their efforts to work with farmers and also to bring military leaders together to end the encroaching civil war are examples of their post-colonial commitment to developing a stable nation wherein people work in synergy to build more productive and functioning systems and peaceful security in governance.

The nationalist ideology and practices of the FNWO grew and changed over time. The group began as the Abeokuta Ladies' Club (ALC) which centered on teaching marriage skills to middle class and elite women. When market women entered the group in the mid 1940s their experiences with poverty and disenfranchisement helped to radicalize the ALC which then recognized the links between women's oppression and colonialism. The group changed its name to the Abeokuta Women's Union and began educating and mobilizing women in support of gender equality through anti-colonialist rhetoric. In the late 1940s the organization experienced another shift. It broadened its membership to invite women nationwide to join and it became the Nigerian Women's Union (NWU). During this period the group began developing Black consciousness as a part of their nationalism. This can be seen in their creating of transnational links with women in the African Diaspora who shared a common heritage and oppression with them. The group reached out to Black women outside of Africa namely Mary McLeod Bethune and Amy Ashwood Garvey to begin conversations on how they could collaborate on shared goals. The next major shift for the collective came in the 1950s when it again changed its name to the Federation of Nigerian Women's Organizations (FNWO) to signify its aim to bring all

Nigerian women's rights movements under one solidified banner. The FNWO expressed a nationalist ideology that was pointedly non-political. They had not made an outward claim to be non-political in their earlier history but as they grew and experienced more pressure from male politicians to join one party or another, they developed a non-political nationalist ideology that centered political awareness and autonomy for women, inter-ethnic and bi-partisan cooperation, and social justice. In the 1960s the FNWO continued to articulate this unique brand of non-political activism by instituting social aid programs and taking up environmental issues as well. Over time their nationalism grew from one rooted in anti-colonialism to one that centered a uniquely contrived ideal of non-politicism.

Women's nationalism was distinct from mainstream versions of nationalism in not only its unique expression of nationalism that combined elements such as gender, music, and non-politicism; it was also distinct in that it was African centered and progressive in ways that other forms were not. Their philosophy of nationalism exhibits an intersection of the West African cosmology of dualism (which informed their gendered view of social responsibility also referred to as *relative perception*) and nationalist consciousness. Both the cosmology of dualism (necessity of a complementary relationship between men's and women's actions) and relative perception (a sense of shared responsibility to community development among men and women) shaped women's collective expression of self determination in Nigeria. To further this point, it is imperative to point out that women's non-political ideology was a unique tenet of their nationalism that was developed as a means of recognizing their shared responsibility to national development. While men were fighting the nationalist cause for freedom by governmental control through politics women sought to develop nationalism through progressiveness and social welfare. For this reason they championed gender equality, solidarity across all lines,

political and economic awareness, better use of the environment, and peace among military rulers. Their aim was to develop the minds of the populous and, at the same time, equip them with the tools necessary to support a newly independent nation so that self determination in Nigeria would prove successful. This was equally important to and also complements what men were doing in light of the cause of nationalism. One of the inherent implications of this research is that women articulated their nationalism as they did due to their sense of shared responsibility to build a self sufficient nation which was rooted in an African-centered philosophy of community development. This differed from men's articulation of nationalism in that theirs was more grounded colonial principles of coercion, political power, and control of government by virtue of the fact that they were fighting in an arena established by the British colonial administration.

In addition, women's nationalism was also distinct in that they espoused a very progressive agenda. The FNWO purposed to build political and economic consciousness among the people, fighting for women's rights, educating children and adults, and developing healthcare infrastructure, and market economy. While men were fighting for political and governmental control women put the country on the track to becoming self sustaining through developing an educated and enlightened populous. Their impact cannot be overstated, although it has been overlooked due to an overwhelming focus on men's nationalism. Another inherent implication of this research is that women developed one of the earliest practical means of cultivating solidarity. They believed in cultivating the idea of one Nigerian nation from multiple ethnic groups and identities. This is exhibited in their intellectual development of non-politicism which consistently called for togetherness across all lines, political, social, economic, ethnic, and religious. This is highly significant because where men's politics tore peoples apart, women

were able to build alliances across lines for the good of the nation. This is what nationhood and nationalism thrive from, solidarity through common interest. In essence, Nigerian women like Mrs. Kuti and the FNWO were the first to successfully develop this idea of one unified Nigeria into a self determined practice.

Women's nationalism expands the boundaries of African nationalist historiography. It does so in theory and practice. However this has been overlooked due to a lack of considering women as *leaders* of nationalist movements. Women developed a philosophy nationalism that was completely novel in its combination of gender, community development, transnationalism, Black consciousness, music radicalism, and non-politicism. Their ideology of non-politicism is also theoretically unchartered territory in terms of articulating feminist empowerment and nationalist self determination. Feminism and nationalism are not widely seen as non-political, but Nigerian women's nationalism challenges these notions. Their agenda or practice of nationalism was broader than that of male nationalist leaders because they adhered to a different philosophy of nationalism that involved establishing the development of women and national progress as one endeavor. These methods of articulating nationalist theory and practice are unique to women and have been overlooked due to a focus on male nationalism in histories of Africa. However, through studying women's nationalism one can clearly see that there are yet more possibilities for analyzing the theory and practice of nationalism in Africa from the colonial to post-colonial periods. In light of the assertion of *Ojo Nro*, these possibilities only come to the fore when we consider women as *leaders* and autonomous creators of intellectual narratives and not supporters of men only.

There are many possibilities for expanding this conversation on women's intellectual and activist history in Africa. There are many individual women as well as women's collectives

throughout the continent who have not received proper and substantive assessment of the complexities of their intellectual thought as it relates to activism and development in Africa. To this end, further studies may explore African women's Pan-African thought within and without the continent. This type of research would involve a transnational approach to Black women's empowerment. As the introduction points out, Black women activists such as Amy Ashwood Garvey and Mrs. Kuti were in conversation with one another to resolve the issues that Black women and people were facing in their time. Exploring the intellectual currents and practical actions that stemmed from relationships between Black women activists transnationally would produce a new insight into Black women's activism and help to build a transnational intellectual history of Black women. It would also spark inquiry into the existence of a Black women's transnational movement from the perspective of African women which would diversify the current narrative of Black women's transnationalism that heavily centers western Black women.

APPENDICIES

Appendix A:

Research Instrument

Biographical Questions

What is your name?
Parents' names?
How many siblings do you have?
Where and when were you born?
Where did you grow up?
What other places have you lived?
What are some of your fondest childhood memories?
What is your highest level of education?
What jobs have you had? What do you do for a living now?

Local History and Community Life

Describe the place you lived in— urban neighborhood, small town,
rural community, suburb — where you grew up.
What was it like?
How has it changed over the years?
What brought about these changes?
What were some of the most memorable, important, or popular events that occurred while you lived there?
What did majority of people do for a living?
What places stand out most in your mind and why?
What kinds of local gatherings and events were there?
What stories and memories come to mind when you think of this place/time?

Important Events and women's experiences

How have historical events affected your life such as colonialism,WWII or the Decolonization eras?
What was life like for you as a working class man/woman during this time?
Were you married? Where did you work? Did you have children?
What were people doing to speak out against hardships and issues that men/women like you faced under colonialism?
What were people saying about gender equality at this time? What did it mean to you? Were there any notable women's groups in your area that were very active in the fight for gender equality?

How did you first learn about women's rights movements in your area?
Were you a member/supporter of any women's organizations? If yes, What was that like? If no, what were the reasons you disagreed?

Kuti and Jibolu-Taiwo Family

Did you know any members of the Kuti family? How did you meet?
Did you know Funmilayo? Can you describe her?
Did you know her as a young woman in her college years?
Did she have an interest in music? How do you know?
Did you know any of her children?
What was her relationship with her husband like?
How did she keep up with domestic duties although she was such a public figure?
Were you familiar with the Jibolu-Taiwo family?
Where did they reside primarily?
What types of things did she do within the family as a leader in the Jibolu-Taiwo family?

Women's Union

Were you familiar with Abeokuta Women's Union? If so What types of things did you hear about them?
Were you involved in any initiatives of the AWU? If, so what did you do? Did the group reach out to other women leaders and groups? Did it have a national or international presence?
Can you describe the leader of the AWU?
Can you describe meetings, protests, and testimony of women used to fight against colonialism?
Do you remember any of the songs women produced in the AWU? What was their significance?
Can you sing one for me? What was your favorite one? Why?
Was there a point at which women became militant in their ideals or actions? How so?
Did the NWU reach out to women's orgs in other African countries?
Did women consider race as an important factor in their fight for rights?
What types of initiatives did women establish to help raise the status of women and girls?
Why did the group claim to be non-political at a point?

Gendered Perspectives

Can you describe men's and women's roles in Yoruba culture? Is one more privileged than the other?
How did colonialism/adherence to western culture affect the relationship between men and women? What was the relationship like after independence?
How did women's protests affect relationships between men and women?
Were many men supportive of women's activism? (For male participants) Were you supportive of the women's campaign?

How were they able to inform the community of their issues and create a sense of togetherness with men? Did they accept men's support?
How were women's rights affected by the larger issues of the era in terms of nationalism and Pan-Africanism? Were women accepting of or participants of nationalism/Pan-Africanism?

What were the differences between women's activism and that of figures such as Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe? What things were they asking for? What classes of people did they fight for? Did women feel that their agendas addressed women's issues?

Conclusions

What were the outcomes of the women's activism? Did it change anything for you?
What was life like for you post-independence? Who were the government leaders post-independence and how did they respond to women's activism?
Would you consider yourself a feminist?
Has the situation for women gotten better in the current time? What do you think needs to be changed?

How did the taxation laws affect your life? Did they affect men and women the same ways?

Appendix B:

Oral History Interviews

All interviews used in the dissertation are marked with an asterisk

Name	Interview Date	Background	Gender
Samuel Oyewole	3/20/2015	Age 68. He is father of the entire market (Babaloja) near Dugbe area in Ibadan, Nigeria.	Male
Prof. Mrs. Lola Adekunle	3/20/2015	Age 71. Retired Professor of Univ of Ibadan and former member of the Nigerian Association of University Women (for graduates) and University Women's Organization (for wives of professors)	Female
Mr. Akin Thomas	1/28/2015	Age unknown. Nephew of Mrs. Kuti. Retired from Civil Service and Army.	Male
*Prof. Bolanle Awe	2/1/2015	Age 82. Retired Professor of oral history at the Univ of Ibadan. Founding member of the Nigerian Association of University Women.	Female
*Prof. F.A. Ogunsheye	2/10/18	Age 89. Retired Professor (first female prof. in Nigeria) of Library and Information Sciences and founding member of the National Council of Women's Societies.	Female

Mr. Owodeleye	3/6/2015	Age 66. Engineer from Abeokuta where Mrs. Kuti was from.	Male
*Alfred Gbolahan Sowemimo	2/1/2015	Age 86. Retired Civil Servant. Student in Mrs. Kuti's grammar school.	Male
Mrs. Olusade Taiwo	3/2/2015	Age 62. Community leader and gender analyst.	Female
Mrs. Oluremi Jegede	3/10/2015	Age 77. Former law librarian who has been active in women's rights issues since 1963. Member of the University of Lagos Women's Society.	Female
Titilope Ngozi Akosa	3/10/2015	Age 46. Community gender activist. Leader of Center for 21st Century Issues which helps vulnerable communities to be heard in policymaking.	Female
Comfort Ogunye	3/11/2015	Age unknown. Active lawyer.	Female
Professor Olufunke Adeboye	3/11/2015	Age: early fifties. Currently a Professor of Social History at the Univ. of Lagos.	Female
Dr. Awosika	3/12/2015	Age unknown. Economist and Chief Executive of Women, Law, and Development Center, Nigeria. NGO for female empowerment, research, training, and advocacy.	Female
West African Women's Association	3/16/2015	Varying ages. An association consisting	Females and

		of 15 African countries and focused on mobilizing women.	males
*Chief Olugbolahan Ijaola	2/15/2015	Age 92. A chief of Owu town in Abeokuta. He is from the town where Mrs. Kuti lived. He was a young boy during the period of her activism in Abeokuta.	Male
Professor Aboyade	3/16/2015	Age 80. A retired Professor from the Univ of Ibadan. Graduated with an MA in Library Science from Univ of Michigan. Was a member of the Association of University Women.	
Mrs. Igun	3/5/2015	Age unknown. Program Director of Iyalode Wuraola Esan Foundation (IWEF) which is an NGO purposed to sponsor girls who have dropped out of school to learn trades.	Female
*Prof. Adebisi Sowomi	3/17/2015	Age 76. Retired professor of pollinology since 2004. Currently lecturing in botany and also a certificated in theology. Has preaching appointments and fights for women to be able to be ordained in the Anglican church. Former official in Assoc. of University Women.	Female
Two Olumo Rock Women	2/19/2015	Age of first woman 128. Age of second woman unknown. These women care for	Females

		the temple at Olumo Rock historical site in Abeokta, the hometown of Mrs. Kuti.	

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