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"*NAIJAFEMINISM*": A TYPOLOGY OF AFRICAN FEMINISM

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Abstract

Severally, European and North American feminists have often been blamed for imposing the historical and cultural experiences of North America and Europe on African women, and Nigerian women in particular. It is a fact as well as a truism that African and Western societies have different historical antecedents. Historical differences like colonialism and neo-colonialism have grave effects and consequences for the role, position and status of women. Like women all over the world, African women have obstacles and challenges and they are the only one who can set right their priorities and agendas. It is in this vein that, the author carried out a case study in eight different states in Nigeria asking question relating to feminism awareness in Nigeria. The result shows that, all the participants had some ideas of what is meant by feminism. In all their responses, the sensitivity of their positions culturally and traditionally was a re-echoed stance. Hence, the author, going in line with Catherine Acholonu's Motherism, Obioma Nmaemeka's Negofeminism and Chikwenye Okonjo-Ogunyemi's African Womanism has coined out what she termed, *"Naijafeminism"* (an acronym for Nigerian feminism), a paradigm and movement which is shaped by Nigerian contexts and experiences.

KEY WORDS; Nigeria, Feminism, Women, Tradition, Motherhood

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INTRODUCTION

African feminists'[560] draw attention to the unique and wonderful experiences of women on the continent as well as the obstacle they face and the agency they exhibit in their lives. It is important to note right from the start that, most African feminists, and indeed Nigerian feminists are critical of being subsumed and submerged under a global North definition of feminism that has often not represented their concerns and even marginalized or excluded their voices.[561] They use the term, 'feminism' sparingly or with reservations. Furthermore, most women in Nigeria find the tag, 'feminism' too strong a label to bear. Most of the women in Nigeria, even the notable 'feminist writers' (Zaynab Alkali, Flora Nwapa, BuchiEmecheta, to mention a few.) will not allow themselves to be referred to, or called feminists. Hence, the use of the term 'feminism' is just for the sake of convenience to identify women who still portrays the characteristics and features of Nigerian women. Nigerian women have detected a huge dose of racist arrogance which characterizes western feminism.[562]

Nigerian feminism should be defined in its own terms, not by western feminists' terms. [563]Professor Bolanle Awe, a Nigerian, a female and the director of the Institute of African Studies has retreated the fact that anyone who wishes to take part in African women's struggle must do so according to theirown context and agenda. Emphasizing plurality, Nnaemeka maintains that, 'to meaningfully explain the phenomenon called African feminism, it is not to western feminism, but rather to African environment that one must refer'. African feminism is not a reactive one; it is proactive in nature. It has a different life of its own rooted in African environment.[564]

Hence, in providing a justification for *Nijafeminism*, the National Council of Women societies in Nigeria, the government-recognized umbrella body under which all women NGOs in Nigeria operates, has declared that, it is a non-political and non-religious organization devoted to the promotion of education, welfare and improved status of Nigerian women. Its agenda has broadened to include, women's

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[560]Without delving into the history of 'nomenclature', the use of 'African Feminism' in this study refers to issues and values respected and held in high esteem by African women, as distinguished from those held in high esteem by white women. See, ChielozonaEze, *Postcolonial Imagination and Moral representations in African Literature and Culture* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 55. See also, Andrea Cornwall, *Readings in Gender in Africa* (London: The International African Institute, 2005), 37 respectively.

[561]Economically dominant countries of the North America, Europe and Asia are referred to as Global North. See, Millie Thayer, *Making Transnational Feminism: Rural Women, NGO activists and Northern Donors in Brazil* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 179. Reproductive right has been seen as forming part of the agenda of global North feminists. The first world women (Global North) felt reproductive right and violence against women should be prioritized. This was a well-known agenda at the two world congress on women held in 1975 and 1980 in Mexico City and Copenhagen respectively. See, Julie D. Shayne, *They Used to call us Witches: Chilean Exile s, Culture and Feminism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 161. Northern feminists have been accused of working in the development of pursuing a western liberal right-based agenda that ignores cultural, racial and class differences. See, Paul Hopper, *Understanding Development* (Cambridge, USA: Polity Press, 2009), 110.

[562]Maureen NwakamaAzuike, "A Radical Feminist Approach to the Works of Zaynab Alkali, being a thesis submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies, University of Jos, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature in English of the University of Jos, (2003).

[563]See, Michael Canning, *Imperialism and the 1999 Women's World Cup Representations of the United States and Nigerian National Team in the United States Media* being a thesis submitted to the Faculty of The Dorothy F. Schmidst College of Arts and Letters in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Masters of Arts, (2009), 74. African feminism owes its origins to different dynamics than those that generated western feminism. See, Gwendolyn Mikell, *African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 4.

[564]See, Evan Mwangi, *African Writes Back to Self: Matafication, Gender, Sexuality* (Albany: State University of New York Presse 2009), 241. See also: Lynne E. Ford, *Women and Politics: The Pursuit of Equality* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2010), 24.

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Furthermore, most women in Nigeria find the tag, 'feminism' too strong a label to bear. Most of the women in Nigeria, even the notable 'feminist writers' (Zaynab Alkali, Flora Nwapa, BuchiEmecheta, to mention a few.) will not allow themselves to be referred to, or called feminists. Hence, the use of the term 'feminism' is just for the sake of convenience to identify women who still portrays the characteristics and features of Nigerian women. Nigerian women have detected a huge dose of racist arrogance which characterizes western feminism.[562]

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legal and political rights and demanding a change in some laws that dehumanize womanhood.[565]

On the other hand, western feminism is alien to Nigeria.[566] This feminism is often considered to be the same with radical feminism,[567] men hatred, total rejection of African traditions and fundamental opposition of marriage and motherhood, and an endeavour, as well as constant attempt to disrupt the power relationship of genders.[568]

[565] See, Mahmood Mamdani, *Beyond Rights Talk: Comparative Essays on the Politics of Rights and Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 107. Furthermore, the National Commission for Women in Nigeria, which is an organization that supports the work of NGOs in Nigeria and also plays a co-coordinating role between government and the Nigerian women's organizations, is out to promote the welfare of women generally, as well as to promote responsible motherhood and the maternal health of women, amongst others..

[566] Feminism is a western phenomenon, which is a reflection of the western cultural predilection as a people and such is designed to meet the particular needs of the western women. The conclusion is therefore drawn that such feminism is of no relevance to Africa. AdemolaKazeemFayemi, "The Challenges of Prostitution and Female Trafficking in Africa: An African Ethico-Feminist Perspective" *Journal of Pan African Studies* 3, No.1(2009): 204,

[567] Radical feminism identifies patriarchy, or male dominance as the root cause of women's oppression. In other words, women experience discrimination because social relations and social interactions are shaped by male power and privilege. Amanda Burgess-Proctor, "Intersection of Race, Class, Gender and Crime: Future Direction for Feminist Criminology" *Feminist Criminology* 1, No.27(2006): 29. http://www.uk.sagepub.com/tibbettsess/study articles/10.Burgess-Proctor.pdf (accessed June 13, 2012).

[568] Norma Masuku, "Perceived Oppression of Women in Zulu Folklore: A Feminist Critique" being a thesis submitted in accordance with the requirement for the degree of doctor of literature and philosophy in the subject African languages at the University of South Africa.(2005): 22-25, http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/1933/thesis.pdf?sequence=1(accessed June 13 2012). Throughout its long history, feminism has sought to disturb the patriarchal culture and assert a belief in sexual equality.

This so-called western type of feminism focuses on three important areas. The first is the reality of oppression continuously legitimated by legal rules and regulations, the second is the all-important issue of patriarchy, or the system of masculine authority and the third is the real question of women's sense of justice.[569]

These feminists, over the years have call for vigilance[570] where in, it is important for jurisprudence to tap the power of the more radical versions of feminism. According to them, an effective contemporary feminist critique must be radical in the literal sense and must go to the very root of inequality.

This type of feminism is believed to be a western idea, and Nigeria women don't want to be a party to it.

AFRICAN THEORIES OF FEMINISM

Although the term feminism is of western origin, and it has been expressed that African women do not wish to be subsumed under the name feminism, it has become imperative to use this term loosely in order to explain certain happenings within the African settings as they relate to women. The two types of feminists' theories in Africa are explained below;

INTELLECTUAL AND POPULAR FEMINISM

There are two separate feminism in Africa namely, intellectual and popular feminism. The intellectual feminism is loved and promoted by the urban and educated women. They condemn aspects relating to African culture, and they tend towards western form of radical feminism.[571]

[569] Wyne Morrison, *Jurisprudence: From the Greeks to Post-Modernism* (UK: Cavendish Publishing Ltd. 1997), 480

[570] Anne. Scales, "The emergency of Feminist Jurisprudence: An essay" in *Feminist Jurisprudence*(ed) Patricia smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993), 97.

[571] Intellectual feminism is largely sponsored by the west, and thus suspected by ordinary African of being channels through which the west

Popular feminism on the other hand, is rooted in culture and lived experiences of African women. Here, the foundation of feminism lies in the importance of women in traditional African society in terms of food production as well as women's role in the liberation struggle against colonialism. Popular feminism appeals to African women who consider their culture and tradition vital to their identity. It also endeavours to find practical solutions rooted in the lived experience of African women, many of whom have skills and talents that can economically empower them. This popular movement of feminism caters for the majority of African women, some of whom are not necessarily literate.[572]

It will be reasonable to assume that, the large majority of Nigerian women subscribe to popular feminism even, amidst their

tries to preach to them. Their agendas are also sensationalist and reductionist, and as not allowing 'for serious reflection on African women's condition and on the appropriate solutions to the problems. See, Louise de Toit, "Old Wives Tales and Philosophical Delusions: on the Problem of Women and African Philosophy" *South African Journal of Philosophy* 27, No.4(2008): 420, www.ajol/index.php/sajpem/article/ViewFile/31528/5890 (accessed March 13, 2012).

[572]See, TawandaSachikonye, "African Feminism Driven by African Women" *NGO News and Views* January 20, 2010 http://www.ngopulse.org/article/african-feminism-driven-african-women (accessed March 13, 2012). Popular African feminism comprises of many women in the economic sphere who are generally illiterate, but still hold considerable shares in the sectors such as fishing, market gardening trade, etc. This popular feminism is based on the vestigates of the matriarchy practiced in most ancient African societies where women enjoyed privileged status, and on the other hand, it is enshrined in the progressive values introduced by nationalist struggle for independent. See, Toit, "Old Wives", 420. Matriarchy is a cultural feminist theory that envisaged a society of strong women guided by essentially female concerns and values. These included, 'most importantly, pacifism, cooperation, non-violent settlement of differences, and a harmonious regulation of public life. See, Josephine Donovan, *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 48.

differences.[573]The country, Nigeria, is a nation with ethnic, religious and economic diversity. Nigeria is said to be characterized by lots of socio-economic inequalities among their regions, ethnic groups and religions. Nigeria is made up of 374 ethnic groups.[574]

Despite these differences, Nigerian women are united as *"Naijafeminists"*; a paradigm and movement shaped by Nigerian contexts and experiences. This is evidenced in the views expressed by participants in this study.

METHODOLOGY

The systematic gathering of data for a particular reason and purpose from various sources is known as data collection.[575] The most popular methods of data collection in a qualitative research, like the one going on are interview, observation, documents, audio-visual

[573]Nigeria has a population of 140 million (National Population Commission Nigeria), making it the most populous country in Africa. See, Anjuwon Grace et al, "Assessment of Scholarly Publications of the Nigerian Health Science Researchers in MEDLINE/PubMed (1996-2007)" *Sierra Leone Journal of Biomedical Research* 3, No.2(2011): 90,http://www.ajol.info/index.php/sljbr/article/viewFile/71809/60765 (accessed March 8, 2012).

[574]See, Arnim Langer and UkohaUkiwo, "Ethnicity, Religion and the State in Ghana and Nigeria: Perceptions from the Streets" *Center for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity* 34, (2007): 3-4,http://www.crise.ox.ac.uk/pubs/workingpaper34.pdf (accessed March 8, 2012).

[575]Planning data collection consists of four separate thought processes namely, choosing data collection questions, identifying data sources, understanding potential data collection methods and selecting methods to implement. See, Deborah Davies Tobey, *Data Collection for Needs Assessment Info Line Tips, Tools and Intelligence for Trainers* (2007) 3.Data collection is the recording of one or more variables from members of a population sampling units. Information is the product of the data that have been acquired, analyzed and interpreted for use. See, Ashley S Hall, *Guidelines for Designing Data Collection and Sharing Systems for Co-Managed Fisheries. Part 2 Technical Guidelines* (2005) 5.

materials and focus group discussion.[576] In order to collect data, this study employs the use of two approaches;

Interview:
This study employs the use of both structured[577] and unstructured[578] interview model to elicit views and opinions of major social actors on feminism awareness in Nigeria. The use of this interview model[579] will enable the participants to talk freely without being restricted to only the questions prepared by the researcher. This will further enhance the quality of the responses from the participants.
The use of interview in this work also suggests that the views and interpretations of certain social actors are necessary to be looked into in order to answer the questions raised in this research. It further suggests that the knowledge of these social actors, their specified social context as well as their account of that social arena is significant to this research.

Focus Group Discussion (Participant Observation)
In a way, focus group looks like interviews, but focus group transcripts can be analysed so as to explore the ways in which the participants interact with each other and influence each other's expressed ideas, which obviously cannot happen with one-on-one interview.[580]

[576]Qualitative research involves detailed verbal description of characteristics, cases and settings and it uses observation, interview and document reviews as sources of data. See, William J Meurer et al, 'Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis Methods: The INSTINCT Trial' (2007) *Society for Academic Emergency Medicine* 1064, 1065.<http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/71497/1/j.1553-2712.2007.tb02390.x.pdf> Accessed 23rd January 2012.Focus group discussion is also a method of gathering qualitative data. See, Peggy Yahas Byers, 'Focus Group. A Qualitative Opportunity for Researchers' (1991) 28(1) *Journal of Business Communication* 63, 63.<http://onlineacademics.org/CA500/Private/ByersQual.pdf> Accessed 23rd January 2012.

[577] This is a formal interview with questions already written down as a guide for the researcher to follow. See Maired, Dunne, John Pryor, Paul Yates, *Becoming a Researcher: A Research Companion for the Social Sciences* (2005) 28. In a structured interview, the interviewer asks all the respondents the same series of pre-established questions with limited set of response categories. See, Fontana Andrea, Prokos, Anastasia H, *Interview: From Formal to Post-Modern* (2007) 19; See also, Clifford, Lorenza, *Step to Success: Interview Others*(2006) 11.

[578]An interview conducted in an informal (non-guided) manner to elicit information on the experiences, opinions, attitudes, feelings or perceptions. The objective of an unstructured interview is to collect information on some preliminary issues so that the researcher can formulate ideas of what variables need further in-depth investigation. See, Uma Sekaran, *Research Methods for Business: A Building Approach* (2nd edn) (1992) 190; Holland J. and Ramazonoglu, C, 'Coming to Conclusions: Power and Interpretation in Researching Young Women's Sexuality' in M. Maynard and J. Purvis (eds), *Researching Women's Lives from aFeminist Perspective*, (1994) 125,135.

[579]In recognition of the power asymmetries and the potentially intimidating encounter of the interview, an informal conversation style is often encouraged to put the interviewee at ease. Nevertheless, both the researcher's methodological stance and the specific substantive interests make the interview more than a conversation. It is from this research position that the researcher moves beyond polite exchange of encounter to encourage deeper engagement in the issues by the interviewee. So, although a conversational style during the interview is often suggested, the researcher is working hard, continually making judgment about the interviewee's responses and their own action in relation to their research interests. The researcher's identity is thereby centralized in the dynamics of the interview. This is also the reason why Kvale describes the interview as a research instrument. See, Kvale, *Interview: An Introduction to QualitativeResearch Interviewing*, (1996) 1-2.

[580]See, Beverly Hancock, Elizabeth Ockleford and Kate Windridge, An Introduction to Qualitative Research (2007) (Last updated 2009) 16-17. <http://www.rds-sc.nihr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/5-Introduction-to-qualitative-research-2009.pdf> Accessed 5th February 2012.

In this wise, focus group can be likened with or compared to participant observation,[581] which is another method of data collection in a qualitative research. The main advantage of focus group in comparison to participant observation is the opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time based on the researcher's ability to assemble and direct the focus group sessions.[582]

Participants' observation helps researchers to know the perspective held by study participants. Participants' observation usually takes place in community settings i.e., in locations believed to have some relevance to the research questions. Generally, the researcher engaged in participant's observation tries to learn and observe what life is like for an 'insider' while remaining, inevitably, an 'outsider'. While within this community, the researcher makes careful and objective notes about what they see, recording all accounts and observations.[583]

In other words, participants' observation, more often than not occurs in a naturalistic setting. Participants' observation in a naturalistic setting can only occur in settings where there is something immediately available to see or observe.[584] Participants' observation in a non-naturalistic setting (like the one going on) can be made possible through the use of a focus group discussion, where more social psychological topics such as attitudes and decision making are paramount. In this wise, focus group method creates access to participant interaction on topics that are either difficult to observe naturally or rare in occurrence.[585]

Focus group and participant observation share an overlapping interest in group interaction. While participants' observation is a research that involves social interaction between the researcher and the informants in the milieu of the latter, during which data are

[581]See, Henrik Palsson, 'Participant Observation in Logistics Research: Experiences from an RFID Implementation Study (2007) 37(2) International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management 148-163.<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=1597751&show=html> Accessed 8th May 2012. This paper suggests that, the comparison between interview studies and participant observation are to a large extent, also valid for focus groups.

[582]A distinctive feature of focus group is that they create data by generating social interaction. This is done by assembling a group of participants to discuss a specific and then observe how the ensuing discussion evolves. See, HeiskanenKatjaJärvale et al, 'Qualitative Research and Consumer Policy: Focus Group Discussion as a form of Consumer Participation (2008) 13(2) Qualitative Report 152, 154.<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-2/heiskanen.pdf> Accessed 8th May 2012.

[583]See, 'Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide' Family Health International 13.<http://www.fhi360.org/nr/rdonlyres/ed2ruznpftevg34lxuftzjiho65asz26erpqjgbbyorggs6tetjic367v44bayssyomnbdjkdtbsium/participantobservation1.pdf>Accessed 8th May 2012.

[584]See, Jun Li, 'Ethical Challenges in Participant Observation: A Reflection on Ethnographic Field Work (2008) 13(1) Qualitative Report 100,103 where observation was carried out in respect of female gamblers. <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-1/li.pdf>Accessed 8th May 2012.

[585]See Elizabeth a Suter, 'Focus Groups in Ethnography of Communication Expanding Topics of Inquiry Beyond Participant Observation (2000) 5(1) Qualitative Report.<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR5-1/suter.html> Accessed 8th May 2012.

systematically and collected,[586] focus groups are a form of group interview that concentrates on communications between research participants in order to generate data. Focus groups encourage research participants to explore the issue that are importance to them in their own words and vocabulary, generating their own inquiries and questions, and pursuing their own agendas and priorities.[587]

This study intends to utilize the contributions of a group as clearly specified above. To contribute to this study are; Non-Governmental Organizations concerning women, League of Moslem and Christian Women, African Traditionalists, Married and Unmarried men and women.

The reason for these choices of participants is that, the non-governmental organizations and the religious league are most concerned about women, and since this study is a women issue, their opinion was thought as relevant. The opinion of African traditionalist is of importance because,

[586] See, Debbie Noble-Carr, 'Engaging Children in Research on Sensitive Issues' (2006) Institute of Child Protection Studies 1, 24.<http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/10301/Engaging_Children_LitReviewEngaging.pdf> Accessed 8th May 2012.

[587] See, Jenny Kitzinger, 'Qualitative Research: Introducing Focus Groups' (1995) 311 British Medical Journal 299, 299; See also, K C Moloi et al, 'Learners' Perception as to what contributes to their School Success: A Case Study (2010) 30 South African Journal of Education 475, 479.<http://www.ajol.info/index.php/saje/article/viewFile/60044/48301> Accessed 8th May 2012. The complementary method of online focus group interviewing was employed to elicit detailed narratives from citizens and tourists in Matthew Williams, 'Avatar Watching: Participant Observation in Graphical Online Environments (2007) 7(5) Qualitative Research 5, 10.<http://inet.cuis.edu.inet10/286/avatarwatching.pdf> Accessed 8th May 2012.

Nigeria is an African setting with well-known tradition and values attached to women. The African traditionalists were able to showcase feminism from a traditional stand point. For the single fact that the issue under discourse pertains to women, both married and unmarried women were able to express their views on feminism in Nigeria. Lastly, the choices of the married and unmarried men are not farfetched. The men are connected to women either as husbands or as boyfriends.

Ultimately, the authors secured 18 Key informants and 2 focus group sessions, consisting of both Christians and Moslems.They came from various backgrounds and professions, had varying qualifications and worked in both government as well as non-government organizations.

PARTICIPANTS' BACKGROUND

Table 1: Background information of key informants

Table 2: Background Information of Focus Group Session '1'

	Study Area	Occupation	Education	Religion	Sex	Unit Analysis
FGS1a	Ilorin	Nurse	School of Nursing Certificate	Christianity	F	Women Wing Christian Association Nigeria (CAN)
FGS1b	Ilorin	Headmistress of Public School	National Certificate of Education	Christianity	F	Women Wing Christian Association Nigeria

						(CAN)
FGS1c	Ilorin	Trader	Secondary School Certificate	Christianity	F	Women Wing of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)
FGS1d	Ilorin	Secretary Women Wing of Christian Association of Nigeria	B.sc	Christianity	F	Women Wing of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)

Source: Field Study

- FGS Focus group session

Table 3: Background Information Focus Group Session '2'

	Study Area	Occupation	Education	Religion	Sex	Unit of Analysis
FGS2a	Ilorin	National Trustee of FOMWAN and Proprietor of Secondary School	BA	Islam	F	Federation of Muslim Women Organization of Nigeria (FOMWAN)
FGS2b	Ilorin	Teacher	National Certificate of Education	Islam	F	Federation of Muslim Women Organization of Nigeria (FOMWAN)
FDS2c	Ilorin	Business Woman	Secondary School certificate	Islam	F	Federation of Muslim Women Organization of Nigeria (FOMWAN)
FGD2d	Ilorin	Civil Servant	B.sc	Islam	F	Federation of Muslim Women Organization of Nigeria (FOMWAN)
FGS2e	Ilorin	Civil Servant	B.sc	Islam	F	Federation of Muslim Women Organization of Nigeria (FOMWAN)
FGS2f	Ilorin	Trader	Primary School Certificate	Islam	F	Federation of Muslim Women Organization (FOMWAN)

- Source: Field 2012
- FGS: Focus group session

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

While the western radical feminism is all against men and African traditional set up,[588] it was the view by the participants that, there was, and still in existence a form of feminism rooted in culture and tradition of Nigerian women.

It was the view of the participants interviewed that, women in Nigeria are still mindful of the role bestowed on them by culture and tradition. These roles are said to be, roles relating to motherhood.[589]

Nigerian Catherine Acholonu introduced the concept of 'Motherism'. She argues that, women are supposed to be perfect nurturers. Her concept of 'Motherism' denotes motherhood. She vehemently opposes the doctrine of white radical feminism which she considers to be anti-mother, anti-child, anti-nature and anti-culture. She considers the tasks of being a mother to include the nurturing of a child, protecting the home as well as the environment.

The views and aspirations of western cultural feminists can be likened to what obtains in Africa, generally, and in particular, Nigeria. According to cultural feminists, women are more nurturant, caring, loving and responsible to others than men. The ability to nurture and care dictates the moral terms in which women distinctively, construct social relations. Cultural feminism does not only identify women's differences; - patriarchy, to insist on women's

[588]Ibid.
[589]Azuike, "A Radical Feminist Appriach", 33-36.

differences, it celebrates them. Women's connectedness to, as well as attachment with others, according to cultural feminists is the source, the heart, the root, the foundation, and the cause of women's different morality, different voice, different ways of knowing, different ways of thinking, different genius, different capacity for care, and different ability to nurture- all worth celebrating.[590]

To cultural feminists, mothering and caring are closely related. Women, having given birth to an offspring, and having entered lactation of the same offspring, are naturally nurturing towards their infants. The socialization views and thinking deny argument for nature, instinct and natural nurturance and insist that mothering is a role-something learned.[591] The views of western cultural feminists, it must be stressed, is in line with the Nigerian views of the role of women.

In the same vein, Chikwenye Okonjo-Ogunyemi believed that, motherhood is part of African culture. She therefore, coined out African Womanism which is deeply rooted in traditional African customs and beleifs.[592]

Remi Akujobi, another Nigerian, expresses the view that motherhood is so crucial, so important in most traditional societies. To her, feminists in Africa read meanings and symbols that are authoritative and empowering to motherhood. The validity as well as substance of womanhood is defined basically by the success of the

[590]Robin West, 'Jurisprudence and Gender' in Patricia Smith (ed), *Feminist Jurisprudence* (1993) 502
[591]Ibid.
[592]Azuike, "A Radical Feminist Approach", 33-36.

children. Success of a woman is seen in success as a mother. It is no longer a secret that the Nigerian woman considers herself a real and accomplished woman only when she proved herself to be capable of producing children. This is so in the sense that, motherhood is a basic condition for social acceptance. Many childless women experience feelings of rejection, castigation and low esteem. Examples abound in many African literatures, especially those written by women. For instance, 'Nnego', in Emechata's 'Joy of Motherhood' never considers or classifies herself a woman until she starts giving birth, 'Efuru' in Nwapa's 'Efuru', is frustrated by her inability to procreate and as such became a priestess. In life, as in literature, motherhood is the only thing in which a woman's worth and importance is determined and measured.[593]

Also, it has been viewed by the participants of the study that Nigerian women have been known to have always fought and struggle against local oppressive conditions.Nigerian women throughout history have responded both individually and collectively to issues they face in an effort to negotiate their lives within difficult and compelling circumstances. There are many ways throughout history in which Nigerian women have exhibited their autonomy. In 1946, a notable feminist in Nigeria, Funmilayo Ransome Kuti (FRK) led the fight on hearing the way in which market women were heavily and indiscriminately taxedby the local ruler (the then Alake).

[593]Remi Akujobi, "Motherhood in African Literatures and Culture" *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*13, No.1 (2011): 1-5, http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol13/iss1/ (accessed June 11, 2012).

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[594]. See, Helen Rappaport, *Encyclopedia of Women Socia Volume 1* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 572. See a Kuhlman, *A to Z of Women in World History* (New York: 2002), 376.

[595]See Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement Guide 1866-1928* (London, USA, Canada: Routledge, 2001), Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland and Jane Rendell, *Defining Nation, Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act 186* Cambridge University Press, 2000), 121. For various struggle Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emamba, *For the Women and FunmilayoRansomeKuti of Nigeria* (Urbana: University of I 1997), 148.

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She, as the leader of the Nigerian Women Union, together with her members, fought the oppression and petition for the Alake's (a king) business to be brought under control. A vigil by a very large group of women led to a demonstration, and as a result, the taxation was abolished in 1949.[594]

FRK, together with another notable feminist of that era, Margaret Ekpo, raised women's consciousness and struggled for female suffrage and political representation. They can be said to be on the same footing with Mary Wollstonecraft, the English philosopher and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the notable abolitionist, in their fight to liberate English women politically by asserting the fundamental rights of women including right to vote.[595] There have also been a number of recent examples of women struggle. Community Women's Organizations have organized and carried out a protest in the oil producing region of the Niger Delta. These were well organized protest for the exclusion of their sons from employment in the oil companies, as well as protest

[594] See, Helen Rappaport, *Encyclopedia of Women Social Reformers. Volume 1* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 572. See also, Erika A Kuhlman, *A to Z of Women in World History* (New York: Facts on File, 2002), 376.

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resisting the alienation of forest by logging, which threatens their forest dependent livelihood.[596]

Also, prominent among various struggles put up by women in Nigeria, is the fight resisting colonialism.[597] Nigerian women have gear up in their struggle and fight against contemporary feminism[598] which is relatively new and has its foundation in Europe.They do not believe

[596]See, Ikelegbe Augustine, "Endangering Civil Society: Oil, Women Groups and Resource Conflicts in the Niger Delta Region in Nigeria"*Journal of Modern African Studies* 43, No.2 (2005): 241, 242, 245, 256, http://proquest.umi.ezproxy.findeers.edu.au/pdqweb?index=2&did=2&srchmode (accessed Apri 12,l 2006). See also, Wamala Irene, "Nigeria Protest: Nigerian Women Take on the Oil Companies" *Women and EnvironmentalInternationalMagazine.Issue 56/57* (2002*)*:38, http://proquest.umi.ezproxy.finders.edu.au/pdqweb?index=7&did=592466931 (accessed Apri 12,l 2006).

[597]Women spare headed one of the most notable anti-colonial uprisings in Nigeria history, known as the 1929 Aba Women's Riot. This is another historic episode that highlights a major element of female power. Women organized themselves against colonial taxation in Aba, a major city in Eastern Nigeria. See, George UzomaUkagba, *The Kpim of Feminism Issues and Women in a Changing World* (USA, Canada: Trafford Publishing, 2010), 382. See also, NkemHyginus M. V. Chigere, *Foreign Missionary Background and Indigenous Evangelization in Igboland* (Munster, Piscataway: Transaction Press, 2001), 203. See also, Viviane Saleh-Hanna and Chris Affor, *Colonial Systems of Control Criminal Justice in Nigeria* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2008), 109.

[598]African women seek an inclusive basis for action across class and ethnic lines. Where patriarchy is responsible for their oppression, these women will fight against it but at other times, they are ready to accommodate men in a concerted effort, as we see in the outlook of women in Nigeria. It is an indication of a whole-some pride in feminine look and attributes as opposed to the effacement of feminine qualities. See, Mary EbunOlodupeKolawole,*Womanism and African Consciousness* (Trenton NJ: African World Press, 1997), 27.

women should be central political leaders. They felt that educated women should assist their husbands in power.[599]

Nigeria therefore, can be said to have developed her own contemporary indigenous feminism which struggles against fundamentalist and oppressive conditions such as female genital mutilation, which is one of the issue affecting Nigerian women and it has affected close to 50% of the female population. The most dangerous form, infibulations, is still being practiced in some areas in Nigeria. [600]

Another oppressive,and indeed a sad condition being struggled against by Nigerian women is forced marriage, which is a marriage, conducted without the consent of one or both parties. It is a marriage in which duress, in whatever form, whether physical or emotional is a factor. FORWARD believes that any child marriage constitutes a forced marriage, because any one less than 18 years of

[599]. See, John N. Paden, *Muslim Civic Cultures and Conflicts Resolutions: The Challenge of Democratic Federalism in Nigeria* (Washington DC: Brookings Inst. Press, 2005), 102-104. FOMWAN is in favor of women education, and thus a defender of a more modern interpretation of the role of Muslim women.

[600]See MojbolOlfnkOkome,"Domestic, Regional and International Protection of Nigerian Women Against Discrimination: Constraints and Possibilities" *African Studies Quarterly* 6, No.3, http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v6/v6i3a2.htm (accessed December 10, 2011),. Female circumcision has been condemned as a torture as well as a degrading treatment. Female genital mutilation has been viewed as a practice depriving women right to health. See, Abdulmumini A. Oba, "Female Circumcision as Female Genital Mutilation: Human Right or Cultural Imperialism" *Global Jurist* 8, No.3 (2008): 12, http://www.bepress.com/gj/iss3/art8 (accessed June 12, 2011).

age is incapable of giving a valid consent[601] Child marriage or early marriage is notorious in the Northern Nigeria where girls marry at the age of 12 or 13. This can lead to serious health hazard, especially VVF and other social deprivations, mostly educational in nature.[602] The mean age at marriage for female children was put at 16.7 years in Nigeria. For North Eastern Nigeria, marriage age was put at 15.2, and for North Western Nigeria, the age was put at 14.2 years. This shows the prevalence of child marriage in Nigeria.[603]

According to FORWARD, poverty and economic transaction has been given as the main reason for child marriage. Parents often derive economic gains in giving out their daughters (who they consider as an economic burden) to much older and rich men. Some poor families

[601]Child or early marriage refers to any marriage of a child younger than 18 years old in accordance with Art 1 of the Convention of the Right of the Child..http://www.forwarduk.org.uk/key-issues/child-marriage (accessed March 17, 2012). Child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and motherhood are foreseeable consequences of early marriage. See, UNICEF, *Progress for Children: A Report Card on Maternal Mortality* (2008), 14 http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Progress_for_Children_2008_-_low_res.pdf (accessed March 17, 2012).

[602]See, James A. Ojobo, "Education: A Catalyst for Women Empowerment in Nigeria"*Ethiopia Journal of Education and Science* 4, No.1(2008): 104, www.ajol.imfo.index.php ejesc article viewfile/42995/26551(accessed March 17, 2012).

[603]See, Eno-ObongAkpan, "Early Marriage in Eastern Nigeria and Health Consequences of Vesico-Vagimal Fistulae (VVF) among Young Mothers"*Gender and Development* 11, No.2 (2003): 70. See also, Olalekan A. Uthman, "Geographical Variations and Contextual Effects on age of Initiation of Sexual Intercourse among Women in Nigeria: A Multilevel and Spatial Analysis" *International Journal of Health Geographics* 7, No.27(2008): 2-7, http://www.ij-healthgeographics.com/content.pdf/1476-072X-7-27.pdf (accessed March 17, 2012).

are currently still confronted with the difficult option of selling their daughters into marriage as a means to supplement their income and guarantee their livelihood.[604]

The way widows are maltreated by men in many parts of South-East Nigeria is alarming. As stated by Folarin, there is a particular section of the Nigerian community that takes delight and pleasure in seeing women suffer after the demise of their husbands as if they are the cause of his death. Some wicked acts, amongst others against widows in Nigeria are; a) she can be sent packing out of her husband's house, b) she can be denied inheritance right to his property whether she has children or not, c) she can be made to mourn him for long period of time, d) she can be restricted from moving about, e) she can be given condition that she must not laugh. She must be seen to be in a mournful mood, f) while mourning, she can be made to stay in the front of the house from morning till night time. It should be recalled that, men who lost their wives are not made to go through similar inhuman treatments. Hence, another important area of struggle by Nigerian women is the widowhood rites.[605]

Education and empowerment of womenis another struggle which majority of women in Nigeria have embarked upon.Gender bias against women ranges from labour

[604]See, Francis Imeobonglbanga, *Child Labor in Nigeria: A Religious Educational Response* being a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education of Fordham University New York (2007), 63. Other reasons for child marriage has been given as, preservation of chastity or cultural and religious reasons. See, Joseph and Najimabadi, *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Creatures*, 300.

[605]See, Ugkagba, *The Kpim of Feminism*, 150.

market to the total exclusion from policy making. According to Mamman, this discrimination exacerbates poverty by preventing the majority of women from obtaining the credit, education, training, health services, child care and legal status needed to improve their status and prospects. One clear area of noted imbalance against women has been in the area of education. It is therefore not surprising that women's inadequate access to education has been seen as the source of the various discrimination that they suffer. As a result, there has been a groundswell of agreement that women's lot and general socio-economic improvement of nations can be achieved through the acquisition of sound education and broad empowerment of women.[606]

These views and aspirations of all the participants in this study have further created a concrete stand on which *Nijafeminism* stands.

[606]See, Edlyne E. Anugwom, "Women, Education and Work in Nigeria"*Educational Research and Review* 4, No.4(2009): 127-132, http://www.academicjournals.org/err/PDF/Pdf%202009/Apr/Anugwom.pdf (accessed March 18, 2012). See also, MahmudatOlawumiMuhibbu-Din, "The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) Policy in Women Empowerment in Africa: A Critical Appraisal" *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 5, No.1(2011): 2-4,http://www.academicjournals.org/ajpsir/pdf/pdf2011/January/Muhibbu-Din.pdf, (accessed March 18, 2012). See also, UzoechiNwagbara, "Changing the Canon: Chinua Achebe's Women, Public Sphere and the Politics of Inclusion in Nigeria" *Journal of Pan African Studies* 3, No.3(2009): 4-5,http://www.jpanafrican.com/docs/vol3no3/3.3Changing.pdf (accessed March 18, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The point being raised by Nigerian women in the guise of *Nijafeminism* is not just about women. It is about creating a brand-new form of social relationships based on equality, mutual respect and justice.[607] Nigerian women have taken action towards achieving this justice, social, economic, environmental and political change. These Nigerian women can be tagged as the progressives. They have challenged and resisted oppressive conditions of the laws by taking action either individually or collectively.

It is clear from the facts given above that there are different issues as well as different values and concerns raised by both Western feminism and Nigerian feminism. In other words, and as rightly pointed out by an author, "It did not occur to the western feminists that, women in other parts of the world had their own culturally specific notion of 'women's right and concerns".[608]

[607] See, MolaraOgundipe-Leslie, *Re-Creating Ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformation* (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 1994), 81.

[608]Reiner Lewis and Sara Mills, *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 4.

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