

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS PROJECT
PODCAST SERIES:
CONTEXTUALIZING FEMINIST VOICES**

SITE: NIGERIA

**Transcript of Elisha Renne and Ronke Olawale
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Intro: This podcast series, *Contextualizing Feminist Voices*, is designed to provide background information for people using the Global Feminisms Project website. The podcasts aim to provide users with a well-informed perspective on interesting aspects of the interviews from a particular country. For each episode one of the project staff interviews an expert on that country site.

Abigail Dumes: Welcome to this episode of *Contextualizing Feminist Voices*. My name is Abigail Dumes. In this episode, I am talking with my University of Michigan colleagues, Professor Elisha Renne and doctoral candidate Ronke Olawale, who will provide perspectives on the interviews from Nigeria. Time is short so we'll dive right in. Elisha, what are one or two important things about feminist activism in Nigeria for people to keep in mind that are not covered in the written introductory information on the website?

Elisha Renne: Thank you, Abby. I'd like to say that while the introduction to the Nigerian interviews mentions that there are many ethnic groups and religious practices in the country, as well as historical analyses which privileged a Western male viewpoint, listeners to these interviews might want to think about how women's cultural backgrounds, associated with particular ethnic groups and religions, intersect with distinctive feminist views. For what might be seen as correct feminist practice by some Nigerian women, does not mean that other Nigerian women might not have a different feminist position, reflecting the sociocultural and political context in which they live. In other words, there is no single feminist perspective or practice in Nigeria, although this sometimes may appear to be the case. For example, continuing disputes over the wearing of hijab, or headscarves, by Muslim girls attending schools in southern Nigeria reflect these different perspectives. Indeed, there have been several newspaper stories about these disputes in recent years in Ogun, Oyo and Kwara states. all in Southwestern Nigeria. One needs to think about how ethnic identity and religious belief, colonial history, and attitudes toward the West intersect with feminism in Nigeria. Several women interviewed present different understandings of the term feminism. Thus, Josephine Effah-Chukwuma argues that as long as you are questioning the treatment of women and fighting social injustices against women and girls, you are a feminist. Mairo Mandara, who also sees herself as a feminist, notes that she looks at feminism within the milieu that I find myself in, which is also about respect for men. Their different perspectives reflect how Nigerian feminists with different backgrounds, and working in different parts of the country, need to consider sociocultural beliefs and local practices in order to successfully implement their programs.

AD: Ronke, we have learned that some topics that would be illuminating about women's movements in a particular setting do not get covered in interviews for a variety of reasons. Are there any topics that you'd like to point out that are missing from the interviews?

Ronke Olawale: Yes, thank you, Abby. Really there are two topics I would like to just kind of talk about, and these will be the issue of submission, in a Nigerian context, and how the success of a child is placed in the woman. We don't think of how these two issues actually affect the mental health of the woman at the end of the day. Let's think about African feminism and how the experiences of women in different backgrounds are not

often covered in a lot of the things that we read and write about. First, submission in the Nigerian context, means that a woman needs, for instance, to submit to the point of submitting a paycheck and livelihood to her husband. And the point at which, where she thinks she's done with this and doesn't want to continue to give him all that she earns, is where trouble begins. And we see how this is still playing out. I do have a personal experience; for instance, the day that my mother after 10 years decided she would no longer give her paycheck as a schoolteacher to my father was the day she began to be looked at as a proud woman, until she was eventually kicked out of the home. And this is not often written about or discussed in the popular media, because it's not like, very, maybe obvious amongst the experiences of women. But we also have situations where the livelihoods of women, whether through their livestock or the money they make for their businesses, have to be given to the man who, at the end of the day, takes the money, whether to go on a drinking spree with his friends, and the woman cannot ask questions about how her money is being spent. So, the issue, for instance, about joint accounts is not very popular because many women are coming to the realization that it's not something they want to continue to practice because it has not worked for them, nor for their children. The other thing I wanted to talk about is the issue of the success of the child. There's actually an idea that a child that succeeds belongs to the father, while the child that fails is the mother's. So you hear them say, "go and meet your mother, you look like your mother," and it's worse where it's a female child. So, you find so many women in Nigeria remain in these oppressive, abusive, repressive relationships, just because they want to stay married because of their children. And they pour out all their energy in the success of the child so that at the end of the day, they know that if the child does not do well, they have not succeeded, whether in business, or in marriage. I see how this has affected a lot of women who we hear and read about die suddenly, and nobody ever diagnoses the causes of their deaths.

AD: Thank you both so much. That was illuminating and we really appreciate your perspectives on the interviews.

Outro: Thank you for listening to this episode of *Contextualizing Feminist Voices* created by the Global Feminisms Project. The entire podcast team hopes it will help you understand and enjoy the materials on the website. If you liked this episode, check out the other podcasts in this series, as well as materials about countries, teaching resources, and interviews.