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► To cite this version:

Sara Panata. ‘Dear Readers...’: Women’s Rights and Duties through Letters to the Editor in the Nigerian Press (1940s-1950s). Sources. Material & Fieldwork in African Studies, 2020, 1, pp.141-198. halshs-02865251v2

HAL Id: halshs-02865251

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02865251v2>

Submitted on 18 Jul 2022

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SOURCES

Materials & Fieldwork in African Studies

no. 1 | 2020

Varia

'Dear Readers...': Women's Rights and Duties through Letters to the Editor in the Nigerian Press (1940s-1950s)

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URL: <https://www.sources-journal.org/86>

HAL Id: halshs-O2865251

Cite this article:

Panata, Sara. 2020. "'Dear Readers...': Women's Rights and Duties through Letters to the Editor in the Nigerian Press (1940s-1950s)." *Sources. Materials & Fieldwork in African Studies* no. 1: 141-198. <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/SOURCES/halshs-02865251>.

Abstract

This paper analyses selected readers' letters published in the women's columns of three cornerstone newspapers of the Nigerian press: "Our Women's Page" in the *Daily Times*, "The Women's Realm" in the *Southern Nigerian Defender* and "For Women Only" in the *Nigerian Tribune*. The period analyzed (1940s-1950s) follows women's large entrance in the press consumption and precedes the emergence of women's magazines, exclusively aimed at women, in the 1960s, in the context of a global development of women's glossy periodicals. Firstly, I will focus on letters to the editor in order to give an overview of the major historiographical debates and methodological challenges, which the use of these particular documents entails. Secondly, I will propose an analysis of the major debates in the letters to disentangle the intricate controversies around women's rights and duties. In spite of the fact that these columns were perceived as a women's space, female and male readers questioned the editors of major newspapers as well as fellow readers, debating the position of women in a rapidly changing society. Between progressive urges and persistent conservative ideas, the readers' letters expressed doubts and anguish about the emergence of the "New Woman" in Nigeria. By giving a wider space to debates between "ordinary" literate women and men, readers' letters provide a more nuanced understanding of the concerns that surrounded changing gender frameworks. I argue that these letters—much more than the opinion pieces of the women's columns or women's magazines, examined at length by historians—reflect the gender dimension of the anxiety around the unsettling women's positions in this period. The discussions presented in the readers pieces mirror a complex understanding of gender through time: they interweave local debates concerning women's roles, with the global currents of the "New Woman". The analysis, showcasing the dialogic qualities of this journalistic genre, demonstrates the ways letters to the editor are significant in terms of how they sit within gender and African studies.

Keywords: Nigeria, newspapers, print culture, gender, letters to the Editor.

Résumé

‘Dear Readers...’: Droits et devoirs des femmes à travers les courriers des lecteurs dans la presse nigériane (années 1940-1950)

Cet article analyse un corpus de lettres de lecteurs et lectrices publiées dans les rubriques féminines de trois journaux phares de la presse nigériane : « Our Women’s Page » dans le *Daily Times*, « The Women’s Realm » dans le *Southern Nigerian Defender* et « For Women Only » dans le *Nigerian Tribune*. La période analysée (1940-1950) suit l’entrée massive des femmes dans la consommation de la presse et précède la création de magazines exclusivement destinés aux femmes dans les années 1960. Je me concentre d’abord sur le genre journalistique des courriers des lecteurs et lectrices afin de donner un aperçu des grands débats historiographiques et des défis méthodologiques soulevés par l’utilisation de cette source. Je propose ensuite une analyse des controverses développées dans ces lettres autour des droits et des devoirs des femmes nigérianes. Si ces rubriques étaient destinées aux femmes, les lettres publiées étaient souvent rédigées par des hommes qui interrogeaient rédacteurs en chef des grands journaux ainsi que lecteurs et lectrices sur la position des femmes dans une société nigériane en rapide évolution. Entre pulsions progressistes et idées conservatrices persistantes, ces lettres expriment les doutes et les angoisses autour de l’émergence de la figure de la « Femme nouvelle » au Nigeria. En donnant un espace aux débats entre femmes et hommes « ordinaires », les courriers des lecteurs et lectrices permettent une compréhension nuancée des préoccupations qui ont entouré l’évolution des assignations de genre. Je soutiens que ces lettres reflètent la dimension genrée de l’anxiété entourant les positions changeantes des femmes à cette époque, bien plus que les articles d’opinion des chroniques féminines ou des magazines féminins souvent examinés par les historien·ne·s. Les discussions des lecteurs et lectrices reflètent une compréhension complexe du genre à travers le temps : elles entremêlent les débats locaux concernant les rôles des femmes avec les représentations mondialisées de la « Femme nouvelle ». L’analyse, qui met en évidence les qualités dialogiques de ce genre journalistique, montre l’importance de cette source dans les études sur le genre et sur l’Afrique.

Mots-clés : Nigéria, journaux, culture imprimée, genre, courriers des lecteurs et lectrices.

Resumen

‘Dear Readers...’: Direitos e deveres das mulheres nas cartas ao editor da imprensa nigeriana (décadas de 1940 e 1950)

Este artigo analisa uma seleção de cartas publicadas nas colunas femininas de três jornais expressivos da imprensa nigeriana: «Página das nossas mulheres» do *Daily Times*, «O domínio das mulheres» do *Southern Nigerian Defender* e «Somente para mulheres» do *Nigerian Tribune*. O período analisado (décadas de 1940 e 1950) acompanha a entrada massiva das mulheres no consumo da imprensa escrita e precede o surgimento das revistas femininas, voltadas exclusivamente para mulheres, na década de 1960, no cenário de desenvolvimento mundial dos periódicos ilustrados para mulheres. Concentro-me nas cartas ao editor, a fim de fornecer uma visão geral dos principais debates historiográficos e desafios metodológicos que o uso desses documentos específicos implica, e proponho uma análise dos principais debates presentes nas cartas para desvendar as intrincadas controvérsias em torno dos direitos e deveres das mulheres. Apesar de essas colunas serem percebidas como um espaço destinado

a mulheres, leitores femininos e masculinos questionaram os editores dos principais jornais e também outros leitores, debatendo a posição das mulheres em uma sociedade que está em constante mudança. Entre anseios progressistas e ideias conservadoras persistentes, as cartas dos leitores expressaram dúvidas e angústias sobre o surgimento da «Nova Mulher» na Nigéria. Ao dar um espaço maior aos debates entre mulheres e homens letrados “comuns”, as cartas dos leitores fornecem um entendimento mais sutil das preocupações que cercavam as mudanças nas estruturas de gênero. Argumento que essas cartas refletem – muito mais que os fragmentos de opinião das colunas ou revistas femininas, examinadas longamente pelos historiadores – a dimensão de gênero e da inquietude em torno das posições desconcertantes das mulheres nesse período. As discussões apresentadas nas cartas dos leitores refletem a dificuldade de compreensão de gênero ao longo do tempo: elas entrelaçam debates locais sobre os papéis das mulheres às correntes mundiais da «Nova Mulher». A análise, evidenciando as qualidades dialógicas desse gênero jornalístico, demonstra como as cartas ao editor são significativas na medida em que elas se enquadram tanto nos estudos de gênero quanto nos estudos africanos.

Palavras chaves: Nigéria, jornais, cultura impressa, gênero, cartas ao editor.

‘Dear Readers...’

Women’s Rights and Duties through Letters to the Editor in the Nigerian Press (1940s-1950s)

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Dataset related to this article: “Women’s Rights and Duties through Letters to the Editor in the Nigerian Press (1940s-1950s).” <https://nakala.fr/collection/11280/fd67b043>.

These data consist of 21 documents (press cuts and their full transcript). See also

“Reproduction of Studied Archival Materials” at the end of the article.

“It is true that the rightful place for the wife is the home but it will be cruel to make the home a glorified prison cell.”
Mrs C.E. Deko, “Harem Age Is Gone.” *Nigerian Tribune. Week-End Supplement*,
Saturday December 9, 1950.

What should Nigerian women do and not do in their private and public life? What are they entitled to? In the 1940s and 1950s, literate Nigerians could find interesting food for thought for their concerns around women’s rights and duties in Nigerian newspapers in English and in, particular, in the women’s columns. Beyond reading advice, they could also take part in the debates that animated the letters to the editor published in the women’s columns. This journalistic genre warrants particular attention, considering the numerous points of view it contains. In spite of the fact that these columns were perceived as a women’s space, female and male readers questioned the editors of major newspapers as well as fellow readers, debating the position of women in a rapidly changing society. Between progressive urges and persistent conservative ideas, the readers’ letters expressed doubts and anguish around the emergence of the “New Woman” in Nigeria. Indeed, unprecedented issues arose in the beginning of 20th century¹, stemming in particular from the emergence

1. Jinny Prais explains that the concept of the “New Woman” first appeared with the publication of Olive Schreiner’s novel *The Story of an African Farm* in 1883. The expression refers to the image of a modern woman, produced by medias and circulated globally in the 1920s-1930s. The “New Woman” was educated, independent, fighting for socio-political, economical and sexual emancipation. Global images of the New Woman were interweaved with local ideas of womanhood producing controversial expectation around femininities. See Prais 2009, 235, footnote 500. Regarding the concept of New Woman and Modern Girls, see the excellent collective work: *The Modern Girl around the World* Research Group et al. 2008. Modern girls are defined as young women—often not married and not mothers—who are not fighting for social or political reforms but who focus on the redefinition of their fashion, body, and consumption patterns, thereby transgressing the conventional limits of women’s roles. The emergence of the global image of the Modern Girl in the 1920–1930s is contemporary or just subsequent to that of the New Woman.

of a group of Western-educated, literate women. This opened up new configurations for women in the socio-political and economic spheres, unsettling existing gender roles.² Shifting gender discourses in the 1920s and 1930s fuelled complex debates. Global discussions over the “New Woman,” Christian and colonial discourses around femininities and masculinities³ and the so-called “traditional Nigerian women’s roles”⁴ mingled and overlapped, mobilized by different constituents. Historians have examined at length the press, women’s columns and women’s magazines as a source to interrogate the new and controversial roles of women in the 1920s to the 1960s, both in Africa and abroad. However, the readers’ letters in women’s columns have largely been ignored.

This article builds on the work of Jinny Prais. Her exemplary analysis of Gold Coast women’s newspaper columns during the 1920s and 1930s underlines how full of contradictions these debates were, precisely because the “meaning of womanhood was itself in the process of being articulated.” They “invented and displayed the New Woman as African, labouring to define who she would be in a post-colonial nation, encouraging women readers to see her as a role model for their own advancement” (Prais 2009, 248). Drawing from the “Ladies Corner” of the *West Africa Times*, Prais focuses on the factious “Marjorie Mensah” column also giving space to the readers’ responses to the debates the editor staged in her column.

My analysis of this journalistic gender aims to demonstrate its dialogic qualities, which allowed readers to stage polyvocal debates on gender roles—mainly in Nigeria’s 1940s-1950s when women entered largely the press consumption. By giving a wider space to debates between “ordinary” literate women and men, letters to the editor provide a more nuanced understanding of the concerns that surrounded changing gender frameworks. I argue that these letters reflect—much more than the opinion pieces of the women’s columns’ editors—the gender dimension of the anxiety around these unsettling women’s positions in this period. They clearly show that the question of the new combinations of women’s roles and expectations is far from being a solely women’s issue, having a direct impact on the recomposing of femininities and masculinities.

After presenting my sources, I will introduce the press of the time to frame my analysis and then I will linger on the journalistic genre of women’s columns and particularly letters to the editor to give an overview of the major historiographical

2. There is a broad consensus in the historiography that this period was pivotal for gender reconfigurations. For some generic studies on this topic in colonial contexts see, among others, Hansen 1992; Clancy-Smith and Gouda 1998; Midgley 1998; Pierson and Chaudhuri 1998; Hugon 2004; Cornwall 2005; Goerg, Rodet and Vince 2007.

3. Shifting gender discourses acted, for example, in new gendered programs of education. Domestic training was first part of the missionary girls’ school curricula and then, after 1931, integrated into coeducational and governmental schools by Gladys Plummer, appointed by the government to amend the girls’ curriculum (Denzer 1992).

4. In Nigerian newspapers, traditional gender roles were identified largely and very ambiguously with pre-colonial women’s positions. These discourses were nevertheless full of inconsistencies.

debates and methodological challenges, which the use of these particular documents entails. Finally, I will propose an analysis of the major debates in the letters, trying to disentangle the intricate controversies around women's rights and duties.

Letters to the Editor: A Brief Overview of a Useful Source for Gender Studies

In Nigeria—as was the case elsewhere in West Africa (Newell 2011)—the press was a male-dominated enterprise until the 1940s, except for a small margin of elite women (including the wives of educated men). From the 1940s onwards, women began to participate more regularly in the production and consumption of newspapers. Magazines, exclusively aimed at women, started appearing in Nigeria in the 1960s, in the context of a global development of women's glossy periodicals.⁵ The development of this new journalistic genre added new layers to an already complex narrative and strengthened the position of women in the debates, as a space for women exchange.⁶ This article thus mobilizes a novel source base to shed new light on the early years of women's participation in Nigeria's journalistic sphere. In so doing, it offers a rare view at the exchanges between men and women about the “New African Woman” as discussed by editors' selected threads.

The analysis focuses on selected readers' letters published in the women's sections of three cornerstone newspapers of the Nigerian press. The first, “Our Women's Page” in the *Daily Times*, had a national circulation. The second and third, “The Women's Realm” in the *Southern Nigerian Defender* and “For Women Only” (renamed “For Women Only. Women, This Page Is Yours: Use It” in October 1950) in the *Nigerian Tribune*, were regionally distributed. Despite representing different political leanings, these three newspapers were all produced in south-western Nigeria: the *Daily Times* in Lagos, the then capital city of Nigeria, and the other two in Ibadan, the political hub of the former Western Region.⁷ While it is not known where these newspapers were circulating in the colony, it is likely that they were mainly for southern-based readers, since their publishers were located in the south-west and because the first newspaper in the north was founded only in 1949, in Kano. The supposed authors of letters are in large majority based in the south-west of the country. My analysis therefore focuses on debates staged mainly in the southern part of Nigeria.

Letters to the editor generally took two forms in the newspapers under study. Sometimes, editors received letters from the readers expressing an opinion on certain topics related to women's lives. These “open letters” aimed to stir up debate.

5. See extant writing on women's magazines from the 1920s onwards, especially intertwining global ideas of “New woman” and “militancy”: Rooks (2004); Silverberg (2007); Johnson (2009); Bier (2010); Jaji (2014); Bush (2016).

6. On the dailies side, Dayo Duyile explains that women become to be prominent in the press as editors especially after the 1980, when they entered the field of journalism to fight the male-dominated press and its vision of the previous years (Duyile 1987, 351–61).

7. Nigeria was divided into three administrative regions at that time: the Northern Region, the Western Region, the Eastern Region.

The authors articulated their concerns around some aspects of women's lives and, by the same token, they asked for input from the editors and other readers. These texts were published in the women's sections, but their accuracy and their true authorship are uncertain. Whatever their origin, these articles generated interactions between readers that are sometimes prolonged over several editions, as evidenced in the *Nigerian Tribune* and the *Southern Nigerian Defender*.

Other times, editors themselves proposed debates to spark exchanges between male and female readers, and then acted as arbiters of the topics to be discussed. Questions such as the relative status of spouses with regard to their level of education, women in the workplace and the presence of women at public events recurred frequently in these debates. This second genre, which I refer to as "open-ended opinion pieces," is present in the *Nigerian Tribune* and the *Daily Times*.

I concentrate on four selected discussion threads between readers, namely: the definition of women's duties, their right to education, to work and to go out to public functions. By no means exhaustive, these four themes represent recurring discussion topics, leading to interesting reflections on gender roles and their conflicting narratives. I have selected the threads from a corpus of approximately three hundred letters published in women's columns,⁸ which I have reconstituted from the (often incomplete) newspaper collections available at the Nigerian National Archives (Ibadan section).

A Summary of the Development of the Press in Nigeria

Following Fred Omu's chronology, the years framing my analysis are considered in the midst of a new era of journalism, whose dawn appears in 1937. A brief account of the development of the Nigerian press helps to replace this analysis in its context.⁹ These new advances of the press followed the awakening of Nigerian journalism in 1880 within the educated class, whose origins go back much farther in time than the emergence of the female elite described above. The first consumers of newspapers were the Saro, freed slaves who, upon their return from Sierra Leone in the second half of the 19th century, had settled down in Lagos in search of their origins. Educated and Christianized, they formed a professional elite occupying prestigious positions, where they often rubbed shoulders with colonial administrators.¹⁰ Fred Omu's study

8. This corpus does not include all the letters published in the three women's columns but a selection I have done with the useful letters on the topic I was studying. It is difficult to quantify the total number of letters to the editors published in the period analysed for the three newspapers because the collections are often incomplete.

9. For a broad summary on the historiography of West African Press see Kunstmann (2014). For a masterpiece on African print newspaper see Newell, Peterson and Hunter (2016).

10. The press took off in Nigeria in 1859 when CMS missionaries in Abeokuta, in the south-west of the country, supported the publication of the Yoruba language newspaper *Iwe Irohin*. In 1860, an English supplement was added to *Iwe Irohin*. Nigeria was a pioneer country in this area, with precedents observed only in Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, South Africa and Liberia (Perret 2005, 19).

reports that between 1880 and 1937, 51 newspapers were established, including 35 produced in Lagos. Starting in 1921, the press experienced an exponential growth, venturing outside of Lagos (Barber 2016). Some newspapers emerged out of other major urban centers in the south thanks to improved security, better transportation routes and the development of education. Fred Omu explains that “Lagos was the center of sophistication, the fountain of enlightened values and tastes. Because Lagos was so regarded, the newspapers produced there and distributed in several towns were seen as representative of greatness. This conception gave birth to the idea that any town worth a respectable name ought to grace a newspaper” (Omu 1978, 27). Concurrently, the political positioning of the newspapers’ top management changed. They increasingly came head to head with colonial administrators and started criticizing or resisting colonial power. This brought them closer to other sections of the population. In this context, the newspapers became increasingly politicized, eventually seeking to reach out to a wider audience. The general literate public responded with growing interest in a more critical press. Literary culture became a vector of social mobility used to access an elite status, hence the efforts of some less-educated social groups who, despite the limitations of an unequal education system, aspired to cultivate habits of reading and writing to “claim to membership of a social world defined precisely by this culture of literacy” (Barber 2006, 5). Karin Barber points out that at this historical juncture “literacy was a vector rather than a fixed attribute of particular social classes or segments of society. As an avenue to status change and a key mode of social and personal self-positioning, it involved dedicated and unremitting individual effort” (ibid.). This helped the expansion of the newspapers’ audience: by then the *Daily Times* had a circulation of 5,900 copies. Between 1926 and 1930, the newspaper doubled its sales revenue thanks to the growing number of literate Nigerians, to the development of transportation routes (roads and railway) and the lowered cost of printing (Omu 1978, 83, 247).

From 1937, the Nigerian media landscape became more complex, with the consolidation of journalism and the proliferation of daily newspapers that serve as mouthpieces for the new parties that dominated political life from the 1940s onwards (Omu 1978; Duyile 1987). While Fred Omu’s book, following in the wake of several other studies on colonial West Africa (Duyile 1987; Kunstmann 2017), mainly presented the press as a tool for the study of nationalist and anticolonial demands, I show these letters both as a mirror of changing times but also as a platform where debates were created, sorrows were shared and advice could be spread. Following Stephanie Newell’s lead, I intend to lay emphasis on the way in which the press also became a space for cultural production, thus a potentially useful tool to analyze the country’s political and cultural history (Barber 2007; Newell 2011). As Jinny Prais points out (Prais 2009, 244):

Readers’ letters [...] presented these men and women with opportunities to whisper their experiences, concerns, ideas, and opinions into the “public ear.” [...] They were] a space of engagement and production in which readers and writers Accra’s English-literate group took part in imagining a new womanhood and nation.

It is this dimension of cultural discourses' production around private and public women's life that I intend to analyze.

The three daily newspapers I focus on in this paper were of various political persuasions and published out of Lagos and Ibadan. Most notable among them for its size, circulation and technical production was the *Daily Times* (Duyile 1987, 237). The national newspaper was based in Lagos and its first issue came out on June 1, 1926, initially as the *Nigerian Daily Times*, later renamed *Daily Times* in 1948. Acting as a cornerstone of the Nigerian press, it inaugurated a strong culture of dailies although it was not the first daily to be published in Nigeria (Duyile 1987, 61–64). It spread from a daily circulation of 25,000 copies in 1951 to 55,000 in 1955 and 120,000 in 1965 (*ibid.*, 240). Unlike other newspapers, it remained fairly neutral with regards to political matters, as it was supported by the colonial administration. The *Daily Times* came out of a joint venture between European businessmen and politically moderate Africans. In the period analyzed the newspaper passed under the Editorship of seven different Nigerians of various but nonpolitical profiles.

The *Southern Nigerian Defender* was established in 1945 by Nnmadi Azikiwe and it is the last newspaper to be published by his company, *Zik's Press Limited*.¹¹ Nnmadi Azikiwe had pioneered a new era of journalism with the creation of the *West African Pilot* in 1937.¹² Remaining a voice for nationalist, liberal and strongly anti-colonial ideals, in 1945 the newspaper started integrating a more wholesome picture of Nigerian society by reporting on both elite events and issues pertaining to less-privileged classes. This was a key element in the success of the newspaper. It provided ample room to issues related to the south of the country, while staying faithful to the nationalist agenda of its founder.¹³ Created in 1949, the *Nigerian Tribune* was rather focused on the Yoruba south-west and had a more left-leaning editorial line: it served as a vehicle for Obafemi Awolowo's political vision, in line with his pan-Yoruba party, the Action Group.¹⁴ These three newspapers represent the points of view of two major parties active in the south of the country as well as more neutral positions, thus covering a whole range of possible political alignments in the south.

Women's Columns and Letters to the Editor: A Critical Background

My analysis focuses on letters to the editor in women's columns of these three newspapers. Audrey Gadzekpo's analysis of the Gold Coast counterparts of these women's columns highlights the way these sections constitute a gendered space

11. In 1944, Azikiwe also bought the *Comet*, a panafricanist propaganda newspaper whose content centered around African issues rather than national ones, though it conveyed nationalist ideas. It became a daily newspaper called the *Daily Comet* in 1944 (Duyile 1987: 141).

12. For a study on the *West African Pilot* see James (2018).

13. No figures are available for the daily circulation of these two provincial newspapers.

14. Kunstmann (2017). For some insights on the Action Group, see Sklar (1963).

within newspapers that are almost exclusively staffed by men (Gadzekpo 2002). The content of these columns is far from documenting a 360-degree view of women's history. Women's marches, protests and mobilizations, their demands and their political speeches, hardly find a place in the women's columns (Fillieule 2007). Rather, they function as a space where various issues considered "specific" to women can be discussed. For example, save for a few articles with more politically-charged content, the "Ladies Corner" in Gold Coast newspaper, *West Africa Times*, tackles girls' education, gender inequality, the best way to fulfil one's duty as a mother and a wife and keeps its readers up to date on women's activities in the fashion industry and entertainment clubs of the time (Newell 2013, 161). As Audrey Gadzekpo's underlines (Gadzekpo 2002, 184):

Women columnists set the agenda, policed the bounds of their columns and the boundaries of their discourse by highlighting certain concerns. They also exerted power over their readers by conferring status on some issues and recommending certain feminine interests, by validating certain feminine experiences, advocating a particular course of action, asserting women's intellectual capabilities and potential equality, and recommending ways that they could achieve prescribed aims and goals.

While the limited range of topics addressed in these sections may be noted, they remain an important space for women's self-expression, given the lack of any real place for them in the newspapers and the absence of daily publications targeting women prior to the 1960s. On the motivations behind the creation of these women's sections in Gold Coast, Audrey Gadzekpo puts forth the hypothesis that the editors of nationalist newspapers saw them as a way to include women in their agenda (Gadzekpo 2002, 106). She also proposes that it might have been expedient for newspapers to show a modern and inclusive face. Keeping these previous analyses in mind, I would add that considering these women's columns within their context of production, it is plain to see that the concerns they raised catalyzed a number of social debates. The Nigerian press, from its beginnings and particularly from 1937 onwards, offered a platform for political and social debate. Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Stephanie Newell respectively in the francophone and anglophone West African contexts, present the press of this era as a forum for intellectual debates (Lüsebrink 2003). As Stephanie Newell points out (Newell 2013, 2):

African-owned newspapers afforded local writers numerous opportunities to contribute material for publication, and editors repeatedly defined the press as a vehicle to host public debates rather than simply as a conduit for the communication of news or editorial ideology. Literate locals responded with great zeal, and in increasing numbers as the 20th century progressed, they sent letters, articles, fiction, and poetry for publication in English and African language newspapers.

At a time of intense social change, where women's positions were shifting, there was an additional need for discussion spaces which these women's sections managed to carve out.

These concerns around women's rights and duties were not completely new. In her seminal work on marriage, Kristin Mann shows that from the end of the

19th century, a new group of Yoruba Lagosian women from upper-class families, who were Christian and western-educated, were raised to be good wives to their powerful, well-educated husbands (Mann 1985).¹⁵ From the beginning of the 20th century, they started to reconsider their position as wives because of the economically dependent status they acquired with the advent of ordinance marriages. While they were used to working and being financially independent, they lost this economic freedom within the frame of the new Western-inspired marital status: the wife played the part of a “companion” taking care of the husband, the house and the children (Mann 1985). From these competing views on women’s work and economic status—a Yoruba and a Western-oriented pattern of family-making—combinations of different gender possibilities for women started flourishing, raising debates around wifehood and husbandhood and more broadly around femininities and masculinities.

But this class of elite women expanded over time and especially from the 1920s onwards, with the development of girls’ schools in Lagos and beyond, chiefly in the south-western Region. The profile of literate women also changed over time, as education was no longer the preserve of a small group of Lagosian women with a diasporic background and hailing from very wealthy families. Several works on education demonstrate that the training of girls acted as a signifier of an oft-repeated link made by colonial administrators between women’s education and private life: more and more girls were first and foremost educated to affect the running of their households and the needs of their husbands. These attitudes were also promoted by colonial administrators and sometimes by middle class Africans far beyond the purview of the schools, with specific policies linked to this spreading concept of modernity: for example, the advertising of some leisure activities—including sports and nightlife—, the use of specific commodities—such as Western-inspired fashion and cosmetics—, the promotion of healthcare and a certain style of family-life (The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group et al. 2008).¹⁶ Gradually from the 1920s, this new class of literate women started to occupy new positions in the economic, social and political spheres. Educated women gained access to salaried employment as well as white collar jobs they were previously barred from. They were more and more active in the social life of the city through entertainment groups such as the Lagos Women’s League (Johnson 1982; Mba 1982) and socio-economic organizations such as the Women’s Improvement Society (Panata 2016). Similarly, they played a role in politics, either alongside men in political parties or through their own organizations fighting for political rights—see for example the Abeokuta Women’s League (Johnson-Odim and Mba 1997) or the Women Movement of Nigeria [sic] (Panata 2016). While they represented but a small subsection of the population, educated women occupied new positions, which were then considered prestigious and often associated with upward social and economic mobility. All

15. For a glance into Yoruba women’s historiography see Denzer (1994).

16. For some case studies see, among others, Hugon (2005); Prais (2014); George (2014); Claire Nicolas (2017); Barré (2018).

these social changes created new gender possibilities and led to reconfigurations of femininities and masculinities towards a new “modernity.” Between socially sanctioned evolutions and contested changes, debates abounded.

As we said before, the choice of letters to the editor as an object of study arose from their sheer relevance to the examination of the nuances in these social debates and of their gender dimension on the roles of modern women. To reflect on letters to the editor as a literary genre, I turn to Karin Barber's research (Thomas 2012). She proposes an analysis of the epistolary novel *Itan Igbesi-Aiye Emi Segilola (Life History of Me, Segilola, of the Fascinating Eyes)* published in book format in Lagos in 1930. *Itan Igbesi-Aiye Emi Segilola* initially appeared in the late 1920s in the newspaper *Akede Eko*¹⁷ as a series of thirty letters in Yoruba, supposedly addressed to the editor by a Lagos prostitute named Segilola.¹⁸ Old, ill and repentant, she used these letters as a vehicle to boast about her past glories but also as a public confession where she repented to God for her past. Her letters carried an inherent condemnation: they became an allegory of vanity leading to regret in later years. Segilola's writing employed a moralizing tone, revealing the at times unsympathetic portrait of a venal and lascivious woman who succumbed to temptation and eventually suffered the consequences. This epistolary narrative met with dazzling success. Several readers—also writing under pseudonyms—sent letters to the editor, but directly addressing Segilola, to comment on her experiences and ask her questions. This led to dialogues between Segilola and her readers. Sometimes her life story took a backseat as she engaged in these conversations. The letter writers were truly captivated by topics that resonated with them. As they read and related to the themes exposed by Segilola, they debated, they questioned, they got increasingly passionate through this exchange of letters. In the corpus I analyzed, a fervent dialogue was established on two levels: on the one hand, between the readers themselves, and between readers and editors on the other hand. This indicates, in line with Barber's research, that the topics addressed by the newspapers struck a personal chord with the public, who in turn used the press to guide them as they stumbled their way through a changing social context.

Anonymities and other Methodological Questions

The letters to the editor published in women's sections are a delicate source to approach in several respects. Firstly, the identities of the editors who launched the debates (and sometimes replied to letters) are uncertain. In the *Daily Times*, Cassandra was the mysterious editor who headed the women's column. The reference to the character of Cassandra in Greek mythology, commonly associated with a woman pronouncing nefarious prophecies, does not seem very relevant here. Cassandra was more likely

17. This bilingual weekly newspaper, edited by Isaac Babalola Thomas, would publish articles in English and Yoruba, with distinct contents usually offered in each language.

18. This woman is in fact a product of the editor's imagination. Thomas's deceit was unveiled by the editors of another newspaper in 1930 (Thomas 2012, 30).

evoked in relation to her great beauty. Since there is no specific information about this writer, it is reasonable to think that men might in fact have been hiding behind the pseudonym of Cassandra. This could explain the important place of men's point of view in this column as well as the many recriminations against women, expressed in the same style as Isaac Babalola Thomas writing as Segilola. The question of authorship remains unresolved. As for the other two women's sections, their letters are addressed to the editors, often called "Sir," but there is no way of knowing who actually drafted the replies. Stephanie Newell tackled the question of anonymity and the use of pseudonyms in the English language press in Africa prior to the 1940s (Newell 2013; see also Labrune-Badiane and Smith 2018). Although her analysis overlaps by just a decade with mine, it clearly shows how these fictitious names (or absence thereof) played an important part in erasing the social and "ethnic" identity of the writers. It becomes a device to craft a more inclusive writing targeting a broader audience. However, the use of pseudonyms opens up the issue of the gender of the writers. Unable to retrace their personal backgrounds, Stephanie Newell seeks to reframe her analysis around the content of the articles to determine where the sympathies of the authors lie, short of identifying their gender: do the ideas expressed in their writing indicate a more conservative, "pro-masculine" stance or rather a more progressive, "pro-feminine" orientation?

In our case, the scenario contains yet another layer of complexity compared to what Stephanie Newell describes. First of all, while giving due consideration to continuities with the previous period, it is essential to note that Nnamdi Azikiwe ushers in a new era of journalism where individual journalists' personalities and opinions were given a new place (Newell 2013, 17–18). The importance of anonymity and the practice of publishing under pseudonyms thus gradually waned. Moreover, my analysis must contend with a double issue. While the identity of the editors remains an open question, that of the readers writing in is revealed in great detail (for example, it is not rare for readers to give their full name, address and profession) although there is no way of verifying this information. There is also no evidence that editors concocted readers' letters, neither does this seem to be the case with other publications. Pending the resolution of the issue of authorship, we can follow in Stephanie Newell's footsteps in revisiting the debates these articles put forth to gain an understanding of their political inclinations.

It is worth noting that the gender of the author of the letter appears to determine a certain mode of expression. Thus, "women" tended to write open opinion pieces, as illustrated by the column "The Women's Realm" edited by "Cassandra,"¹⁹ while the letter to the editor was a genre dominated by "men." They found some satisfaction

19. See also the column "The World of Women" edited by "Miss Nigeria" in the *Daily Comet*. The nickname "Miss Nigeria" might refer to a woman taken as a token for all unmarried women in Nigeria. But the choice of an unmarried woman seems odd, as the articles she wrote tackle issues related to marriage. We could thus assume that the name was coined to allude to the winner of a beauty contest, though the first official Miss Nigeria beauty contest only took place in 1957.

in expressing their views on women's attire, their manners, the way they should behave to please them. These letters sometimes entered the territory of the advice column, where men exposed their wives' misconduct (cheating, extravagant behavior, divorce, etc.) and requested the editor's opinion on the proper attitude to adopt under such circumstances. "Women" rarely wrote on their own account to express their opinions or opened up a discussion. Instead, "women's" points of view as selected for publication by the editors found a conduit through their replies to "men's" letters. Moreover, the analysis shows that—unsurprisingly—"men" were constantly defending their rights over women at home and a more conservative view of the couple and of marital life. Of course, the entire architecture of these debates could be the product of editors' imagination as was the case for the so beloved Segilola. These questions remain unsolved but this source is by no means less interesting since its presence in a major newspaper testifies to the interest of the readers.

Another problematic question is the readership of these newspapers in a context of limited literacy. There is no way to find out the gender of the readers or their exact number but in the 1940s the literate elite was around 6% of the total Nigerian population and women represented an undefined but small percentage of this group (Coleman 1958). Regardless of demographic weight, this class of people was leading important socio-economic and political transformations in the country. The women in particular, though a narrow fraction of the literate elite, were acting outside the boundaries of their small social group, for example to promote the education of girls and women (George 2014) or to advocate for women's socio-political and economic rights (Johnson 1982; Byfield 2003; Panata and Finch-Boyer 2016). Consequently, having acknowledged the limitations in scope, it seems relevant to give an overview of the debates around gender roles and stereotypes that preoccupied this active group of women, whose socio-political centrality made it highly influential in Nigerian society.

"She should..." "I should...": When Men and Women Describe the Duties of the Modern Nigerian Wife

The common thread unifying a large number of letters destined for women's columns was the call to duty. "What should she do?" was the underlying question in many opinion letters that provided women with precious advice on their duties, which were primarily conceived as those of a mother and a wife. The letters to the editor thus outlined this kind of lifestyle catechism, helping women achieve their great mission: being the ideal partner for their husbands. This task demanded the mastery of several skills mentioned by readers. Their letters, rich in advice for women, generated debates and motivated other readers to express their opinion on

the matter at hand. Series of letters and responses between readers that carried the debate forward from one edition to the next are particularly revealing.

Published in Cassandra's column in September-October 1946, the following thread—as well as countless others—described the duties of the perfect wife. Mr Cookery had this to say on the topic of virtues men seek in a potential wife:

There are three virtues which a good wife must practice:

1. She should be like a clock, keeping time and regularity,
2. She should be like a snail, prudent and keep within her house; but she should not like a snail carry all she has on her back;
3. She should be like an echo, speaking when spoken to; but she should not be like an echo, always determined to have the last word.²⁰

Morphing from a clock to a snail to an echo (when needed), the wife is a complement to her husband without stepping on his toes.

But this serenity and ability to create a quiet, harmonious home, must also be coordinated with domestic tasks: a woman should know how to take care of her house and her children. The letters had much to say on the matter of the best way to clean the house, to sort out the laundry into appropriate baskets, to prepare nutritious porridge. The wife should be quiet and understanding towards her husband, who derives strength from her good behavior so that he can go forth in the world and be successful in his dealings. A woman is a stronghold ensuring her husband's success. In the following letter, Mr Isaac Ok Gasco from Ile Ife explained that a wife should not be “too expensive” for her husband and should instead help him provide for the household:

For it is written in the Old Testament that God made the man, man made the woman, woman made the devil, and the devil spoils the world. [...] make yourself as calm as possible and be merciful. Try not to be too expensive by laying all your burdens on your husband. Have some words and eat not of the bread of idleness that you may reap of the seeds so planted.²¹

There are several points highlighted in this passage. Firstly, women would have a natural inclination to immorality, since the creation. For this natural devil attitude, they could lead husbands to their downfall. So, it is necessary to encourage women to work: they need to conform with a certain discipline. Secondly, promoted by Christian marriage, the constructions of the male breadwinner and the female mother are here contrasted.²² Mr Isaac Ok Gasco underlined that the economic expectations linked to the marriage were difficult to fulfil for men. The association between women and the devil is then easy to make: they spoil the world by squandering men's money. Women should not complain or be an expensive burden but instead be merciful towards their husbands and help them. One female reader

20. Mr J.K. Cookery. “Wives' Temper and Virtues.” *Southern Nigerian Defender*, September 26, 1946, sec. “Women's Realm” (p. 3).

21. Mr Isaac Ok Gasco. “Advice to Females.” *Southern Nigerian Defender*, September 28, 1946, sec. “Women's Realm” (p. 3).

22. For a masterful analysis on the gender of the labor through a working-class perspective in south-west Nigeria see Lindsay (2003).

tried to discourage these self-appointed advisers and their unsolicited mansplaining: “Majority of men think they are too superior to women, that they must treat them as they like. Men, please advise yourselves first before advising us.”²³ But another reader replied: “It will be claiming too much for the opposite sex to think that because men make mistakes, they are not entitled to give advice no matter however incessant, to women. After all [...] the height which any woman can attain is still subordinate to that of the husband at home.”²⁴ The need to advise and frame women’s behaviors was cogent: women needed to perfectly fit into their realm—or the one socially constructed for them—without stepping into men’s shoes. But they also needed to help men as they went about their own duties, easing them of part of their burden. The divide between these multiple dichotomies of women/men, mother/breadwinner, Devil/God, trainee/advisor, was then negotiated for men showing that these gender constructions were manipulated to fit men’s interests. Évelyne Sullerot proposes in her analysis of the French feminine press that “[it] helps women live, in this masculine world, the way men would like them to live [...] ‘We should...,’ ‘We should not...,’ all women’s magazines, whether they focus on good manners, hats or feelings, adopt this moralizing tone” (Sullerot 1966, 8–9). Although examining a different journalistic genre, addressing exclusively a female readership, Évelyne Sullerot emphasizes the extent to which these publications were a way of tracing the contour of women’s tasks (ibid., 7–8). Similarly, in the letters to the editor, men and women’s reflections on women’s duties expressed a social need to find order at this nexus of multiple expectations for literate women.

Dear Readers, what Are Women Entitled to Do? Women’s Rights under Readers Review

Women have duties as wives but do wives have rights? The issue of women’s education was picked up and subjected to further analysis in other letters that introduced debates on women’s rights. These concerns sparked off an exchange of ideas between readers who often expressed divergent opinions, thus proving that there was indeed an ongoing—and stronger—debate. This part of the discussions was most often taken over by editors who offered a reflection geared towards thorny situations and controversial practices, as women found themselves at a breaking point between neglecting a duty and acquiring a right.

Do Equality and Education Promote Domestic Happiness?

Girls’ and women’s literacy was at the heart of many debates, though its importance, its promotion in principle and the necessity of opening new schools met with

23. Mrs Joan Nwakaego. “Behold the Mote!” *Southern Nigerian Defender*, October 17, 1946, sec. “Women’s Realm” (p. 3).

24. Mr Lincoln Ajijalaya. “Men Are Not Wrong.” *Southern Nigerian Defender*, October 18, 1946, sec. “Women’s Realm” (p. 3).

unanimous approval. What was in question was what level of education women could aspire to. Several women's sections tackled this issue, while the editors of the *Daily Times* ran a special call out on this topic: they claimed to have received a letter "asking if it was advisable for men to marry their academic equals." Four men responded to this prompt. According to Mr Oyelowo, it was scientifically proven that women had a smaller brain and the fact that women could learn to be quiet was religiously sanctioned. He underlined that there was then no need for them to be more educated than men:

It was emphatically stated in the Holy Bible that women should learn in silence. She is neither meant to teach nor to usurp authority over the man. It is then clearly seen that the husband has been given the right to rule the home. He has been ordained to do so. But a wife who is an academic equal will question the authority. She will dispute it; and this mean division of authority. She will not learn in silence and subjection. And at the same time the husband will not tolerate the unwarranted attitude hence strife will ensue as such the essence of marriage—to keep a happy home—is lost.

In physiology it was shown that the weight of the brain in woman is 44 oz while that in man 48 oz. That shows that the reasoning power of a woman is below that of a man. But instead of a wife giving her husband opportunity of reasoning out deeply and devise means to shape the destiny of the home, an academic equal will claim equality in ruling forgetting that her mentality is below that of her husband. But if a man marries a lady whose academic education is below his, he will have good control of the home, exercise his initiative and mental reasoning. On the other hand the woman will be submissive. Since power is delegated to one person, there will be peace, harmony and happiness and the aim of marriage will thus be fulfilled.²⁵

Mr Oyelowo delved into science and religion to highlight women's inferiority and to reinforce the idea that they needed to be under the husband's wing. The biological and the divine are hence considered as boundaries dividing the world into two social gendered realms and as measures to establish gender-inappropriate behaviors. In this way, the men readers wanted to underline that their pieces were not dictated by their opinions but instead derived their legitimacy from unquestionable natural and supernatural sources. In this bipolar world so well designed by God and biology, there could only be one captain, as Mr Fadaka stated in his letter:

It is said that two captains cannot be in a ship. It is also holds [sic] good in the case of marriage life. By marrying an academic equal there are bound to be two academic masters in the house with none ready to be subservient to the other. It is then and there quarrel arises.²⁶

Responses keep flocking in during the following days. Given women's inferiority by nature, Mr Adeyemi pointed out that it is better to encourage women's good character, which includes recognizing the husband's superiority. The letters claimed that it could be an unnatural lie to assert that women were equal to men.

Nature did not, does not and will never intend man to be the equal of his wife, it follows, therefore, that anything that may tend to make a woman feel that she is the equal of her

25. D.A. Oyelowo. "Women Should Be Meek." *Daily Times*, May 6, 1950, sec. "Saturday Supplement - Our Women's Page" (p. 1).

26. Mr Josiah Fadaka. "Men Need Not Marry Academic Equals." *Daily Times*, May 6, 1950, sec. "Saturday Supplement - Our Women's Page" (p. 1).

husband must be discouraged. Women, as a rule, are prone to be vain. A wife who can lay claim to equality (not only academic, but also in other respects) with her husband becomes, in nine cases out of ten, haughty and indifferent. [...] Academic achievement is not a "*sine qua non*". What we have to look for is character. After all, the ignorant peasant without fault is better than the philosopher with many faults. But whatever may be the degree of disparity between a man and his wife, the wife must regard the husband as her senior colleague, and the husband in his turn, should look upon his wife as his equal. By so doing there will be mutual respect which is the essence of a happy, married life.²⁷

Difficult to accept as it upset the balance of the married couple, equality in educational achievement was thus rejected by men. A few lonely voices in this choir of negative views about women's education, argued that a couple's happiness was not determined by the level of education of each spouse.²⁸ Although female readers did not seem to participate in this discussion, whether they simply did not write in or their letters ended up not finding a place in the *Daily Times*, girls' education was strongly encouraged by women's organizations in this time period. Activists fiercely demanded more schools for girls so as to close the educational gap (Panata 2016). Thus, the letters presented above clearly reflect a male perspective and a male anxiety in the sharing of their status.

Should Wives Seek Employment?

Another issue prompting debates is that of women in the workplace. Should husbands let their wives work? Yoruba women had always worked and been financially independent (Oyèwùmí 1997). A handful of elite and literate women constituted the exception. As Kristin Mann pointed out, by the mid-1920s, literate women conformed to the Christian idea of marriage started to criticize exclusively domestic roles because of the difficult economic conditions linked to this model of marriage. Moreover, since the mid-1940s, in West Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular, there was an increasing demand for work for educated women. They were called to practice new professions (namely as teachers, nurses, phone operators, secretaries) and this put them in new conflictual situations (Denzer 1989, 21²⁹).

In an April 1950 edition of the *Daily Times*, Mrs Akunne Anaoma wrote a letter summarizing the issue of women's work, following several letters on this topic. She argued that this should be a non-issue since Nigerian women had always worked. Among illiterate traders, who formed a large part of the female population, there

27. Mr Adebayo Adeyemi. "Wives' Role Must Be Subordinate." *Daily Times*, May 15, 1950, sec. "Our Women's Page" (p. 5).

28. J. Ade Oguntola. "Does Equality in Education Promote Domestic Happiness?" *Daily Times*, May 6, 1950, sec. "Saturday Supplement—Our Women's Page" (p. 1); S.C.A. Ajomale. "Equality the Basis of a Happy Home." *Daily Times*, May 6, 1950, sec. "Saturday Supplement—Our Women's Page" (p. 1).

29. Denzer underlines that sewing, teaching and nursing were the main occupations for educated women until the 1950s. Then, they started to work as phone operators, typists, secretaries and government dependents. See also Barré (2019).

was a tacit understanding that idleness would not be tolerated.³⁰ At the same time—she underlined—new professions emerged for which women were thought to be more suitable than men. It logically followed, according to the writer, that then more than ever, educated women should also be encouraged to leave the home to join the workforce, as they always had.³¹

But it was mostly men that seemed to have qualms about this issue and expressed a preference for women staying home, as they worried that their wives might neglect the household in favor of their jobs. Here is Mr Williams Magnus writing on women's place:

Woman is for the home. Marriage, child bearing and rearing are the full time occupation. All else is confusion and vexation of the spirit. What man in Nigeria would be pleased to witness the miserable situation of his child being handed over to a nurse while he and his wife go out to work? Such a deplorable situation is more of a necessity than a pleasure. You cannot fully realise the dangers our girls are exposed by going to work.³²

He proclaimed: "Being a mother is a full time job!"³³ The proper place of a woman is in the home, where she spends her time alone, caring for her husband's happiness and raising her children. His position was summarized by this picture of a "happy family":



Mr Williams Magnus. "Thoughts on Men and Women."
Daily Times, May 8, 1950, sec. "Our Women's Page." (Detail.)

The father is absent from the picture, which shows a mother fully devoted to her two babies. Mr William Magnus thus summarised the position of several men, who did not see any need for women to leave their home. To prove his point, he

30. Anaoma Akunne. "Discusses a Question Which Concerns All Women." *Daily Times*, April 3, 1950, sec. "Our Women's Page" (p. 5).

31. Mrs Ibiyemi Bright. "Should Married Woman Work?" *Daily Times*, April 10, 1950, sec. "Our Women's Page" (p. 5).

32. Mr Magnus Williams. "Thoughts on Men and Women." *Daily Times*, May 8, 1950, sec. "Our Women's Page."

33. "Mother is a fulltime occupation!" Mr Magnus Williams, art. cit.

relied on a strictly gendered division of spheres of influence. Sending women to work would break down the limits of women's sphere, and some men, holding on to a new gendered duality were wary of women leaving their reserved domain, the household.

Mrs Bright Ibiyemi's response indicated a deep irritation. After providing clear examples of women rubbing shoulders with men in different workplaces, she concluded:

I strongly favour married and unmarried women working. It is a progressive step and a step that will help our country as a whole. The question of immorality which is noticeably rampant in the country could be tackled by public spirited men and women and also by religious bodies. It is of course something serious and could therefore engage the attention of everybody who wishes to see Nigeria develop on the right lines.³⁴

In this letter, the writer poked at the limits of women's sphere as depicted by Mr Magnus, adding a new layer. She invited women to work for the betterment of Nigeria and to join men in their struggle against immorality. Several literate women shared her view as shown by women's militancy in those years. Many of them engaged in social activities and others built more politicized networks in order to negotiate a better inclusion in the public sphere (Johnson-Odim and Mba 1997; Panata and Finch-Boyer 2016). This man's anxiety reflected by the press was nevertheless able to shape educated women's life in the 1940-1950: several women from the wealthiest families were forced to put an end to their careers and dedicate themselves to the household.³⁵ Their discomfort with this new passive role was sometime attested by their subsequent engagement in associationism or activism in order to have an impact in their social and political position. What appears paradoxical in these two interventions is that these readers seemed to ignore the fact that Nigerian women had always worked in this part of the country, as extensively showcased by several historians (Sudarkasa 1973; Oyěwùmí 1997; McIntosh 2009; Oladejo 2016). Their anxieties were a response to shifts in the discourse surrounding women's roles beyond Nigerian contexts. This completely obscures local contexts creating a continuous tension around women's lives and duties and their better configuration.

To what Extent Is the Home the Place for Women?

Pursuing a similar line of argument, the *Nigerian Tribune* editors invited readers to reflect on the issue of whether men could legitimately attend public functions without their wives. Women were called upon to express themselves on the matter. Mrs Bello Sherifat, who was in a Muslim polygamous marriage, offered an interesting perspective. She argued that, in trying to reproduce Western culture, women started neglecting their household duties in favor of fashion trends and shopping. She cited the example of a polygamous household, where women did not work outside the

34. Mrs Ibiyemi Bright. "Magnus Williams and the Women." *Daily Times*, May 22, 1950, sec. "Saturday Supplement—Our Women's Page" (p. 1).

35. See for example the cases of Mrs Ogunlesi or Lady Ademola, in Rosiji (1996); Panata (2016).

home and were distracted from their domestic tasks by ephemeral vices such as fashion and European cuisine.

Home is the proper place for women and until everything had been put right at home (which is not possible in a home with children and several domestic affairs to attend to everyday) before women could go out with their husbands.

I am speaking as a Muslim housewife and in strict conformity with the teaching of Islam.

Civilisations have waxed and waned, they have come and gone, and today what is now known as Western Civilization (which we are blindly copying) will sooner or later help towards the ruin of the world.

But for Western Civilization what woman in Africa dare aspire to go out with her husband?

Now that we wish to copy everything European, several of our educated married women have neglected their domestic duties and are seen all about the streets dressed like Hollywood stars, going from one shop to the other while their husbands (who must come home for meals) are busy in the offices or workshops.

No wonder the high rate of divorce cases these days!

Some of our literate women could not cook good African dishes, instead they prefer to prepare those European diet which is not useful and too costly for wage earning husbands.

Is there any sense in the idea of a wife who because she wanted herself to be seen all the time with her husband, leaving her home, neglecting her duties to attend functions which have no benefit for the home?

[...] Our duty in the home is of vital importance and it is foolhardy for a housewife to attend functions with her husband—functions where she could only be seen not heard.

We Muslims are against the practise of women going out to functions with their husbands.

Suppose a polygamous husband is invited to a function, should he take with him all the four or six wives he has to the function?

Home is the proper place for women.³⁶

According to her, wives had no business attending these public functions where they would be mere spectators. The home, full of children, was constantly demanding women's attention, and with all these duties to attend to, there was no free time. Her discourse is rife with contradictions: on the one side, she espoused some Western gender expectations, glorifying the home and the wife as its guardian. On the other side, she denied "Western attitudes" followed by some women as excessively consumerist and misleading. This allows us to torpedo the linear vision of a colonial gender legacy passed down by the colonial administrators to a Nigerian elite, translated in a carbon copy reproduction of Western models. Gender roles were the result of interactions in motion that constantly smashed the borders of assigned gender spaces and constructions. The fact that she was speaking from the perspective of a Muslim woman is less directly relevant to the debate: Muslim women in southern Nigeria were free to be active in the public sphere (Tajudeen Gbadebo

36. Sherifat Bello. "Married Women Must Stay At Home." *Nigerian Tribune. Week-End Supplement*, November 11, 1950, sec. "For Women Only. Women, This Page Is Yours: Use It" (p. 6).

Olusanya Gbadamosi 2014; Oladejo 2016). The *Ansar-ud-Deen* progressist group, for example, founded in Lagos, had strongly advocated since 1923 for “modernizing Islam,” putting an end to seclusion practices, and developing women’s education.³⁷

Another reader supported this point of view, adding that going out would also leave less time for women to take care of the house. Mrs Omitota expressed the conundrum of a couple remaining without a cooked meal once back from their respective offices:

Suppose a couple who have no cook attend a function which closes late in the evening, how will the husband or both of them get their dinner that night? Who is to do the cooking? Suppose a man’s wife is nursing a child or a twin (at times) and the husband is invited to a function, how will it be convenient for both of them to attend the function together?

Women must confine their attention to domestic duties alone. We have much to do at home that at functions.³⁸

However, the majority of women held the opposite view, defending women’s right to participate in social activities thus far monopolized by men.³⁹ Mrs Okunsanya, as well as numerous other female readers, made this argument, emphasizing the negative effects a reclusive life could have on women:

I disagree with the views that Home is for women or that women must stay at home but I agree with the plain fact that the woman owns the home. It is the duty of the woman to take her dwelling a home in the true sense of it. [...] Where the home suffers because the woman goes out, it will suffer all the same if the woman spends all her life in the kitchen. It is simply just and fair that “women should stay at home at all times” those are her words. I wonder what other women think of it. I agree that it may be Islamic, but it surely does not comply with the old Yoruba mode of life. It may be true that our grannies never [...] go out with their husbands but nevertheless, go out they did.⁴⁰

The home belonged to the woman, just like it belonged to the man and the children. Being a homemaker did not imply becoming a slave to the home. Again, it is clear that the borders between the “traditional” and local gender roles and the foreign models were constantly shifting and were far from eliciting unanimity. These contrasting expectations emerged in other discussions where women were blamed for staying cooped up in the comfort of their homes like a bird in a cage, only to complain that they hadn’t been offered any opportunities.⁴¹ They should take it upon themselves to go out and contribute towards the progress of their country. Women were being criticized for not joining meetings, for failing to get involved

37. An exception were the *elecha* (owner of confinement), a very small percentage of women who practiced seclusion and did not have access to education at that time (Renne 2013).

38. Mrs C.S. Omitota Adebisi. “Home Is for Women.” *Nigerian Tribune. Week-End Supplement*, November 18, 1950, sec. “For Women Only. Women, This Page Is Yours: Use It” (p. 6).

39. Mrs Elizabeth Adekogbe. “Men Who Attend Functions Alone Are Selfish.” *Nigerian Tribune. Week-End Supplement*, December 2, 1950, “Should Men Go Out To Functions With Their Wives?—Yes” (p. 6).

40. Mrs C. Okunsanya. “The Old Order Changeth.” *Nigerian Tribune. Week-End Supplement*, Saturday December 2, 1950, “Should Men Go Out to Functions with Their Wives?—Yes” (p. 6).

41. See opening quote.

in the political, social, economic and educational arenas. According to this segment of the public opinion, many women were content watching men do the work while they relied on the comfortable notion that they had to take care of the home. These passive observers were urged to follow in the footsteps of Western women and men who have transformed their countries through active engagement, by getting out of the house and struggling for freedom and for the glory of the next generation of women.⁴²

Conclusion:

The “New Women’s Realm” full of Unsolved Paradoxes

Readers’ letters are an important source for gender and African studies. On the one hand they help document men and women’s everyday concerns within the changing West African societies in the 1940s and 1950s, approaching independence and looking for the most suitable place for men and women in the construction of their nation. On the other hand, they help trace the circulation of different gender discourses that created a new anxiety around the “right gender duties.”

These readers’ discussions did not eschew contradictions: women were invited to play the role of a lenient, submissive supporter to their husbands and they were viewed as guardians of the integrity of home where they were supposed to create happiness. Meanwhile, the very same critics blamed them for standing behind the protective shield of their duties to the household to stay away from national politics. The “New African Woman” described in these articles is first and foremost a wife and a mother who is expected to be entirely devoted to her husband, her home and her children’s education. As Jinny Prais points out in analysing the New African Woman’s personality beyond the editor Marjorie Mansha, she was linked to the group of literate students, returning from studying abroad, namely in London, and representing “their nationalist project that envisioned an educated monogamous couple and nuclear family at its centre” (Prais 2009, 242). The women portrayed in these Nigerian letters to the editor followed this direction. However, the place of the woman in this monogamous couple and the nuclear family was continuously called into question. The wife was encouraged to get an education but she was not supposed to reach the same academic level as her husband as he should remain his master. She should be hardworking and independent, although some men worried about her neglecting her household duties if she worked outside the home. Some women readers proposed a different vision, advocating the need for them to play a role in the socio-political dynamics of their nation beyond their nurturing roles.

42. This kind of articles are generally presented as opinion pieces and not as letters to the editor. Here are a few examples: Commentator. “Nigerian Women to Wake Up.” *Southern Nigerian Defender*, July 3, 1947 (p. 3); Cassandra. “Ibadan Ladies and Politics.” *Southern Nigerian Defender*, December 23, 1946, sec. “Women’s Realm” (p. 3); Cassandra. “This World of Women.” *Southern Nigerian Defender*, February 6, 1948, sec. “Women’s Realm” (p. 3); Mr D.O.B. Odubuye (of the GB Ollivant Limited, Ibadan). “Education With Responsibility [sic].” *Southern Nigerian Defender*, December 13, 1946, sec. “Women’s Realm” (p. 3).

The discussions presented here reflect a complex understanding of gender through time. They interweaved local debates concerning women's roles (Yoruba norms, the influence of Islam and Christianity, composite forms of modernity drawing its inspiration from colonial education), with the global currents of the "New Woman" (social and economically emancipated). Readers views influenced by these multiple interactions ended up in stark contradiction with each other. These readers did not claim a "cosmopolitan modernity"⁴³ but they tried to propose a locally grounded modernity. They then advised contradictory and unsolved reflections testifying to the multitude of available combinations—and the porous and historical changing nature of these modernity claims. Not only was the introduction of the male/female dichotomy partly inspired by discourses around Western modernity, but the rejection of these overly restrictive dichotomies also claims to pertain to Western modernity. This underlines the fact that these thought categories were filled with different contents in changing contexts, mobilized in different ways depending on the framework of reference and the interests of the various participants in these debates. Whether these injunctions were progressive or conservative, there is no point in trying to untangle their inconsistent nature. On the contrary, it is by taking them all into account that we can appreciate the complexity of gender transformations at this historical moment as perceived and lived by ordinary literate Nigerians. This source finds its place in an already very developed literature on West African English language press but also adds nuances, showcasing deeper debates among ordinary writers and going beyond professional editors. In this respect, in spite of the methodological questions raised and not fully resolved, letters to the editor are significant in terms of how they sit within gender and African studies.

I would like to thank the staff of the National Archives of Ibadan for their assistance in facilitating my access to their newspapers collection and their permission to reproduce the documents. Thanks are also due to also to the Director of IFRA, Dr Élodie Aparé, Dr Rouven Kunstmann and Dr Elisa Prosperetti who provided constructive feedback.

Sources

General Remarks

Open Access and Reproduction

To date, there is no open-access digital archive of the materials used in this paper.

Reproductions of the archival materials are from the holdings of the National Archives of Ibadan. They are reproduced with their agreement. I would like to thank the staff at the Nigerian National Archives in Ibadan for their assistance in facilitating my access to the collection and their permission to reproduce some items.

Copies (microfilms) of these materials are also present in other archives as stated below for each newspaper journal.

43. I borrow this term from Louise Barré's analysis (Barré 2018).

Location and Dates

For the paper, I mostly used the press published in 1950, but a complete list of the useful items to build my reflection is presented below. The three newspapers are also available in different European libraries, mostly in microfilm form, for periods that are not always easy to determine: item records of the different archival centers may not contain complete listings. Presumably, these libraries rely on the resources of the Center for Research Libraries, which has produced microfilm and digital versions of collection segments⁴⁴. To have an idea of where to consult these newspapers, please check Worldcat, the world's largest network of library content⁴⁵.

Chronology for the Women's Sections and Letters to the Editor

The newspaper collections I consulted have gaps in their holdings and did not allow me to determine the exact chronology of the women's sections and letters to the editor. From the newspapers consulted for this paper and other publications, I could date back the beginning of the women's columns to the 1940s. Farther research is needed to fill this gap.

Notes for each Items Consulted

1. *Nigerian Daily Times* (1926–1948) - *Daily Times* (1949 to date)

The *Daily Times* (earlier title *Nigerian Daily Times*) is a daily newspaper (except Sunday) printed in Lagos (Nigeria).

Location. Nigerian National Archives (printed forms): 1944, 1949, 1950, 1957, 1960, 1961, 1963.

Other libraries (microfilms): Segments of sections. For more information please check on WorldCat:

- *The Nigerian Daily Times*: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/29572703>
- *Daily Times*: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/5537138>

2. *Southern Nigerian Defender* (1943 to 1959)

The *Southern Nigerian Defender* is a daily newspaper (except Sunday) printed in Warri (1943 – 1945), in Lagos (1945) and then in Ibadan.

Location. Nigerian National Archives (printed forms): 1944, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951

Other libraries (microfilms): Segments of sections. For more information please check on WorldCat: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/41577164>

3. *Nigerian Tribune* (1949 to date)

The *Nigerian Tribune* is a daily newspaper (except on Sunday), printed in Ibadan.

Location. Nigerian National Archives (printed forms): 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1958.

44. <http://www.crl.edu/about>.

45. <https://www.worldcat.org>.

Other libraries (microfilms): Segments of sections. For more information please check on WorldCat:

- <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/942431607>
- <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/990504772>
- <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1076388202>

Reproduction of studied archival materials

Daily Times

Anaoma AKUNNE. "Discusses a Question Which Concerns All Women." April 3, 1950

ANAOMA AKUNNE

DISCUSSES A QUESTION WHICH CONCERNS ALL WOMEN

OUR WOMEN'S PAGE

This week Anaoma Akunne deals with a question on which we have received many letters recently. The question is not 'Should Women Work?' but—How can they get the best out of the life they lead?

A few weeks ago some members of the public were keenly interested about whether women should or should not work. That question is now closed perhaps without a definite conclusion, but what I wish to point out is that such a question should never have been asked.

There has never been a time in any indigenous African society where women, especially the married ones, pause to think whether they should or should not work. In my own home town, the beginning of the rainy season is the beginning of the farming season, and every woman engages herself in farming. Sometimes a group of women form a team and then work for one another in turns. This team work is much more interesting and the progress is fast.

Farm labourers are engaged hard and difficult pieces of ground. The harvesting of the crops follows on immediately. After the harvest, there is a short interval before another farming season arrives. During this period, that is looked forward to as one for rest, these women once more continue their various handicrafts. These are either pot making, bread baking, weaving or petty trading in towns like Lagos, Port Harcourt, Enugu and Onitsha, with their mixed societies, the majority of the women undertake petty trade. Some keep shops

In any indigenous African society, there is no toleration of idleness—says Anaoma Akunne.

Some cook and sell food in the market places, other fry akara by the way side. Barring some of the shopkeepers, the rest are illiterates, and the unwritten law amongst them is no toleration of idleness.

From our literate women, come the nurses, teachers, clerical workers, and telephone operators.

Judging from what we see of the Europeans out here, the tendency is that every woman married or single makes it a point of duty to work. Where

I work, there are 40 women workers in the establishment. Of these, 32 are married. Only 4 out of the 32 have no children. The oft given excuse for locking us women indoors is to look after the home husband, and children. Now 28 of these 40 women have a home, husband and children to look after, and in addition their office work to perform efficiently. After close contact with these women for over a year, my conclusion is that what is really essential for the efficient running of a happy home, is money and some ability to organise.

Children do not thrive on endless do's and don'ts, but on a sufficient and regular supply of balanced and nourishing meals, and plenty of sunshine and fresh air. The world's greatest men and women are not those milksons tied eternally to their mothers' apron-strings.

The problem arises in connection with the semi literates. These people are not literate enough to be absorbed by any government department, not

reasonable enough to employ themselves usefully. They look down upon these occupations usually pursued by the illiterates.

On the other hand there are some educated women who stay at home, not because they intend to spend all their days mending shirts, darning socks or polishing furniture, but simply because they feel that they can afford the luxury of lazing about.

There are many men, even in this 20th century Nigeria who are still very barbarous at heart. Their one and only intention is to press women under their thumbs. They feel that their only effective method is to encourage idleness rather than allow their wives out of the house.

As I have said before money, as well as mutual acceptance of one another, is essential to the smooth running of home. Any man who finds himself in possession of a woman who has both the aptitude and ability to augment his income should count himself blessed.

The idea of women going to work is not at all new to us; why should we now encourage idleness in favour of industry? Is what beats my imagination.

Or else, do we understand that our men would rather have us do farm work and food hawking than office work?

A MERE MAN

A MAN GIVES HIS VIEWS

ANYBODY who witnessed the 20th Annual Sports meeting of the Lagos Baptist Academy recently held at the King's College, would have been struck by a particular feature of it. I am referring to the girls' event—100 Yds. senior and senior, and the 100 Yds. junior.

Although the girls' events are comparatively few, yet champions as far as sports are concerned, in a day or two it takes time but not too long a time. A year's practice can put anybody in good form for serious athletics.

Our boys have been doing well because they have been taught systematically in schools. This is not so in our girls' schools. I suggest that principals of girls' schools take

ON SPORTS FOR WOMEN

Competitions are also arranged between them.

By this method, the sports feature of the country can be made stabilised, which would in itself result in raising the standard of sports in this

which a high standard of sports in Nigeria can be safely established, and the country will ever be indebted to them for that service.

Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/26c3022d>

Transcript

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Mrs Ibiyemi BRIGHT. "Should Married Woman Work?" April 10, 1950

"SHOULD MARRIED WOMAN WORK?"

MUCH had been written on this very interesting subject; but the writers have confined their thoughts more on clerical duties in offices than any other job. They have therefore declared that married women should not work.

There are however, other vocations for married women which have not been examined but which if examined, I believe, might change the stand of antagonists of married women working.

Let us think of Nursing, Midwifery, Teaching and Health Work. It is evident that women are more suited for these jobs than men. I understand there is a plan already in hand to reserve nursing work in Nigeria exclusively for women. It cannot be otherwise, if Nigeria is to move with the time.

SWEET MATRIMONY

If Nursing, Midwifery, Teaching and Health Work are to be staffed by women, it will apparently be quite absurd to suggest that married women should not be allowed to work.

It is now common that girls fresh from school do not stay long enough in their jobs before they are gently allured into sweet matrimony, and if these ladies are to be kicked out of their work as and when they get married, I doubt whether such attitude will not have adverse effect on the working economy and efficiency of the department in which they are engaged.

Let us take Midwifery work for an instance. Lady school-leavers are recruited for three years training to become Midwives. After training, they are expected to become full

By MRS. IBIYEMI BRIGHT

fledged Midwives and thus give to the Medical Service the full benefit of their training and experience. But it has been known that majority of those who started the training have always decided to marry before completion of their training or not long enough after it.

This attitude, it is quite obvious will not help our country. On the other hand, if married women are allowed to work, there will be continuity and smoothness of work and the country as a whole will benefit by it. The foregoing instance gives the exact picture in regard to Teaching, Nursing and Health work.

Let us examine another point. I find it very difficult to agree with those who for economic reason alone would not decide on the side that married women should work. Cost of living in the whole country is now very high. We women know that quite well. Even our Legislative Councilors and the Press are unanimous in appreciating this fact, and in calling on the Government to do something to ease the situation.

But, before Government could find a panacea to the disturbing situation, can't we women be allowed to render little help to our husbands by working?

I know I am treading on delicate ground and some of my readers will think of the resultant effect such a position will have on the home. I must state quite clearly that this point has been grossly exaggerated by previous writers on this subject.

Married women who have children can arrange for their mothers or some elderly and experienced relations to look after the children, after all it is not a total absence from home, but rather for a short period.

The age that women are incapable of sitting side by side with their husbands to plan together the future and discuss important family matters together has gone. If we are to progress, we must move with the time. Married women working is the sign of the time; it is a progressive step, it is a break-away from the stupid and age-worn conception that women are footstools of men.

My dear readers allow your wives to work if they wish to do so.

Should Wives Have Pocket Money?

Sir—Below is a problem which puzzles me very much. Will you give it publication so that your readers may air their views on the matter.

At the end of every month after providing my wife with "chop money," she often demands an extra amount which she terms as her "pocket money".

May I know if it is fair to give a wife extra money for her private use? What do your readers think about this?

I thank you in anticipation for your help in answering my question.

Yaba. OGA N. OJLJI.

Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/e132563a>

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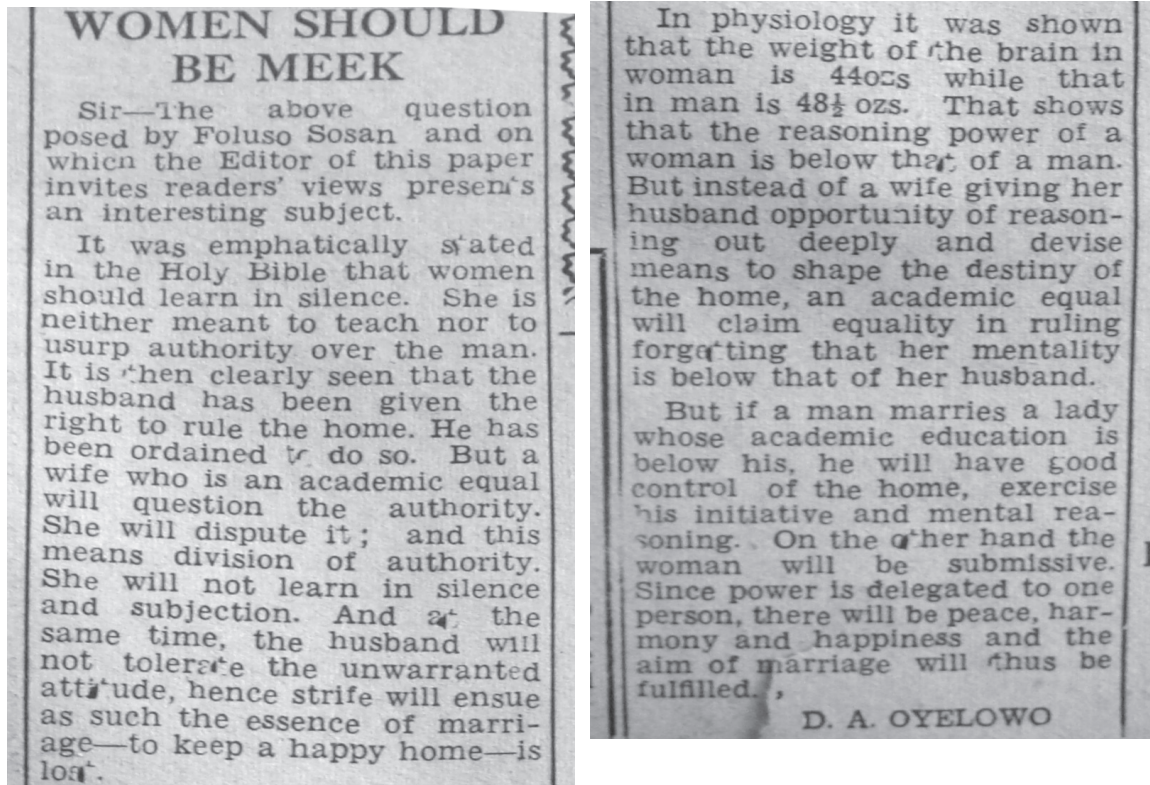
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D.A. OYELowo. "Women Should Be Meek." May 6, 1950



Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/0bdda07b>

Transcript

WOMEN SHOULD BE MEEK

Sir—the above question posed by Foluso Sosan and on which the Editor of this paper invites readers' views presents an interesting subject.

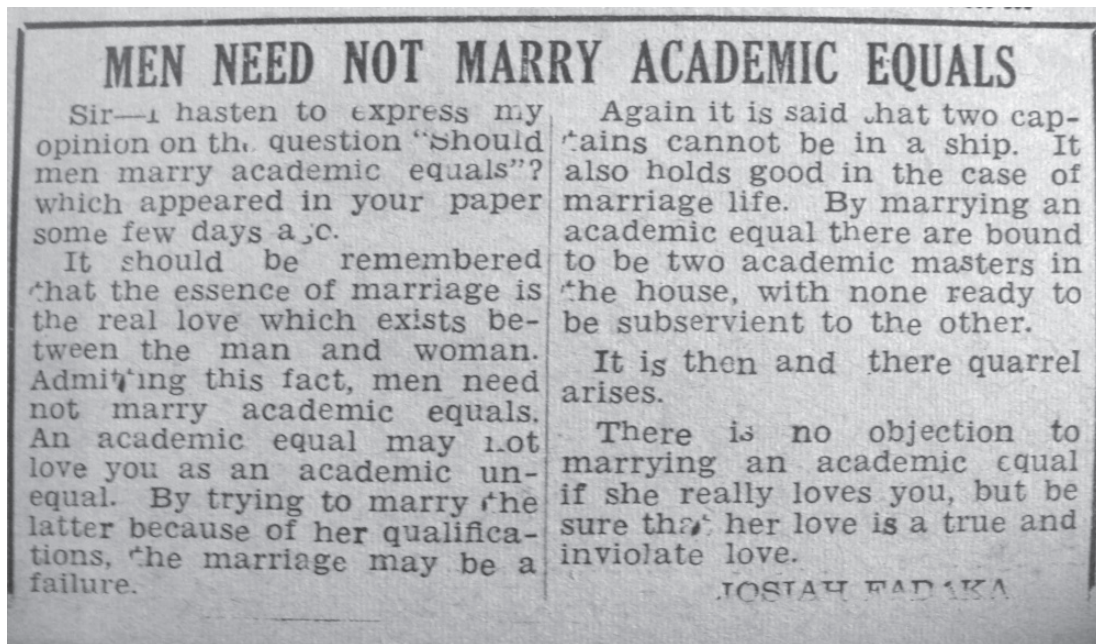
It was emphatically stated in the Holy Bible that women should learn in silence. She is neither meant to teach nor to usurp authority over the man. It is then clearly seen that the husband has been given the right to rule the home. He has been ordained to do so. But a wife who is an academic equal will question the authority. She will dispute it; and this means division of authority. She will not learn in silence and subjection. And at the same time, the husband will not tolerate the unwarranted attitude, hence strife will ensue as such the essence of marriage—to keep a happy home—is lost.

In physiology it was shown that the weight of the brain in woman is 44ozs while that in man is 48½ozs. That shows that the reasoning power of a woman is below that of a man. But instead of a wife giving her husband opportunity of reasoning out deeply and devise means to shape the destiny of the home, an academic equal will claim equality in ruling forgetting that her mentality is below that of her husband.

But if a man marries a lady whose academic education is below his, he will have good control of the home, exercise his initiative and mental reasoning. On the other hand the woman will be submissive. Since power is delegated to one person, there will be peace, harmony and happiness and the aim of marriage will thus be fulfilled.

D.A. OYELowo

Mr Josiah FADAKA. "Men Need Not Marry Academic Equals." May 6, 1950



Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/26c13d23>

Transcript

MEN NEED NOT MARRY ACADEMIC EQUALS

Sir—I hasten to express my opinion on the question "Should men marry academic equals"? which appeared in your paper some few days ago.

It should be remembered that the essence of marriage is the real love which exists between the man and woman. Admitting this fact, men need not marry academic equals. An academic equal may not love you as an academic unequal. By trying to marry the latter because of her qualifications, the marriage may be a failure.

Again it is said that two captains cannot be in a ship. It also holds good in the case of marriage life. By marrying an academic equal there are bound to be two academic masters in the house, with none ready to be subservient to the other.

It is then and there quarrel arises.

There is no objection to marrying an academic equal if she really loves you, but be sure that her love is a true and inviolate love.

JOSIAH FADAKA

J. ADE OGUNTOLA. "Does Equality in Education Promote Domestic Happiness?"
May 6, 1950

DOES EQUALITY IN EDUCATION PROMOTE DOMESTIC HAPPINESS?

WE recently invited our readers to comment on a letter asking if it were advisable for men to marry their academic equals.

On this page to-day we are publishing some of the replies we have received—Read on and see how others feel about this vital topic.

Our readers mainly seem to lean to the view that academic equality is not necessary for a marriage to be happy.

Sir—Permit me a space to express my views about an article captioned 'Should men marry Academic Equals?'. It would be unreasonable, to imagine, when considering happiness, that 'Academic Equality' in marriage is a necessity or that 'inequality' as such is a barrier to happiness.

In the first place, an indispensable requisite of happiness is a clear conscience unclouded by the reproach or the remembrance of unworthy actions. I would rather be an advocate of marriage 'inequality' between the couple, as long as 'inequality' does not degenerate into deep illiteracy.

Arguing from the point of view of village life, the present output of literate girls and the present standard of literacy among them, would not justify a need for equality.

Many of our girls leave school before finishing their elementary education; the boys survive and perhaps receive secondary education. Such boys, if 'equality' were the only criterion of suitability for marriage, would be greatly handicapped since they must look for only girls who are academically equal.

What would be the fate of the so many girls who left school early! We should not permit theory to predominate; most families owe their children a grudge for marrying girls who, as a result of their education, are not able to cope successfully with the rest of the family. To such parents and to sincerely minded writers, 'academic equality' is a menace to happy village life.

Furthermore, in really urban towns some of these educated girls are unfortunately the greatest scums of society we could possibly have. In brief I would suggest that a fairly educated girl, possessing no outstanding faults either morally or physically is a sufficient asset for any average man who is looking for a wife.

J. ADE OGUNTOLA
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EQUALITY THE BASIS OF A HAPPY HOME

Sir—Regarding the question "should men marry their academic equals?" I am of the following opinion.

As time is moving, so too are the men of this twentieth century. Gone are the days when wives were thinking of their husbands as 'demigods' or 'almighty masters' who should be reverently adored on account of their claimed supremacy. Passed into oblivion too, are the days when wives could not enjoy the intimate companionship of their husbands.


Thank goodness, those bogus ideas are now relegated to the background! I am in profound agreement with men marrying their academic equals. The following are my reasons—If a man and woman are equally qualified they are able to chat together about their college activities, their favourite subjects, and the various aspects of their student days.

The two, as pillars of the home, are responsible for the upbringing of their children and for guiding them in their education. Such experienced parents would help the children and be better fitted to guide them when it comes to their choosing a profession.

For instance a lawyer husband and his lawyer wife, would be in a position to advise their young would-be-lawyer son conjointly!

This equality and mutual understanding is, to my mind, the basis of a happy home.

S. C. A. AJOMALE



Should men marry.....

Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/f22601ef>

Transcript

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J. ADE OKUNLOLA

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[Images]

[Captions] Should men marry... ..

... .. academic equals?

AJOMALE, S.C.A. "Equality the Basis of a Happy Home." May 6, 1950



Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/f18b57e7>

Transcript

EQUALITY THE BASIS OF A HAPPY HOME

Sir—Regarding the question "Should men marry their academic equals?" I am of the following opinion.

As time is moving, so too are the men of this twentieth century. Gone are the days when wives were thinking of their husbands as 'demi-gods' or 'almighty masters' who should be reverently adored on account of their claimed supremacy. Passed into oblivion too, are the days when wives could not enjoy the intimate companionship of their husbands. Thank goodness those bogus ideas are now relegated to the background!

I am in profound agreement with men marrying their academic equals. The following are my reasons: —If a man and woman are equally qualified they are able to chat together about their college activities, their favourite subjects, and the various aspects of their student days.

The two, as pillars of the home, are responsible for the upbringing of their children and for guiding them in their education. Such experienced parents would help the children and be better fitted to guide them when it comes to their choosing a profession.

For instance, a lawyer husband and his lawyer wife, would be in a position to advise their young would-be-lawyer son conjointly!

This equality and mutual understanding is, to my mind, the basis of a happy home.

S. C. A. AJOMALE.

WILLIAMS, Magnus (Mr). "Thoughts on Men and Women." May 8, 1950

OUR WOMEN'S PAGE
THOUGHTS ON MEN AND WOMEN by **MAGNUS WILLIAMS**
ON THIS page to-day M. A. O. Williams the well known lawyer has some unusual observations to make concerning the part women are ordained to play in Nigerian society. As the comments come from a 'mere male' our women readers may have something to add!

Why should women not pay tax? They claim to be the equal of men and yet they choose to shirk the responsibilities of men. It is an admission that they are not our equals. It is claimed that they are poor, but so are millions of men in this country. You can imagine what a colossal sum of money is lost to the revenue of this country by way of tax when it is realised that many men trade through the womenfolk and thus evade payment of income tax. Whether women are the equal of men or not, it is my opinion that they should contribute by direct taxation to the revenue of the country. They enjoy the amenities too. Personally, I have never believed that women are equal to men. How can they be? I'd like to see women crew of a submarine or women handling heavy steel in the Railway Loco Workshops. I'd like to see women land surveyors undergoing the hardships men surveyors do undergo in the bush. Women should begin to apply for such heavy jobs now to prove their equality with men. As auxiliaries, they may measure up to the heights, but as the real operators, I refuse to be convinced. Men have been created the protectors and guardian angels of women and we cannot estimate the obvious fact that without him she is helpless. He is the robe that clothes her, every other thing is mere adornment.

SHEER HYPOCRISY
Woman is for the home. Marriage, child bearing and rearing are a full time occupation. All else is confusion and relaxation of the spirit. What man in Nigeria would be pleased to witness the miserable situation of his child being handed over to a nurse while he and his wife go out to work? Such a deplorable situation is more of a necessity than a pleasure. You cannot fully realise the dangers our girls are exposed to by going to work. Some African and European "high-ups" think that the girls are a meat for consumption. These "high-ups" continually bring pressure to bear. I say no more. A lot has been written about monogamy and polygamy. Let us not enthrone hypocrisy. How many Africans have "known" only their wives since marriage? If even you are living with a woman not married according to the Marriage Ordinance or Native Custom, it will be difficult to swear you "know" only that woman. Why waste time to preach a thing that is impracticable in this country? The truth is that in this country, your mother, auntie, uncle, etc, want to "see" your children, the source not withstanding. Five men and twenty-five women can populate a town but the converse is not also true. This is a food for thought.

In season of great peril to a country, when the peace and are in jeopardy, when the seer, do you discriminate between married men, married women, children born in wedlock and those born out of wedlock as to those who will save the country? In war and in peace "as one dieth, so dieth the other. Yeal they all have one breath". And as Shakespeare, the immortal poet who sang of time and eternity: Shakespeare the sweet singer of England has beautifully put it: "And what have Kings that beggars have not too, Save ceremony, save ceremony, Be sick great greatness, and let thy ceremony give thee cure!"

HAPPY FAMILY

Motherhood is a full time occupation says M. A. O. Williams.

Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/36b75632>

Transcript

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by MAGNUS WILLIAMS

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ADEYEMI, Adebayo (Mr). "Wive's Role Must Be Subordinate." May 15, 1950

WIVES' ROLE MUST BE SUBORDINATE

Sir—Nature did not, does not and will never intend man to be the equal of his wife. It follows, therefore, that anything that may tend to make a woman feel that she is the equal of her husband must be discouraged.

Women, as a rule, are prone to be vain. A wife who can lay claim to equality (not only academic, but also in other respects) with her husband becomes, in nine cases out of ten, haughty and indifferent. She is not prepared to accept a subordinate position, but always likes to have things in her own ways. And since there is always a limit to human endurance, she at last becomes intolerable, and unhappiness sets in.

Academic achievement, is not a "sine qua non". What we have to look for is character. After all, the ignorant peasant without fault is better than the philosopher with many faults. But whatever may be the degree of disparity between a man and his wife, the wife must regard the husband as her senior colleague, and the husband, in his turn, should look upon his

wife as his equal. By so doing there will be mutual respect which is the essence of a happy married life.

ADEBAYO ADEYEMI.
Ebute Metta.

A Thought For "Maggie"

Sir—I read an article in your paper the other day on the "questionable" equality of women and men, by Mr. M. A. O. Williams.

Far be it from me, a "medicine woman" to engage in controversy with a learned member of the learned profession of the Bar.

But I would like to say on behalf of my sex, that if Mr. Williams is the typical male, then the literary style and subject matter of his article supply the answer to the question he posed himself.

Yours Faithfully,
A Mere Female,
IRENE E. B. IGHODARO.
Benin City. M.B.B.S.

Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/d6a2e70f>

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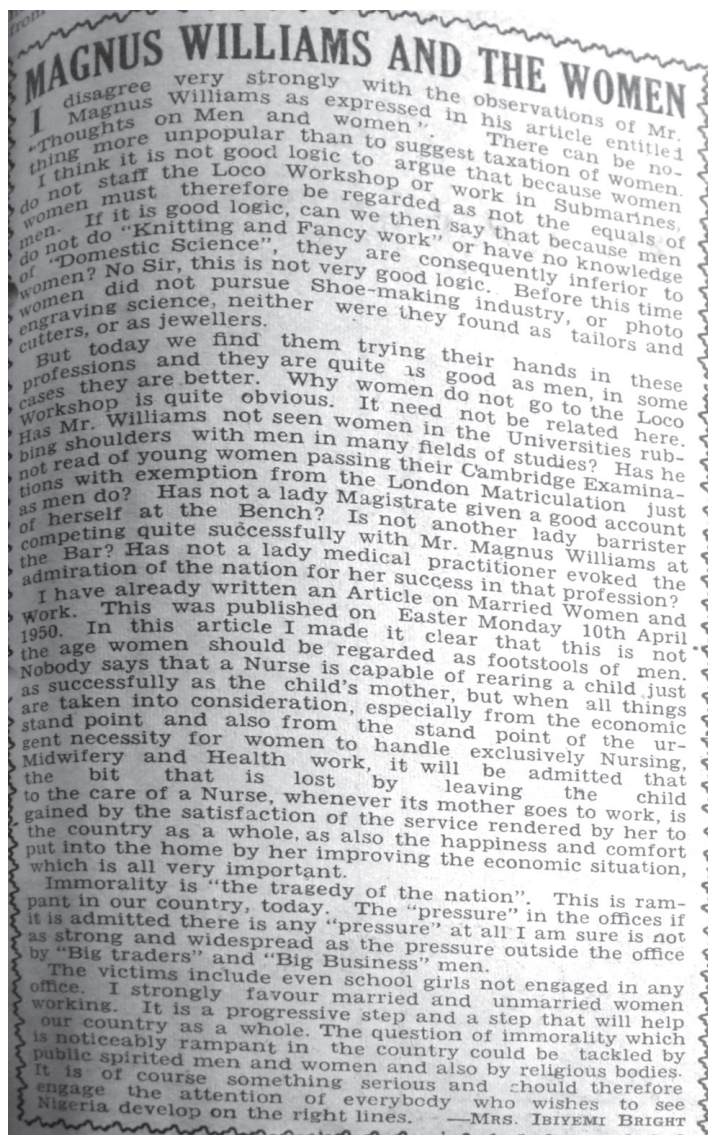
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IRENE E. B. IGHODARO. M.B.B.S.

Benin City.

BRIGHT, Ibiyemi (Mrs). "Magnus Williams and the Women." May 22, 1950



Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/bc09138c>

Transcript

MAGNUS WILLIAMS AND THE WOMEN

I disagree very strongly with the observations of Mr Magnus Williams as expressed in his article entitled "Thoughts on Men and women". There can be nothing more unpopular than to suggest taxation of women.

I think it is not good logic to argue that because women do not staff the Loco Workshop or work in Submarines, women must therefore be regarded as not the equals of men. If it is good logic, can we then say that because men do not do "Knitting and Fancy work" or have no knowledge of "Domestic Science", they are consequently inferior to women? No Sir, this is not very good logic. Before this time women did not pursue Shoe-making industry, or photo engraving science, neither were they found as tailors and cutters, or as jewellers.

But today we find them trying their hands in these professions and they are quite as good as men, in some cases they are better. Why women do not go to the Loco Workshop is quite obvious. It need not be related here. Has Mr. Williams not seen women in the Universities rubbing shoulders with men in many fields of studies? Has he not read of young women passing their Cambridge Examinations with exemption from the London Matriculation just as men do? Has not a lady Magistrate given a good account of herself at the Bench? Is not another lady barrister competing quite successfully with Mr. Magnus Williams at the Bar? Has not a lady medical practitioner evoked the admiration of the nation for her success in that profession? I have already written an Article on Married Women and Work. This was published on Easter Monday 10th April. 1950. In this article I made it clear that this is not the age women should be regarded as footstools of men. Nobody says that a Nurse is capable of rearing a child just as successfully as the child's mother, but when all things are taken into consideration, especially from the economic stand point and also from the stand point of the urgent necessity for women to handle exclusively Nursing, Midwifery and Health work, it will be admitted that the bit that is lost by leaving the child to the care of a Nurse, whenever its mother goes to work, is gained by the satisfaction of the service rendered by her to the country as a whole, as also the happiness and comfort put into the home by her improving the economic situation, which is all very important.

Immorality is "the tragedy of the nation". This is rampant in our country, today. The "pressure" in the offices if it is admitted there is any "pressure" at all I am sure is not as strong and widespread as the pressure outside the office by "Big traders" and "Big Business" men.

The victims include even school girls not engaged in any office. I strongly favour married and unmarried women working. It is a progressive step and a step that will help our country as a whole. The question of immorality which is noticeably rampant in the country could be tackled by public spirited men and women and also by religious bodies. It is of course something serious and should therefore engage the attention of everybody who wishes to see Nigeria develop on the right lines.

—Mrs. IBIYEMI BRIGHT

Nigerian Tribune

BELLO, Sherifat. "Married Women Must Stay at Home." November 11, 1950

Married Women Must Stay At Home
By SHERIFAT BELLO

The Editor of the "Tribune" has invited the views of his readers—especially women on the topical question as to whether it is fair or unfair for married men to go out to functions without their wives.

Let me say right now that, it is simply just and fair that women should stay at home all the time and leave their husbands to attend functions alone.

Home is the proper place for women and until everything had been put right at home (which is not possible in a home with children and several domestic affairs to attend to everyday) before women could go out with their husbands.

I am speaking as a Muslim housewife and in strict conformity with the teachings of Islam.

Civilisations have waxed and waned, they have come and gone, and today what is now known as Western Civilization (which we are blindly copying,) will sooner or later help towards the ruin of the world.

But for Western civilization, what woman in Africa dare aspire to go out with her husband?

Now that we wish to copy everything European, several of our educated married women have neglected their domestic duties and are seen all about the streets dressed like Hollywood stars, going from one shop to the other while their husbands (who must come home for meals) are busy in the offices or workshops.

No wonder the high rate of divorce

No wonder the high rate of divorce cases these days!

Some of our literate women could not cook good African dishes, instead they prefer to prepare those European diet which is not useful and too costly for wage-earning husbands.

Is there any sense in the idea of a wife who because she wanted herself to be seen all the time with her husband, leaving her home, neglecting her duties to the children and other domestic duties to attend functions which have no benefit for the home?

Hear what Gandhi of India had said about "Duty".

"If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If leaving duties unperformed we run after rights, they will escape us like a Will O'The Wisp.

"The more we pursue them the farther will they fly, The same teaching has been embodied by Krishna in the words:

"Action alone is thine".

"Leave thou the fruits severely alone. Action is duty: fruit is the right".

Our duty in the home is of vital importance and it is foolhardy for a housewife to attend functions with her husbands—functions where she could only be seen not heard.

We Muslims are against the practice of women going out to functions with their husbands.

Suppose a polygamous husband is invited to a function, should he take with him all the four or six wives he has to the function?

Home is the proper place for women.

Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/302c5ff0>

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Suppose a polygamous husband is invited to a function, should he take with him all the four or six wives he has to the function?

Home is the proper place for women.

OMITOTA ADEBIYI, C.S. (Mrs). "Home Is for Women." November 18, 1950

(Image on next page)

Transcript

Home Is For Women

Dear Sir,

Please allow me space in your widely read journal to express my views on the Editor's question as to whether married women should go out to functions with their husbands or not,

I dare say that it is entirely wrong for women to attend functions with their husbands.

Suppose a couple who have no cook attend a function which closes late in the evening, how will the husband or both of them get their dinner that night?

Who is to do the cooking?

Suppose a man's wife is nursing a child or a twin (at times) and the husband is invited to a function, How will it be convenient for both of them to attend the function together?

Women must confine their attention to domestic duties atone. We have much to do at home than at functions.

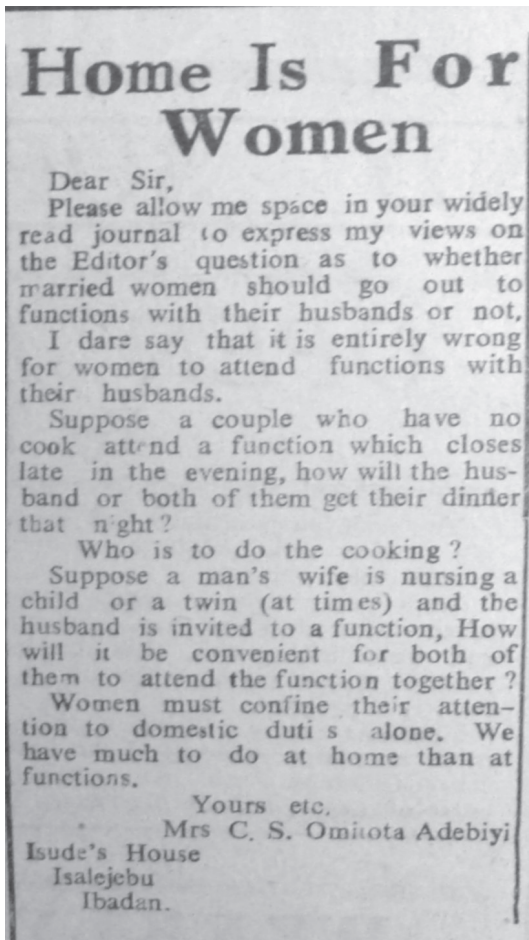
Yours etc.

Mrs C. S. Omitota Adebisi

Isude's House

Isalejebu

Ibadan.



Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/63474134>

ADEKOGBE, Elizabeth (Mrs). "Men Who Attend Functions Alone Are Selfish."
December 2, 1950

Transcript

**MRS ELIZABETH ADEKOGBE SAYS:
MEN WHO ATTEND FUNCTIONS ALONE ARE SELFISH**

The important topic which you have thrown to the general public especially women, for discussion should be of wide interest in this country as are of the greatest defects in most of our married men and has therein been rightly spotted out.

The idea of a man leaving his better half – the wife – behind always when both of them are invited to certain functions and when this wife is physically and mentally fit to attend such functions does leave in the mind of the wife certain unpleasant impressions and memories.

In my opinion, this practice is based on the idea that the 'HOME' is the place of a woman. But this saying has lost some of its effects from the point of view of present day occurrences – most men having had their eyes open.

No Moral Justification

The practice of leaving up wives has no moral justification. On the other hand it creates suspicion, exhibits selfishness and depicts a monopoly of social interests on the men's part.

It instils into the mind of future wives a fear that once they are 'housed', they are cut off from the social world and that only Mr B. must honour any invitation intended for Mr and Mrs B.

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And we wonder at the SINKING of many ladies after marriage - ladies who in their maiden days were the observed of all observers.

We are all aware of the fact that wives cannot afford the time to respond to all invitations because of Home Management and allied problems; but they do wish to appear occasionally and a denial of this often leads to grumbling which increases in volume as more invitations are received by Mr and Mrs B.

Wife's Embarrassment

Foreigners do ask occasionally why most married Africans do not go out with their wives.

A wife feels embarrassed when called upon to answer such a question and any answer given is generally full of "probables".

Really it is not the wives that are unwilling to attend functions; and so our married men are placed in a better position to answer the question posed because most of them are the people that go to functions leaving their wives in the Home all the time.

Functions do give a diversion from the usual routine and provide more topics for discussion in the home; hence wives are interested in attending them when convenient so to do.

Men's Views

Above all, I still feel these men

have reasons for their actions and it will be of interest if they can speak out their minds.

Then affected wives will be able to see through and make adjustments if necessary.

What about polygamous husbands Don't they come in?

They are not out of the question I know a man who goes to functions with his two or three wife at the same time.



MRS ELIZABETH ADEKOGBE

It sounds funny but it is a fact. He enjoys doing so. He wants his wives to share his pleasures.

The man is right but you would ask, what were the wives' feelings? Did they like it?

The answer is, they did not look unhappy at these functions.

In closing up, let me refer the readers to the words of Councilor Nibonu Ojike.

Human Relations

One S. Thomas once asked him: "Is Mr A. justified in leaving Mrs A. behind when he is going to a function because Mrs A. is an illiterate and English is the language to be used in the function?"

Answered he in his "Catechism": "No. The principal object of all functions is social, to meet and see others as well as observe human relations and drama.

"Hence an illiterate can benefit from such functions.

"So, Mr A. should take his wife to the function."

We want our married men to tell us why most of them are going out with their wives to functions.

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[Image]

[Caption] MRS ELIZABETH ADEKOGBE

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We want our married men to tell us why most of them abhor going out with their wives to functions."

OKUNSANYA, C.E. (Mrs). "The Old Order Changeth." December 2, 1950

(Image on next page)

Transcript

The Old Order Changeth

By Mrs C. Okunsanya

I disagree with the views that Home is for women or that women must stay at home but I agree with the plain fact that the woman owns the home, it is the duty of the woman to make her dwelling a home in the true sense of it.

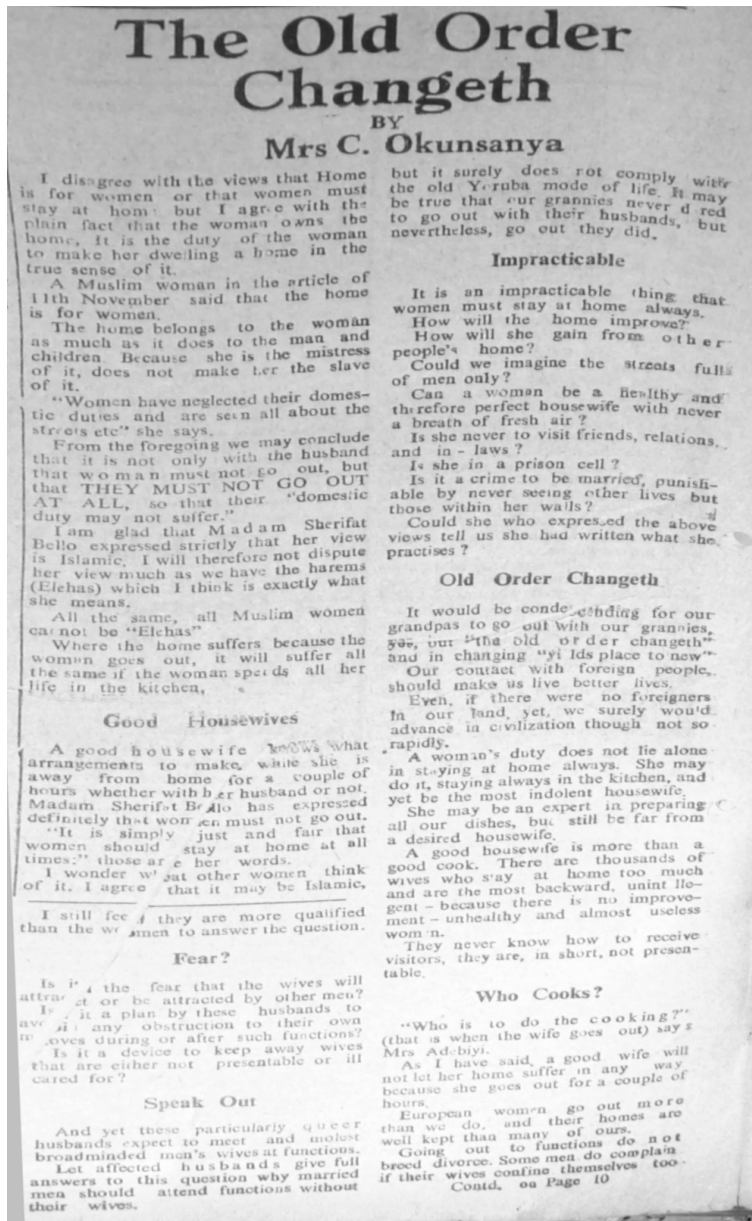
A Muslim woman in the article of 11th November said that the home is for women.

The home belongs to the woman as much as it does to the man and children. Because she is the mistress of it, does not make her the slave of it.

"Women have neglected their domestic duties and are seen all about the streets etc" she says.

From the foregoing we may conclude that it is not only with the husbands that woman must not go out, but that THEY MUST NOT GO OUT AT ALL, so that their "domestic duty may not suffer."

I am glad that Madam Sherifat Bello expressed strictly that her view is Islamic, I will therefore not dispute her view much as we have the harem (Elehas) which I think is exactly what she means.



Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/cc61bcfe>

All the same, all Muslim women cannot be "Elehas"

Where the home suffers because the woman goes out, it will suffer all the same if the woman spends all her life in the kitchen.

Good Housewives

A good housewife knows what arrangements to make while she is away from home for a couple of hours whether with her husband or not. Madam Sherifat Bello has expressed definitely that women must not go out.

"It is simply just and fair that women should stay at home at all times;" those are her words.

I wonder what other women think of it. I agree that it may be Islamic, but it surely does not comply, but it surely does not comply with the old Yoruba mode of life; It may be true that our grannies never dared to go out with their husbands, but nevertheless, go out they did.

Impracticable

It is an impracticable thing that women must stay at home always.

How will the home improve?
How will she gain from other people's home?
Could we imagine the streets full of men only?
Can a women be a healthy and therefore perfect housewife with never a breath of fresh air?
Is she never to visit friends, relations, and in-laws?
Is she in a prison cell?
Is it a crime to be married, punishable by never seeing other lives but those within her walls?
Could she who expressed the above views tells us she had written what she practises?

Old Order Changeth

It would be condescending for our grandpas to go out with our grannies, [...], but "the old order changeth" and in changing "yields place to new."
Our contact with foreign people should make us live better lives.
Even, if there were no foreigner in our land yet, we surely would advance in civilization though not so rapidly.
A woman's duty does not lie alone in staying at home always. She may do it, staying always in the kitchen, and vet be the most indolent housewife.
She may be an expert in preparing all our dishes, but still be far from a desired housewife.

A good housewife is more than a good cook. There are thousands of wives who stay at home too much and are the most backward, unintelligent – because there is no improvement – unhealthy and almost useless women.

They never know how to receive visitors, they are, in short, not presentable.

Who Cooks?

"Who is to do the cooking?" (that is when the wife goes out) says Mrs Adebisi.
As I have said, a good wife will not let her home suffer in any way because she goes out for a couple of hours.
European women go out more than we do, and their homes are well kept than many of ours.
Going out to functions do not breed divorce. Some men do complain if their wives confine themselves too.

DEKO, C.E. (Mrs). "Harem Age Is Gone." December 9, 1950

(Image on next page)

Transcript

Harem Age Is Gone

Sir,

Over the question of whether or not it is wrong that men should take their wives out to functions I don't quite agree with the views of your first two correspondents.

Men should accept the fact that women have gone past the harem age and any attempt to keep them 'Shut in' like their mothers is fraught with dangers.

Also, it is true that the rightful place for the wife is the home but it will be cruel to make the home a glorified prison cell.

Personally, I think the question largely depends on the temperament of each individual wife who has her likes and dislikes.

Broadly speaking, it will be just as wrong for a husband to take an unwilling wife to a function as it would be for him to keep a willing wife away from one.

It is at question over which the wife's feelings should be consulted rather than be taken for granted.

My husband once took me out to a function where dancing was the principal feature. I am glad he has not repeated it since, for at a dance I feel naturally awkward and sooner than go and be an embarassment to myself and to others I much prefer to stay at home.

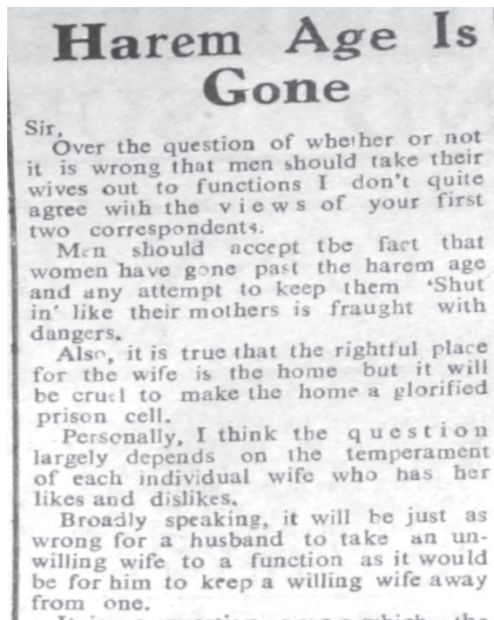
On the other hand, my husband knows I am interested in lectures, debates and certain other public or Club functions and i will be disappointed if rather than encourage he discourages my going with him.

After all, these functions don't occur everyday and should therefore not menace the wife's duties in the home.

In fact I am yet to met an educated African wife who cannot secure 'a baby minder' or someone to help look after the home and children to make an occasional 'outing' with her husband a safe proposition.

Yours Etc.

Mrs C. E. Deko — Govt. College
Ibadan



Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/ab728d0c>

Southern Nigerian Defender

COOKERY, J.K. (Mr). "Wives' Temper and Virtues." September 26, 1946



Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/cb96e06b>

Transcript

WOMEN'S REALM

BY CASSANDRA

Wife's Temper and Virtue

I have received the following letter from Mr J. G. Cookey (Jnr.) of the Labour Department dealing with the above topic.

Dear Miss Cassandra,

Today, I am speaking to members of your sex on "The wife's temper and virtue."

I wish the members of my own sex will interest themselves and help in the upkeep of these virtues.

No trait of character is more commendable in a female than the possession of a sweet temper.

No home can be happy without it.

It is like the flowers that spring up in the pathway, reviving and cheering us.

When a man goes home at night, weary and worn, how soothing is a word uttered through affection and fine disposition of the wife!

A sweet temper has a soothing influence over the minds of a whole family.

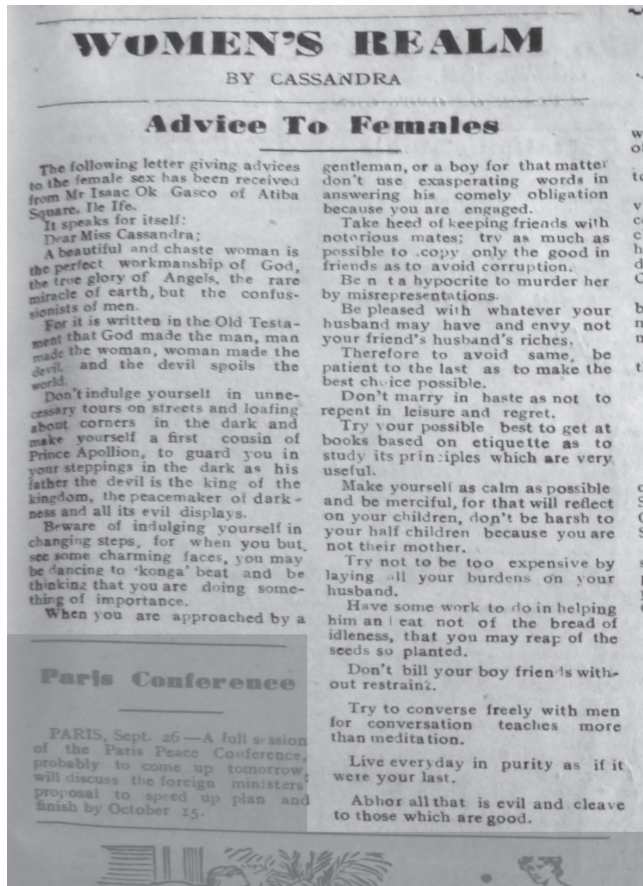
Where it is found in the wife and mother, you observe kindness and love predominating over natural feelings of a bad heart.

Smiles, kind words and looks find impression in character of children while love and peace have their dwelling in them.

Try then to acquire a sweet temper.

There are three virtues which a good wife must practise
She should be like a clock, keeping time and regularity.
She should be like a snail, prudent and keep within her house; but she should not like a snail carry all she has on her back.
She should be like an echo, speaking when spoken to; but she should not like an echo, always determine to have the last word.

OK GASCO, Isaac (Mr). "Advice to Females." September 28, 1946



Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/fbf627c1>

Transcript

WOMEN'S REALM

BY CASSANDRA

Advice to Females

The following letter giving advices to the female sex has been received from Mr Isaac Ok Gasco of Atiba Square, Ile Ife.

It speaks for itself:

Dear Miss Cassandra;

A beautiful and chaste woman is perfect workmanship of God, the true glory of Angels, the rare miracle of earth, but the confusionists of men.

For it is written in the Old Testament that God made the man, man made the woman, woman made the devil, and the devil spoils the world.

Don't indulge yourself in unnecessary tours on streets and loafing about corners in the dark and make yourself a first cousin of Prince Apollion, to guard you in your steppings in the dark as his father the devil is the king of the kingdom, the peacemaker of darkness and all its evil displays.

Beware of indulging yourself in changing steps, for when you but see some charming faces, you may be dancing to 'konga' beat and be thinking that you are doing something of importance.

When you are approached by a gentleman, or a boy for that matter don't use exasperating words in answering his comely obligation because you are engaged.

Take heed of keeping friends with notorious mates: try as much as possible to copy only the good in friends as to avoid corruption.

Be not a hypocrite to murder her by misrepresentations.

Be pleased with whatever your husband may have and envy not your friend's husband's riches.

Therefore to avoid same, be patient to the last as to make the best choice possible.

Don't marry in haste as not to repent in tenure and regret.

Try your possible best to get at books based on etiquette as to study its principles which are very useful.

Make yourself as calm as possible and be merciful, for that will reflect on your children, don't be harsh to your half children because you are not their mother.

Try not to be too expensive by laying all your burdens on your husband.

Have some work to do in helping him and eat not of the bread of idleness, that you may reap of the seeds so planted.

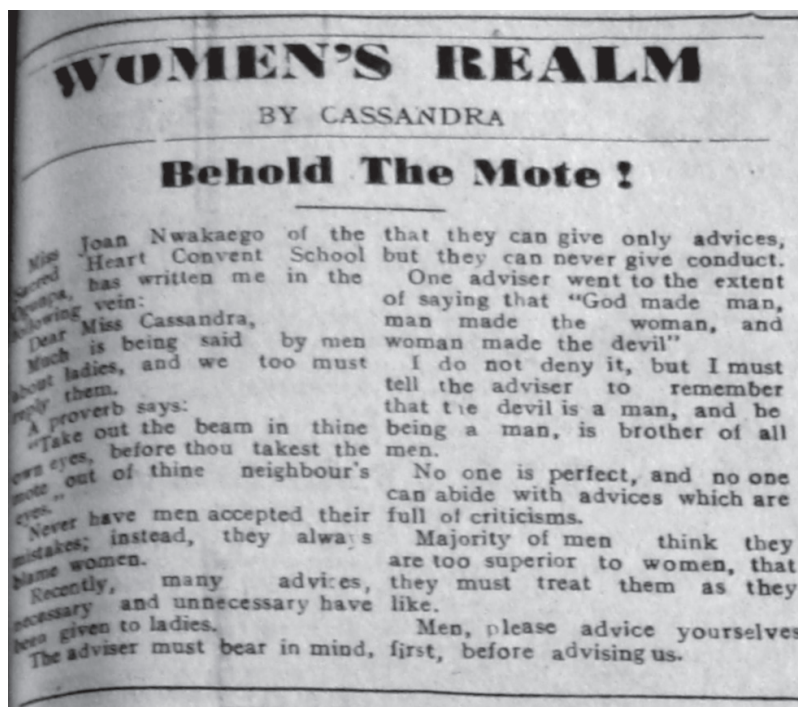
Don't bill your boy friends without restraint.

Try to converse freely with men for conversation teaches more than meditation.

Live everyday in purity as if it were your last.

Abhor all that is evil and cleave to those which are good.

NWAKAEGO, Joan (Mrs). "Behold the Mote!" October 17, 1946



Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/791a792f>

Transcript

WOMEN'S REALM

BY CASSANDRA

Behold The Mote!

Miss Joan Nwakaego of the Sacred Heart Convent School Ogunpa, has written me in the following vein:

Dear Miss Cassandra,

Much is being said by men about ladies, and we too must reply them.

A proverb says:

“Take out the beam in thine own eyes, before thou takest the mote out of thine neighbour's eyes.”

Never have men accepted their mistakes; instead, they always blame women.

Recently, many advices, necessary and unnecessary have been given to ladies.

The adviser must bear in mind, that they can give only advices, but they can never give conduct. One adviser went to the extent of saying that “God made man, man made the woman, and woman made the devil”

I do not deny it, but I must tell the adviser to remember that the devil is a man, and he being a man, is brother of all men

No one is perfect, and no one can abide with advices which are full of criticisms.

Majority of men think they are too superior to women, that they must treat them as they like.

Men, please advice yourselves first, before advising us.

ODUBUYE, D.O.B. (Mr). “Education with Responsibility [*sic*].” December 13, 1946

(Image on next page)

Transcript

WOMEN'S REALM

BY CASSANDRA

Education with Responsibility [*sic*]

The following contribution has been sent by Mr D O B Oduye of Messrs G B Ollivant Limited, Ibadan, deploring the attitude of our women folks in not patronizing lectures and debates.

He says:

Dear Miss Cassandra,

Kindly permit me a space to point out to our women folks what I feel will, of no necessity, hamper their educational and cultural growth.

I have been observing the scarcity of the so-called educated women and ladies in many lecture rooms

But that lecture of Friday November I delivered at Agbeni Methodist School room by Revd T V Aderinola B.A., has induced me to send this article.

It was a pity to observe on the day that not more than one lady attended.

Did that mean that all our women went out of the town that day, or they were all busily engaged.

Were there no female teachers or lady clerks at Ibadan?

Did they not read or hear that there would be such a special lecture that day.

Very wonderful indeed!

We look on our educated ladies to be the mothers of tomorrow, but how can they become useful without good and sound knowledge of daily occurrences around them?

Such lecture should have been well attended by our women since it dealt with the building up of our beloved country—“Education and Life Today”.

I appeal to our women folks to develop interest for this sort of things rather than take interest in mustering strong at wakings and christening ceremonies. Our educated ladies must exercise responsibility.



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CASSANDRA. "Ibadan Ladies and Politics." December 23, 1946

(Image on next page)

Transcript

WOMEN'S REALM

BY CASSANDRA

Ibadan Ladies And Politics

The youths of this country have been accused of agitating for self-government. Even the government is aware of the new awakening and the wide consciousness in the country.

I am confident that this is the dawn of a new era, when the youths of this country should know their rights and they are prepared to demand those anyhow, anywhere and anytime.

As a woman I wish to congratulate the boys of this country for their spirit of patriotism, and I pray that the God of Africa may be with them in the holy crusade for noble existence.

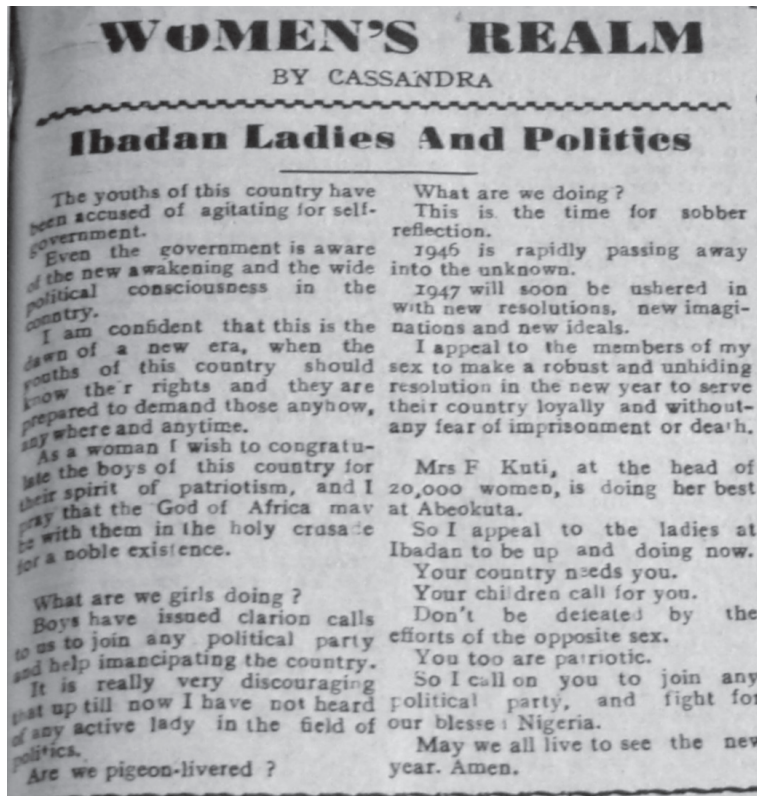
What are we girls doing?

Boys have issued clarion calls to us to join any political party and help imancipating the country.

It is really very discouraging that up till now I have not heard of any active lady in the field of politics.

Are we pigeon-livered?

What are we doing?



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This is the time for sober reflection.

1946 is rapidly passing away into the unknown.

1947 will soon be ushered in with new resolutions, new imaginations and new ideals.

I appeal to the members of my sex to make a robust and un hiding resolution in the new year to serve their country loyally and without any fear of imprisonment or death.

Mrs F Kuti, at the head of 20,000 women, is doing her best at Abeokuta.

So I appeal to the ladies at Ibadan to be up and doing now.

Your country needs you.

Your children call for you.

Don't be defeated by the efforts of the opposite sex. You too are patriotic.

So I call you to join any political party, and fight for our blessed Nigeria.

May we all live to see the new year. Amen.

COMMENTATOR. "Nigerian Women to Wake Up." July 3, 1947

(Image on next page)

Transcript

CURRENT AFFAIRS

By COMMENTATOR

NIGERIAN WOMEN TO WAKE UP

Nigerian women must wake up from their lethargy and begin to watch the trends of world affairs.

The place of women in any peoples' national evolution is higher than the low level of of the kitchen.

Nigerian women must now wipe off the inferiority complex which had long retarded the progress of this nation in many aspects.

NIGERIAN WOMEN TO WAKE UP

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Nigerian women must now wipe off the inferiority complex which had long retarded the progress of this nation in many aspects.

Women are thinking hard in other countries.

They are daring; but did not die; and each day that dawns brings to our poor selves what women are capable of doing.

For the first time, perhaps, in modern history, India is sending, Mrs Pandit to Moscow as the first Indian ambassador to Russia.

This is faith in Indian womanhood.

I don't know what those who have felt, for three hundred years, that India could not govern herself, would think of this bold step.

India now leads the West.

What a record!

Mrs Pandit is the sister of Pandit Jawarhalal Nehru, Prime Minister of India.

Those who are acquainted with the brilliance of Mrs Pandit and her activities towards Indian independence would not question her selection.

Very well known in the United States during the war, Mrs V Pandit was one of India's vocal instruments.

She was born in 1900 and was educated privately.

She joined the Non-Cooperation Movement and was imprisoned in 1932.

She was a member of the Allahabad Municipal Board in 1936, Chairman Education Committee and the Municipal Board; first Indian Woman Minister, being a Minister of local Self-Government and Public Health in the United Provinces Government in 1937.

She was a member of the Indian Congress Party and sentenced to four months imprisonment in 1940 for anti-war activities.

She was detained under Defence Regulation in August 1942 to June 1943 and later Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit represented India in the United Nations General Assembly.

Behold the triumph of a rebel, the daughter of a rebel and a sister of a rebel.

Note this Nigerian men and women.

The future of this country lies on our shoulder.

If you like, continue to play the role of an Abraham Quisling or a Pierre Laval just to save your skin or play the role of E. mon de Valera and save this country.

Time, however, marches on!

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CASSANDRA. "This World of Women." February 6, 1948



Permanent URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/11280/a1fa2a8f>

Transcript

WOMEN'S REALM

By CASSANDRA

This World of Women

Most women have said it in public as they do in private that the place of women is no longer the home.

Women cannot only find the home the place assigned for sex by God.

She has further fields in which to show herself and what her sex is capable of doing.

That fact has been proved and any argument to the contrary cannot hold any water.

During the last war women [took] active part and in some cases were even better hands than their masculine comrades in-arms.

Women were airpilots, operators, and even engineers.

The female sex is definitely leaving the old world of the kitchen and is marching out to the new world to enter the universities, colleges, and workshops.

In these places, woman is out to prove herself a match if not a super-match to her brother competitor.

Let young Nigerian girls know and remember that our sex had produced an Amy Johnson for the air, Stella Thomas for the bench, Mrs Awoonor Renner for the bar,

Pr (Mrs) Awoliyt for the medical profession and many others whose names I shall release gradually.

Let those of our sex before us [serve] as an incentive to us for greater [nation].

Women cannot now talk of chances and opportunities not being given them; that would be a very lame excuse.

Opportunities are in our way.

Chances are open for us to study, to dare and to do.

Wake up then, and let us give our brothers the competition that they want from us.

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