



Emergence of paths in Africa!

Considering elements of searching for a better life under social crisis

Toyin Ndidi TAIWO-OJO
Kiyomi KAIDA
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Edited by Shirabe OGATA

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公開
ラウンドテーブル
Roundtable

第94回
ASCセミナー
The 94th
ASC Seminar

アフリカにおける創発

社会的危機下における模索のあり方を考える

Emergence of paths in Africa

Considering elements of searching for a better life under social crisis

2024年11月9日土
Saturday 9th November 2024
13:30 — 16:30

弁護士で人権活動家のトイン・ンディディ・タイウォ=オジョ氏をナイジェリアからお迎えし、社会的危機下においてアフリカで暮らす人びとがどのように道を模索し、切りひらいているのか、日本のアフリカ研究者とともに考えます

Inviting barrister and human rights activist Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo ESQ from Nigeria, along with four other Japanese discussants, we are discussing how people in Africa have been searching for a better life under social crisis.

参加無料 Admission Free

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For virtual participants, please register using the URL or QR code.
<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZYvd-hrTsuHtMGXnPSzfGiePYrvjdWp4S>



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【AA研基幹研究】社会性的人类学的探究：トランスカルチャー状況と寛容／不寛容の機序
【龍谷大学社会科学研究所指定研究】台頭するアフリカ地域大國ナイジェリアの総合的研究
【東京外国語大学現代アフリカ地域研究センター】ASCセミナー

Co-hosted by [JSPS Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B)] Anthropological Study of Immergence of Culture in the midst of Social Crisis in Africa [ILCAA Core Project] Anthropological Inquiry of Sociality: Dynamics of Tolerance / Intolerance in Transcultural Contexts [Research Institute for Social Sciences, Ryukoku University] The Research Team for "Nigeria as an Emerging Power in Africa: A Comprehensive Study" [African Studies Center, TUFS] ASC Seminars

場所 Venue

ハイブリッド開催

東京外国語大学アジア・アフリカ言語文化研究所 (AA研)
304 マルチメディア会議室 / Zoom

304 Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) & Zoom

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トイン・ンディディ・タイウォ=オジョ氏
Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo ESQ

弁護士として、女性と子供を暴力から守るNGO (Stop The Abuse Against Women And Children Foundation) を2018年にナイジェリアで創設。同NGOは、貧困層を中心とした性暴力や虐待の被害者に法的サービスを提供する社会貢献活動を行っている。

A legal practitioner and the founder of an NGO, Stop The Abuse Against Women And Children Foundation (2018, Nigeria), that offers pro-bono legal services to indigent individuals who are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

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- Opening remarks
Shirabe OGATA
(Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, TUFS)
- Speech by Toyin Ndidi TAIWO-OJO
—— Comments and discussions ——
- How much progress has Nigeria made towards achieving gender equality?
Kiyomi KAIDA (Bunkyo Gakuin University)
- Mechanisms of violence and the potential of social media in victims' testimonies
Takashi TAMAI (Tokyo Woman's Christian University)
- Engaging African citizens in addressing violence against women and children: strategies for action and advocacy
Wakana SHIINO
(Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, TUFS)
- Hope for the unknown: importance of venturing practices in urban Nigeria
Hidetoshi KONDO (Kansai Gaidai University)

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科研費
KAKENHI

Opening remarks

Shirabe OGATA

Good afternoon, everyone. Can everyone hear me on Zoom? Please let me know using chat if there is any technology issue. Our staff will attend to you through chat. Thank you very much for coming to this symposium, more like a public roundtable. It's 1:30pm here in Japan, and 5:30am in Nigeria. For those of you attending from Nigeria on Zoom, thank you so much for attending this event early in the morning. And thank you very much to everybody including you participants in this venue in Tokyo for being here in spite of it being the weekend.

My name is Shirabe Ogata, and I'm from the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa. The abbreviation of this research institute is AA-Ken in Japanese, and ILCAA in English. This institution, ILCAA, is under Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. This symposium hosted by ILCAA is co-hosted by the ASC Seminars, which is a series of seminars run by the African Studies Center of this University, and this is its 94th Seminar. And I am a convener of this symposium and moderator today.

Let me briefly explain the background of this project. I am a member of a research project "Anthropological Study of Emergence of Culture in the midst of Social Crisis in Africa," and I was supposed to do some field research for this project in Nigeria this year. But being a friend of Toyin sitting down next me now for more than 21 years, I just came up with this idea that Toyin could come and tell us her story about her people instead of me going to Nigeria, researching it, coming back to Japan, writing an academic article, and publishing it, which would have only a few readers unfortunately, and which could also be meaningful to some extent. But I just thought Toyin's voice is more significant because she is the very one who has been working on the issue and she is the one who works with and works for local people, and she herself is one of the local people, a resident of Lagos, Nigeria. And from there, we can explore the emergence of paths in Africa as we consider elements of searching for a better life under social crisis.

So, today, we welcome Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo esquire from the Stop the Abuse against Women and Children Foundation in Nigeria. She is going to give us her story about who she is and what she has been doing for her community. And we have four discussants who are going to comment on Toyin san's paper from their perspectives of their specialty. Kaida san from Bunkyo Gakuin University specializes in empowerment of women in Nigeria. Tamai san from Tokyo Woman's Christian University majors in Nigerian Study focusing on violence and movements against it. Shiino san from this research institute, ILCAA, brings issues of gender and youth in East Africa from her experiences in Kenya and Uganda. Kondo san is a social anthropologist who has insight into the way Nigerian people live and sees it as venturing practices.

Now, Toyin san is going to give us her speech for half an hour and then our discussants are going to comment on her speech, which could be expanded to a one-by-one discussion for another half an hour each. Between programmes 4 and 5, we are having a 10-minute break, and after programme 6, the last comment and discussion session, we hope to have a 10-minute discussion session that will be open to the floor. We may not be able to pick out all the comments and questions, especially for those on Zoom, but please do leave your comments and questions to Toyin san or our discussants on chat with your email address so that we will be able to give you as much feedback as possible. We will also try to respond to them in the proceedings of this symposium, a booklet that we are going to publish by the end of March 2025, which is going to be uploaded as a PDF on the ILCAA website.

So now I think Toyin san is ready for her speech. Let me finish my brief introduction with this photo which I took 15 years ago in Nigeria. Toyin san is there outside a bus to Ile-Ife, where we met in 2003. This was the day following the Call to Bar, the ceremony for barristers, to celebrate becoming of a barrister / lawyer after graduating Law School. I attended the ceremony on behalf of her family because her first born was only 3 years old then and with her mother in Lagos. This is the Utako bus terminal in Abuja, and from the inside of the bus, I snapped her when she came to see me off. We never knew that we would be sitting here together like this today, but I knew that her eyes were shining and they were so bright even through the foggy window.

Toyin san, are you ready?



Toyin in Abuja, 4th November 2009. Photo: Shirabe Ogata

Emergence of paths in Africa:

Considering elements of searching for a better life under social crisis

Toyin Ndidi TAIWO-OJO

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning. My name is Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo, and it is a profound honor to be here today at the invitation of the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. I extend my deepest gratitude to the organizers for deeming me worthy of this distinguished panel and for creating space for a conversation that resonates deeply with the critical socio-political and economic realities facing Nigeria today and Africa as a whole. This dialogue could not be more timely given the complexities of our global interconnectedness and the urgency of African development and sovereignty. Lastly, I wish to thank this esteemed university for hosting such a meaningful and impactful event, fostering engagement that has the potential to shape our collective future

Africa, a land of immense beauty, rich cultures, and untapped potential, has often found itself at the intersection of crises and resilience. Even amid challenges, Africans have consistently sought ways to transform adversity into opportunity. I can remember when someone once asked me, “How do you cope with all these crises in Nigeria”? And I automatically answered, “We are Nigerians, we always survive!” This is the summary of the Nigerian people’s spirit of resilience, and as we delve into the emergence of paths in Africa, especially focusing on the relentless quest for a better life amidst social crises, through true life experiences that I will share with you, you will agree with me that indeed

“We are Nigerians” is a deep truth that needs to be experienced by others who are not Nigerians.

For emphasis, I will say once again that this theme is not just academic for me; it is deeply personal and resonates with the lived experiences of many Africans, particularly Nigerians. All my life, my experiences as a Nigerian living in Nigeria has illuminated the persistent and pervasive crises faced by its people. From ethnic and religious conflicts and political corruption to everyday electricity shortages, sexual and domestic violence, life in Nigeria can often seem like a -constant state of crisis. Yet, within this landscape of adversity, we witness remarkable resilience and the emergence of new paths toward a better future.

A notable development has been the rise of a middle class that, despite ongoing social crises, has succeeded in education and business, steadily gaining wealth and contributing to the nation’s economy. This emerging middle class serves as an economic lubricant, demonstrating that progress is possible even in the most challenging circumstances. At the heart of true resilience are the individuals and organizations who wake up every day determined to make a difference. My own path as a lawyer and human rights activist led me to establish the Stop the Abuse Against Women and Children Foundation in Lagos. Our foundation’s mission is twofold: to prevent abuse and to offer vital support to survivors of gender-based violence. But our work didn’t emerge



Volunteers of Stop the Abuse Against Women and Children Foundation, Nasarawa State, 2019. Photo: Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo

from theory or distant observations; it began in response to a single, tragic incident.

A six-year-old boy named Promise became the catalyst for our mission. He was brutally stabbed by his own mother—her idea of punishment for what she saw as “sexual misbehavior” with a two-year old girl. As a mother of four young children myself, I was deeply shaken. I found myself grappling with questions: Where had this boy learned such behavior? Could it have been from something he saw on TV? Or was he tragically reenacting something he himself had suffered? Such questions hinted at an unbroken cycle of trauma and abuse—one that couldn’t be ignored. This tragic event underscored an urgent need for intervention, education, and support for vulnerable children. And so, our journey began.

Our foundation has since encountered heartbreaking stories of injustice that reaffirm why we must continue this work. We helped a mother of two who endured constant physical violence from her husband, only for him to eventually abduct their children, disregarding their education and well-being entirely. He went as far as selling her land, car, and phone—items she relied on to support their family. We intervened by petitioning the Commissioner of Police, pushing for an investigation. Eventually, the husband agreed to stop harassing her, but the survivor and her children still live in hiding due to ongoing threats. This case, one of many, illustrates the devastating impact of domestic violence, child abduction, and emotional abuse.

In another case, Pastor Nduka Anyanwu—a man many saw as a trusted figure—used his authority to exploit two sisters, aged 17 and 13. Under the guise of spiritual guidance, he abused and impregnated both girls, even pressuring the younger sister into an abortion while insisting the elder keep her pregnancy. Working with police and advocates, our foundation ensured Pastor Nduka faced justice, resulting in a life sentence. Yet, these young girls were left with permanent scars, forced to carry pregnancies born from violence due to Nigeria’s restrictive abortion laws. Cases like these bring into sharp focus the complex, often tragic aftermath of abuse.

On the 14th day of July 2020. An 83-year-olds landlord, an alleged serial paedophile was arraigned at the Sam Ilori Magistrate Court for having defiled four minors even though he knew

he was HIV positive, and he was remanded in prison custody pending trial. One of the reasons why, the parents of the Children could not seek active prosecution of the perpetrator was because he was their landlord and they feared that if they challenged him, he would ask them to leave his house and the cost of getting a new apartment in Lagos was not something they could afford. We had to intervene rescued over thirty survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, provided new accommodations to avoid the stigma of rape, and supported nearly 1400 widows, aged individuals, by completing the house of one of the victim's parents located in the neighbouring town of Ifo, Ogun State. This encouraged them to seek justice for their two children who had been repeatedly defiled by the old man. Unfortunately, the perpetrator died before justice could be gotten for the children. As an organisation, we have collectively and consistently shown that no matter the age, class or gender of the perpetrator, justice cannot be swayed.

We are also handling a recent, ongoing case involving Pastor Elijah of the Chapel of Revelation Ministry. This man preyed upon three young brothers, disguised as “divine intervention.” Their mother, trusting him to guide her eldest son away from risky behaviors, unknowingly handed her children to a predator. Pastor Elijah subjected them to appalling abuse, teaching the eldest son sexual behaviors and extending the same to his younger siblings. This case, like so many others, painfully underscores the vulnerability of children when those entrusted with power and authority exploit it.

Since 2018, the Stop the Abuse Foundation has rescued over thirty survivors, provided safe housing for many who needed to escape the stigma surrounding rape, and supported nearly 1400 widows, the elderly, and others on society's frontlines. But our work has not been easy. We face intimidation at every turn, from powerful figures who wish to silence us to authorities who should be helping us but instead hinder our progress. Sometimes, even the police—those charged with protecting the vulnerable—pose obstacles rather than offer-support.

The challenges do not end with intimidation. Unlike organizations with substantial financial



Furnishing a room for a victim who lived on the street. She later rejected the room and it was turned into a transit home for the victims of domestic violence, Ogun State, 2019. Photo: Prince UC



A house, partly with the effort of the victim's father, built by Stop the Abuse Against Women and Children Foundation, Lagos, 2020. Photo: Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo

backing, Stop the Abuse Against Women and Children Foundation operates entirely on goodwill. We have no large-scale funding, no powerful donors. Our work continues because of the sacrifices and contributions of our members, who are willing to give not just their time but also their own resources to see the justice served. I want to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has joined in this journey with us. Standing up to gender-based violence requires solidarity and courage. I ask each of you here today to recognize your role in this fight. Through advocacy, shared responsibility, and collective action, we can and frontline responders. Our work is a testament to the strength and determination of the Nigerian people, who continue to move forward despite enormous difficulties.



Taking medical supplies, food and cash to a child victim whose aunt allegedly poured hot water on the child, Lagos, 2020. Photo: Rita

A significant source of strength for Nigerians is the family. Strong family structures and foundations play a crucial role in helping individuals navigate crises. Parents instill values of resilience, hope, and perseverance from an early age, enabling their children to face and overcome challenges. This familial support system provides emotional and practical assistance, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility.

Nigeria's history is a tapestry of triumphs and trials. The country has experienced draconian military rules, marked by two significant military coups in 1966. These coups eventually led to a civil war from 1967 to 1970, a conflict that arose from deep-seated ethnic tensions and a lack of trust among Nigeria's diverse tribes. The war and subsequent periods of military rule left scars on the national psyche, contributing to ongoing mistrust and division. Despite these historical challenges, Nigeria and its people continue to push forward as one nation. The spirit of unity and resilience that defines Nigerians is evident in their ability to find common ground and work together towards a shared future. This perseverance in the face of adversity is a testament to who Nigerians are: a people of hope, strength, and unyielding determination.

To understand how Nigerians and other Africans are searching for a better life under social crises, we must consider several key elements:

The Evils of Religion and Weaponization of Tribes

Religion and tribal affiliations, while integral to the social fabric of many African communities, have often been manipulated to fuel conflict and division. The weaponization of these identities has led to deep-seated mistrust and violence. To overcome this, Nigerians especially people of the Yoruba tribe have always exhibited great tolerance towards all religions, which is showcased by their penchant for celebrating the festivals of all three major religions in Nigeria, the Christianity,

Islam and traditional worships. There is a need also for the other tribes to emulate such tolerance and the government needs to promote more room and advocacy for interfaith and intertribal dialogue that promotes understanding, unity, and peace.

Continuing Political Interference

Political corruption and interference remain significant obstacles to progress. Corrupt practices undermine trust in governance and inhibit development efforts. Nigerians in a bid to cope with this endemic corruption have resorted to migrating to all parts of the world and have also developed a coping mechanism to look within and develop themselves individually without recourse to government, making them one of the highest educated immigrant groups globally. Thus from this, a term commonly known as “hustling” was born. However, there is a need for Nigerians to hold government accountable and impress on them the need to strengthen democratic institutions and promote transparency as crucial steps towards building a just and equitable society.

Asymmetrical Global Power Relations

Africa’s relationship with the global community is often characterized by unequal power dynamics that perpetuate dependency and exploitation. Addressing these imbalances requires a concerted effort to promote fair trade, equitable investment, and international cooperation that respects the sovereignty and aspirations of African nations.

The Negative Impact of Colonialism

The legacy of colonialism continues to cast a long shadow over Nigeria and much of Africa. Colonialism disrupted traditional societies, imposed arbitrary borders, and established economic systems designed to extract resources for the benefit of colonial powers. This legacy has fueled ongoing crises and underdevelopment. Moreover, it has given rise to native colonizers—post-colonial leaders who, lacking innovation, have perpetuated many of the exploitative practices of their colonial predecessors. These leaders often fail to harness the full potential of their nations’ abundant resources. Nigeria is a nation blessed with immense natural and human resources. From vast oil reserves to rich agricultural land, the potential for prosperity is undeniable. Yet, these blessings have not spread to every single Nigerian home. Despite the strong efforts and remarkable ingenuity of its people, widespread poverty and inequality persist. The underutilization and mismanagement of resources by successive governments have hindered the nation’s progress.

Underutilization of Nigeria’s Youthful Population

One of Nigeria’s greatest assets is its youthful population. However, this potential remains largely untapped. Leadership has often undermined and underutilized the capabilities of its youth, resulting in a significant brain drain as many young Nigerians seek opportunities abroad. This “forced” emigration represents a loss of talent and energy that could otherwise drive the nation’s development. Despite these challenges, there is hope. The strength of the Nigerian people, and indeed all Africans, lies in their resilience and capacity for innovation. By harnessing this strength, we can create new pathways to a better future.

Nigeria is not only a land of challenges but also a land of immense potential and opportunity. Its people are known for their remarkable resilience, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit. The birth of the Nollywood industry invokes this salient truth. From just a small cottage industry, Nollywood became the third largest film industry in the world after Hollywood and Bollywood. Our films have gained global appeal and even notable movie platforms like Netflix, Amazon and Prime Videos are not complete without Nigerian movies! These movies, which resonates with almost all African countries and their experiences, are a great money spinner for the economy. Another place where Nigerians have made an indelible mark in spite of all mitigating challenges is on the global musical scene. Nigerian music has become so global that artistes from other countries actively seek to collaborate with Nigerian artistes in order to garner global appeal. Nigerian artistes have gone ahead to win global recognitions and even Grammy Awards. With the right partnerships and support, Nigeria can fulfill its manifest destiny and achieve sustainable development.

A crucial aspect of realizing this potential lies in building strong international relationships. Today, I want to emphasize the importance of a strong relationship between Nigeria and Japan. Such a partnership can significantly advance Nigeria's development goal. Japan, with its advanced technology, innovative industries, and robust economy, can offer invaluable support to Nigeria's aspirations. In return, Nigeria, with its vast resources and dynamic population, can provide Japan with opportunities for growth and expansion in Africa. With this great conversation and engagement today, it is my hope that the Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, along with other universities across this beautiful country, as well as policy experts and politicians, will begin to prioritize Nigeria and its people. I urge the Japanese government and its citizens to consider the importance of building stronger relations with Nigeria at the levels of government, citizenry, and strategic diplomacy. Together, we can consolidate democracy and promote sustainable development in Nigeria, aligning with the African 2026 development agenda.

Today's roundtable provides an invaluable opportunity to engage in dialogue with researchers who have conducted extensive work in various parts of Africa. Together, we will explore themes of disappointment and empowerment of women and young people, as well as the complex interplay of ethnicity, religion, and faith. Through this exchange of ideas and experiences, we aim to uncover the elements that can help societies everywhere find solutions to their crises. As we listen to these insights and engage in discussions, let us seek to draw parallels and lessons that can be applied globally. The resilience and resourcefulness demonstrated by the people of Nigeria and other parts of Africa offer a powerful blueprint for overcoming adversity. It is through these shared experiences and collective wisdom that we can hope to build a better future for all.

In conclusion, the emergence of paths in Africa is a testament to the power of perseverance in the face of adversity. Every African who dares to dream, every community that dares to work together, every youth who dares to innovate is part of a new dawn on this continent. Together, we are carving out paths that may be long and winding, yet they lead toward the Africa we envision: a continent defined not by crisis but by resilience, not by struggle but by success.

Firstly, policies must focus on equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Harnessing Nigeria's vast natural and human resources effectively requires innovation and a commitment to social justice. Special attention must be paid to engaging the youthful population, providing them with education, job opportunities, and the support necessary to become the leaders of tomorrow. Furthermore, fostering strong family structures and community networks can provide the social support needed to navigate crises. The resilience of Nigerian families has been a cornerstone of our society, and this should be recognized and reinforced through supportive policies and community programs.

Finally, international partnerships, particularly with countries like Japan, can provide the technological and economic support needed for sustainable development. By prioritizing mutual respect and collaboration, Nigeria and Japan can work together to achieve shared goals of progress and prosperity.

Thank you.

How much progress has Nigeria made towards achieving gender equality?

Kiyomi KAIDA

Self-introduction

Let me briefly introduce myself. I'm Kiyomi KAIDA, I'm an associate professor at Bunkyo Gakuin University in Tokyo. I hold a Ph.D. in International Development Studies, with research interests centered on gender issues in Africa. My first visit to Nigeria was in March 2004, when I was working at JICA Headquarters. Initially, I was dispatched as a short-term expert, followed by a long-term assignment, to conduct gender training for staff at the National Centre for Women Development, an agency under the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs. Subsequently, I was appointed as an expert on a three-year technical cooperation project, working at the National Centre for Women Development with a focus on empowering women through women development centers in Kano State, in the northwest part of the country.

After the project ended, I started my doctoral studies conducting field research for my doctoral thesis in Kano, which was about women's economic empowerment and decision-making within a household. In 2013, after completing my Ph.D, I resumed involvement with JICA's technical cooperation project at the National Centre for Women Development, covering six states across the country. Since 2022, I have been conducting research on rural women in collaboration with the Federal University of Agriculture in Abeokuta, located in the southwest part of the country. This is my 20-year relationship with Nigeria.

Nigeria's journey towards Gender Equality

YEAR	Nigerian Government commitment toward Gender Equality
1985	Ratified CEDAW(Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) Ratified the optional protocol(Individuals may submit complaints to the CEDAW committee) in 2004
1989	Established National Commission on Women
1995	Established Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
1999	New Constitution that guaranteed gender equality
2000	National Policy on Women (to implement/monitor progress on the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action)
2003	Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act(amended in 2005, 2015)
2004	Ratified Maputo protocol (Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa)
2004	AU Declaration of Soloum Gender Equality
2006	National Policy on Gender (modified in 2021)
2015	Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act
2023	The Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill was again rejected at the National Assembly. (since 2006)

In the 2024 Global Gender Gap Report, Nigeria ranked 125th out of 146 countries (29th out of 36 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa)

Laws and policies aimed to promote gender equality have been put in place, however, gender inequality persists in many areas.

An excerpt from the presentation slides

Nigeria's Path to Gender Equality

Firstly, I would like to discuss Nigeria's journey towards Gender Equality.

The most significant international convention on gender equality is CEDAW, the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979. Nigeria ratified this convention on June 13, 1985. In 1999, the convention adopted an Optional Protocol, adding mechanisms for individual complaints and inquiries to address women's rights violations. Under this protocol, individuals whose rights under the convention have been violated may submit complaints to the CEDAW Committee after exhausting domestic remedies, with the Committee providing a review and recommendations. Nigeria ratified this Optional Protocol on November 22, 2004, while Japan has yet to ratify it. At the time of ratifying CEDAW in 1985, Nigeria was under military rule.

In 1989, with the support of women's groups and Maryam Babangida, the wife of the then president, the National Commission on Women (NCW) was established by the federal government to promote women's welfare and empowerment. In 1995, the National Commission on Women was elevated to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, which continues to operate today. In the same year, the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing, setting off the establishment of national mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide. Nigeria followed this and created a framework for gender mainstreaming with establishing Ministries of Women's Affairs at both the federal and state levels and assigned Women Development Officers to local governments.

In 1999, Nigeria transitioned to a civilian government, adopting a new constitution that guaranteed gender equality. In the following year, Nigeria adopted a National Policy on women to implement and monitor progress on the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. In 2003, with the influence of the then Vice President's wife, Nigeria enacted the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act. That same year, the African Union adopted the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (commonly known as the Maputo Protocol), which Nigeria ratified in 2004. This protocol broadly safeguards women's rights, including reproductive health rights, eradication of female genital mutilation, and social and political equality for women. Nigerian activists continue to advocate for gender equality based on the Maputo Protocol and CEDAW. In the same year, the African Union adopted the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, calling for continuous action to protect women's rights and combat gender-based violence. In 2006, Nigeria revised its National Policy on women, adopting a National Gender Policy with a detailed plan to promote gender equality.

In 2015, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act was enacted to further combat harmful and discriminatory practices against women. Despite these legislative and policy advancements, persistent gender-based issues and disparities still remain. Since 2006, women's rights activists and the Ministry of Women Affairs have repeatedly proposed the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill to the National Assembly, yet it has been opposed and rejected, most recently in 2023. In the Global Gender Gap Report 2024 by the World Economic Forum, Nigeria ranks 125th out of 146 countries, indicating that gender disparities persist. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria ranks

29th out of 36 countries. Laws and policies aimed to promote gender equality have been put in place. However, gender inequality persists in many areas.

The Role of Nigeria's First Ladies

In Nigeria, First Ladies have led initiatives from the top down to promote social welfare and rights for women and children. Here are three prominent examples. The first woman to lead such a program was Maryam Babangida, wife of the military head of state Ibrahim Babangida. In 1987, she launched the Better Life Program for rural women (BLP) to improve the lives of rural women. Since then, subsequent First Ladies in Nigeria have implemented various welfare programs focusing on women and children. At its peak, this Better Life program was a nationwide top-down initiative led by the first lady, with wives of state governors and local government appointed as BLP chairpersons. BLP established over 400 women's centers at the local level across the country to offer literacy education and income-generation skills to women. In 1992, a National Center for Women Development was built in the heart of Abuja as the BLP headquarters, now a parastatal agency under the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, where I worked as a JICA expert. Although some criticize BLP for its reliance on the power of the First Lady under the military regime, it is credited with bringing women's issues to national attention and advancing women's literacy, income generation, and health knowledge, especially among rural communities.

The Role of Nigeria's First Ladies

First Lady	President/Term in Office	First Ladies' Programme/Legacies
Maryam Babangida	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida 1985~1993	Better Life Programme for Rural Women (BLP) Established Women Development Centers and cottage industry for women's economic empowerment
Fati Lami Abubakar	Abdulsalami Abubakar 1998~1999	Founder of NGO, WRAPA(Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative)
Amina Titi Atiku-Abubakar	Vice President (1999~2007) Atiku Abubakar	Founder of NGO, WOTCLEF (Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation) Influenced on the establishment of NAP TIP(National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons)



National Centre for Women Development in Abuja

While some First Lady initiatives have faced criticism for lack of sustainability, transparency, and funding, they have raised awareness of women's roles and the challenges facing women and children in Nigeria

An excerpt from the presentation slides

The second example is Fati Lami Abubakar, wife of President Abdulsalami Abubakar. As a former state judge, she established a NGO, that is the Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative, known as WRAPA, the NGO focused on advancing women's rights and protecting them from violence. WRAPA has actively promoted women's political participation, legal literacy, and domestication of CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol. This NGO is still actively working for the women's rights issues. Finally, Amina Titi Abubakar, who was not the first lady, but the second lady. As the wife of the Vice President Atiku Abubakar, she greatly impacted efforts to combat trafficking of women and children. She founded the NGO, Women Trafficking and

Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), which led to the creation of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). The NGO she established is also still active. While some First Lady initiatives have faced criticism for lack of sustainability, transparency, and funding, they have raised awareness of women's roles and the challenges facing women and children in Nigeria.

The Household is Not a Safe Space for Women

Despite macro-level efforts for gender equality, household dynamics still reflect significant inequalities. In my research conducted around Kano in the northwest and Abeokuta in the southwest of Nigeria, it is clear that the household is often neither safe nor equitable for women. Women typically have less economic power than their husbands and limited access to higher education. Strong gender norms dictate that men are responsible for providing household needs such as food, cloths, house, healthcare, and educational expenses, while women are expected to obey their husbands and take on the responsibilities of household chores and childcare. In reality, it is challenging for men to meet all household needs on his own, so women also contribute financially. In general, husband and wife do not pool their income and assets. Each of them has autonomy over their financial resources. Although women have limited decision-making power in households, women have control over their income.

Case Study of Kano

Now, let me introduce some insights from my research in Kano to illustrate the challenges women face

*“My husband doesn't ask me how much food we actually need. He doesn't understand how difficult it is to cook with the limited food he provides. **He spends his money on personal items, but I can't say anything to him.**”*

*“I seek my husband's permission when I want to attend a wedding. Usually, he doesn't allow me to go, but sometimes he does. I beg him by kneeling, cooking good food, and serving cold juice. I do my best to earn his permission, but ultimately, **it all depends on his decision.**”*

*“**My husband beats me up** whenever he finds there is no meat in a soup at a dinner. But he doesn't provide money to buy the meat.”*

Kano is predominantly populated by Muslims, and Islamic law governs much of life there. Gender norms are strict, and there is a clear gender division of labor. In households, the husband is expected to provide all household necessities, while the wife is expected to obey her husband, manage household chores, and raise children. This is seen as a complementary, rather than an unequal role in exchange for receiving the husband's provision. However, due to financial hardships, it is increasingly difficult for men to fully meet household needs, leading women to engage in economic activities to cover expenses like food and education. Married women, however, face the custom of seclusion, which restricts their movement outside the home, requiring them to seek permission from their husbands before they go out. Husbands do not always grant this permission, so women strive to maintain a good relationship with their husbands to avoid disruptions to their economic activities.

Due to the cultural preference for women not to be seen by other men, it is rare to find married women working in agriculture themselves. Instead, women engage in small-scale trading and other home-based economic activities. Polygamy is common, and divorce is also common, but unmarried women face social stigma, unwanted gossip, and difficulty in maintaining their dignity. Furthermore, it is difficult for women to make decisions within the household, meaning that the lives of women in Kano are largely subject to the decisions of their husbands.

Case Study of Abeokuta

Next, I will share some insights from my research conducted in Abeokuta in the southwest part of Nigeria.

*“I have a separate field from my husband, and we don’t combine our incomes. We don’t discuss how to use the money. We each contribute 50% of the household expenses. **My husband has another woman he spends money on, but if I bring it up, he gets angry, so I can’t say anything.** I can’t talk to my parents about it either, so all I can do is take care of my children and work to earn the money we need.”*

*“My husband doesn’t provide enough for the family, like school fees and daily food. I use my own money to buy food and pay school fees. **The more I pay, the less he contributes.** But if I say anything, I’m afraid he might beat me. There’s nothing I can do.”*

Abeokuta, located in southwestern Nigeria, is home to both Christian and Muslim populations. Even among Muslim women, practices of seclusion are not prevalent among the women I surveyed, and many work in agriculture outside the home. Husbands and wives do not share income and assets. Many people rely on farming, but husbands and wives often work on separate plots of land without sharing inputs like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, or labor. While both husband and wife contribute financially to the household, the primary responsibility for providing necessities still falls on the husband. Polygamy is common, and women frequently fear that their husbands may spend money on other women. This can lead to domestic disputes over household finances or the husband’s support for other women. Divorce is heavily stigmatized and rare, but some couples live separately. Ultimately, efforts by women to improve their family’s quality of life often end up enabling husbands to abandon their responsibilities as primary providers.

Strategies Women Use for a Better Life

Then, how do women adapt to these circumstances? In Kano, women often comply with gender norms and divisions of labor that place decision-making in the hands of men. However, some women try to influence their husbands’ decisions by maintaining a harmonious relationship and subtly expressing their opinions. In Abeokuta, women leverage their financial resources, often by lending money to their husbands in exchange for the use of his hired laborers on their own land to address labor shortages.

A common strategy observed in both areas is for women to avoid arguments with their husbands in order to prevent conflict. In essence, women’s strategies for building a better life involve giving up on the idea of cooperating with their husbands, instead focusing on working hard for

themselves and their children.

Questions to Ms Toyin

That is all from me, and now I would like to ask questions to Ms. Toyin. I have three questions; First of all, I would like to know what motivated you to establish the NGO and carry out your activities? Secondly, are there any First Lady programs in Nigeria that have left a strong impression on you? How did they influence you? Lastly, do you think the Nigerian government's efforts toward gender equality have been effective in helping victims of domestic violence, rehabilitating perpetrators, and addressing patriarchal norms that dictate wives must obey their husbands? What have been the outcomes of efforts by the Nigerian government and international aid agencies in improving women's lives?

Replies from Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo to Kiyomi Kaida's comments and questions

TAIWO-OJO: Thank you, Kaida san. That was a very detailed research, and all you have stated, there are no lies in it. This is the reality of Nigerian women. I'm a Nigerian woman, and I will tell you that Nigerian women, I see them as one of the strongest species of human beings, because over time, we have developed a coping mechanism. The men want patriarchy. Patriarchy denotes that the man is the head, and when you are the head, you are supposed to provide. The woman is second class to you. But Nigerian men want patriarchy without the responsibilities that come with patriarchy. They want to eat their cake and still have it. They will be the head, and yet they do not provide, or they want to split bills with the woman. Sometimes, most times, the woman even carries a bigger financial responsibility than men, because when I was delivering my paper, I told you Nigerian women are attached to their children. And because divorce is really frowned upon in Nigeria, you want to remain in your marriage, because you know if you go out, people will laugh at you, they will mock you. So they remain, and they become what I call single but married. And yet, their rights are still inhibited. Like in one of the reports, going out depends on the husbands. But things are changing because the younger generation are refusing to go with these norms. And I believe that with time, Nigerian women will be more liberated.

So now, in regards to your question, "what motivated me to establish the NGO and carry out my activities?" I come from a strong line of women. I have two heritages. I'm half Igbo and half Yoruba. These are two tribes in Nigeria. But my Igbo side is Asaba. Asaba is a town in mid-western Nigeria. Though they speak the same Igbo language, but they have a distinct culture, different from the rest of the Igbos. The town was founded by a woman. So, women in Asaba are not as restricted as the other Igbo women. Women in Asaba are allowed to thrive. Women in Asaba are allowed to achieve. And women in Asaba, divorce is not a big issue like it is for the rest of the country. Women can divorce, remarry, divorce, remarry, no stigma attached. Women can even decide on their own not to get married, but to have children. And the children will not be discriminated. The only thing is that the children will bear the name of their father. So, the children become part of the father's children, even though he is not the one that fathered the children.

So, coming from this background and my Yoruba heritage, I have a bit more different outlook than the average Nigerian woman. And I want to say that these are things that influenced me to fight for the rights of women and children. Apart from the case I reported that really spurred me, I have been doing these activities, but without a structure of an NGO. Seeing women who are vulnerable, assisting them to get a better life by encouraging them to stand on their own. But the case I reported was what actually made me build up a structure that, okay, I can do this. It would be better if I do it structured. So, my motivation comes from my mother's heritage and my father's heritage. Yoruba women are also a bit freer than the rest of Nigerian women, because children in Yoruba land, women in Yoruba land are allowed to inherit, unlike the rest of the southern tribes. So, these are things greatly influenced me and has helped me to carry out my activities.

Now, "are there any First Lady programs in Nigeria that have left a lasting impression on me"? Yes. You also mentioned this in your research, and that is the Better Life for Rural Women. The program was built by the First Lady of Nigeria then, Mrs. Maryam Babangida. Incidentally, she's also an Asaba woman. So, growing up with my grandmother, I remember we would take cassava on our heads, quite a distance, to the mill. And this mill, I remember, I could read as a child, very early. I remember seeing Better Life for Nigerian Women, and it was at a very low cost. Instead of the high exorbitance fees that is charged by other mills, this very mill charges women at a very low cost. So, growing up, I would hear about this illustrious daughter of Asaba who is now the wife of the Head of State. I never met her physically, but I would hear from my mother that this is our daughter. This is the industry built to us by our daughter, which is Maryam Babangida. So, it helped me to understand that women could achieve. Women could actually use their intelligence to make life better. I could sense even as a child that pride from my grandmother that an Asaba daughter was a high achiever. Even the whole town used to have that sense of pride when they referred to Maryam Babangida as our daughter, collectively. So, it also made a lasting influence on me.

Now, "has the Nigerian government's efforts towards women emancipation yielded great fruit", well, I will tell you, you have listed a lot of protocols, the Maputo, the CEDAW. These things we have, Nigerian government has ratified it. But there is a lack of political willpower to implement these things. In these two days or three days I've been in Japan, we went to the Center for Women in Saitama. And when we got there, I was able to see that Japanese women may not have ratified some of these protocols and instruments. But their governments have been able to provide mechanisms for women to thrive. Unlike us, we go on ahead to sign these protocols, we are always the first to sign these protocols and instruments. But yet, we do not implement it. The efforts Nigerian governments have made, yes, is minimal, as far as I can say.

And even though there are foreign organizations who have tried to make life better by donating, making donations and, you know, trying to implement these things. It has not really had so much effect on us. If it has, it may be something like 30%, and there's a large 70% unattended to. And this is because of cultural inhibitions. Our government has been unwilling to make sure that we follow the law to the letter. So, yes and no. The government's efforts have actually led

to the enactment of some relevant laws, at least now we have women who go to school more than our parents' time. With laws like the Child Rights Law and the VAPP law, we know oh, you cannot do this. But another thing that has happened is the cultural inhibitions do not make women to actually strive to implement these laws. And our society's tolerance of these injustices also inhibits women. Did that answer your question?

KAIDA: Yes.

TAIWO-OJO: Thank you.

KAIDA: Thank you so much, Mrs. Toyin. I think the Nigerian government has made significant efforts to ratify the entire convention. They have developed numerous policies on women and gender, as well as gender-related policies in agriculture and other sectors. In each area, there are specific policies addressing gender issues. However, what has prevented their implementation?

TAIWO-OJO: You know, when I left the Women's Center, I made something to Shirabe san. I told her that there's something I learned from the Japanese experience. As gender activist, what we want to do in Nigeria is to push more women into politics. Because we believe that if women are in politics, we will have a say in the way our lives are being run. But from the Japanese experience, not so many women are in politics. Yet, the average Japanese woman has a better life. So it may not be politics that is the problem. It may be the cultural orientation of our people and the government's willingness to actually implement these things that they keep on signing.

OGATA: Thank you very much Toyin san and Kaida san. We can discuss more later on. Let's move on to the next session.

Mechanisms of violence and the potential of social media in victims' testimonies

Takashi TAMAI

I would like to thank Ms Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo for her excellent speech. I am grateful to Dr Ogata for organising a wonderful event and inviting me to be one of the commentators. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the staff for their efforts in preparing for this event.

First, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for Ms Taiwo-Ojo's great work and efforts. Your initiatives are highly unique. I believe that strength, creativity, and kindness are essential to do your job. I love Nigeria and have been researching it since 2011. While I am in Nigeria, I always have interesting experiences that exceed my imagination. If I were asked to continue praising Nigeria, I could talk for several hours! However, as I will discuss later, I have also come to realise the many challenges with violence in this country. I always wonder how I can contribute to improve the situation. I am glad to know that people like you are working with utmost sincerity to resolve this issue, and I am grateful to be able to meet you here.



Makoko, Lagos, September 2020, Lagos. Photo: Takashi Tamai

Let me begin by introducing myself. My comments are based on my research interests, so I would like to elaborate on them further. I have been conducting research in Lagos State, Nigeria since 2011. I am forever indebted to the staff and alumni of the University of Lagos. From 2011 to 2015, when I was doing my master's and PhD studies, I was conducting anthropological research in Makoko, known as a 'floating slum' in Lagos State. In particular, I investigated people's perceptions and behaviours to search for treatments for malaria. The findings of my research were

compiled into a book in Japanese and published as papers. Then, I took a break from my research and worked at the Japanese Embassy in the Nigerian capital, Abuja for two years. I became a university lecturer in 2019 and resumed my research. At that time, the COVID-19 Pandemic began.

Around that time, I became interested in the issue of violence where COVID-19 was prevalent, and a lockdown was implemented around May 2020. At that time, the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria reported that more people had died due to extrajudicial police violence (18 people) than from COVID-19 (10 people).

In May 2020, Tina Ezekwe, a 17-year-old girl in Lagos State, was shot dead by police officers for failing to comply with a lockdown request. People expressed their anger at her absurd death and protested with the hashtag 'JusticeForTina' on social media platforms, such as X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook. I continued to follow the social media and news from Japan. Tina was not the only person killed by police officers.

Nigerian anger was sparked by the End SARS Movement, a protest condemning violence against citizens by a police force unit, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). Organised in 1992, the SARS was known as the most horrendous assault, torture, rape, and murder squad, particularly targeting young people. The need for government-led police reform, including of SARS, had long been discussed, but the progress was rather slow. The End SARS Movement began in southern Nigeria in early October 2020. The trigger for the movement was a video posted on social media showing SARS personnel killing a young musician on the street, robbing his car, and fleeing, which caused immense anger and sadness among many people. The mass protests calmed down around the end of October, but hashtags, such as #EndSARS and #EndPoliceBrutality, continued to dominate social media afterward. Many arrests and casualties occurred during these protests.

I wrote some papers aiming to elucidate the mechanisms of violence and protests that occurred

Self-introduction

✓ **End SARS Movement (#EndSARS, #EndPoliceBrutality etc.)**

- ✓ a protest condemning violence against citizens by a police force, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)
- ✓ a video posted on social media...SARS personnel killing a young musician, robbing his car, and fleeing.

✓ **2022- Focused my research on the extrajudicial violence by state forces**

- ✓ why and how violence occurs, the suffering that the victims of violence subsequently endure, and the type of care that is given to them.
- ✓ in-depth interviews with eight people based in Lagos so far.

A photo of protesters calling for the scrapping of the controversial police unit Aljazerra (2020) #EndSARS: Nigerians protest against police brutality, (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/9/endsars-nigerians-protest-over-police-brutality>)

Fig.4 #EndSARNow

Aljazerra (2020) #EndSARS: Nigerians protest against police brutality, (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/9/endsars-nigerians-protest-over-police-brutality>)
An excerpt from the presentation slides

during the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, I focused my research on the extrajudicial violence by state forces from 2022 till the present. In my current research project, I seek to clarify why and how violence occurs, the suffering that the victims of violence subsequently endure, and the type of care that is given to them. I can only visit Nigeria for a short period of time in March and September every year. For my research, I have conducted in-depth interviews with eight people based in Lagos so far. I was introduced to the interviewees by lawyers who do pro bono work and provide legal support to victims.

When I began my research, I realised that little care was provided to the survivors of violence. However, while the experiences of the people I interviewed differed, they were all victims of serious trauma. The people I interviewed were assaulted by security agencies and taken to the police station one day without having done anything illegal. Unless they had a personal connection with the police officials or money to pay bribes, they were tortured at the police station and imprisoned. They were dragged to court and sentenced for crimes that they did not commit. The judicial process was slow, the necessary documents were disordered, and unless properly handled by a qualified lawyer, they would indefinitely remain in prison. One of my interviewees described the conditions in the prison as 'hell'. They drank water from the toilet and ate food (only beans) with cockroaches and stones in it. A hierarchy exists among the inmates in prison, and those with money abuse those who don't.

The interviewees had been detained in prison for several years. They were fortunate to be found and released by lawyers who worked on a pro bono basis to rescue people illegally detained in prison. When they returned to their hometowns after several years in prison, they were stigmatised as criminals, separated from their families, their homes were given away or rented out to others, and they lost their jobs and savings. With physical and mental scars, they have to look for work or a house to 'survive' tomorrow almost alone.

I use the term 'suffering' in wider perspectives in my discussion, which means the assemblage of problems that devastating injuries that can be inflicted on human life. Their suffering can be viewed as socially continuous from the past to the present. Although they receive legal support from lawyers, the people I interviewed have no option to recover but to live with their suffering in various forms. This aspect is not well-known in Nigeria or other countries. They tend to conceal it. Consequently, for those who endure the suffering and whose lives are severely disrupted by it, especially young people, the experience becomes an extremely personal issue. In other words, the intense suffering that they experience is unlikely to be a social issue. The End SARS Movement was able to thoroughly make police violence a public issue and has succeeded in changing the government's response to some extent. However, the movement does not address the issue of the lives of people who find it hard to look for a better life but to survive with suffering.

Considering my personal research, I would like to ask four questions based on Ms Taiwo-Ojo's experiences.

The first question is whether it is possible for women and children who have suffered violence to

testify about their suffering and experiences by highlighting this issue to society. The issue that I want to raise here is not that those who are suffering must testify about it. Rather, I am keen to understand whether the suffering of each person can be considered a more social or public issue rather than as an individual problem. This is an extremely difficult aspect of sexual violence because it is quite possible that it may (1) lead to further accusations, stigmatisation, blame by family members, and vice versa and (2) remind victims of the incident, resulting in further trauma.

To avoid these risks, it is preferable not to talk to them. In this case, the suffering or trauma is hidden and becomes a personal problem that only the person must deal with. If this happens, it may become painful and difficult to live life afterwards. It is not easy to live everyday life, such as spending time with family, attending school, working, and being with a partner, while suffering in situations. I think that it would be better for them to receive help. I also believe that it should be widely recognised and discussed as an issue for society as a whole and not just an individual problem. Against this background, I would like to examine the possibilities and challenges of testimony.

The second question that I would like to ask you here in relation to the first is regarding the possibilities and challenges of social media (i.e. X, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok) in the context of testimony. Social media has become indispensable to understand the thoughts of the young generation and various social movements including #EndSARS in 2017 and 2020, #OccupyNigeria, #BringBackOurGirls, #EndBadGovernance. Social media solidarity can occasionally transcend the boundaries of ethnicity, religion, and place of origin. It is important to consider how social media can extend support to those in need.

At this time, I would like to know whether social media is useful as a medium to testify about personal experiences and suffering. Do you think that it is possible and valuable if it could function in a useful way to raise the issues in society similar to the End SARS Movement? As mentioned previously, social media has immense possibilities, but simultaneously, I'm sometimes afraid that testimonies may be interpreted or used in a different context, beyond the imagination of the person in question, resulting in severe criticism. I think that social media inevitably focuses excessively on visible problems and that the direction that the discussion will take is highly uncertain. Large-scale manipulation of public opinion created by social media has already occurred worldwide. I would like to know your opinions on the possibilities and challenges of social media.

The third question that I would like to ask you, which is related in the previous questions, is about family. In your speech, you mentioned the importance of family. Undoubtedly, the family is crucial for children's development in a safe and secure environment. I am certain that the value of a family is probably a social norm. However, I wonder if we should continue saying that family is important even if a family member, such as a father or brother, is violent. The reason why I dare to ask this is because the stronger the norm of family importance, the more difficult it is for the victims of violence to complain or escape from their family. This may leave them with

no other option but to feel that the violence that befalls them is their own responsibility. How do you think that we should address this issue, which at first glance appears contradictory, in which the family is socially recognised as important yet is a site of violence?

The fourth question is related to the approach to perpetrators, which may be slightly different from the previous ones. Evidently, the perpetrators must be 'punished' in an appropriate manner. What I want to consider here is that in addition to punishing them, they also need to be 'corrected' to prevent them from reoffending. I would like to know your opinions on the extent of opportunity and support available to rehabilitate perpetrators and how this can be made possible.

Finally, I would like to once again express my profound respect for Ms Taiwo-Ojo's initiative and considerable efforts. I hope that we can collaborate to build a society in which children and women are not tormented by the problems surrounding violence. Thank you for your kind attention.

Replies from Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo to Takashi Tamai's comments and questions

TAIWO-OJO: Yes, thank you, Tamai san. Like same words I use for Kaida san, I'm going to tell you your work is well-researched, and these are our reality, sadly. In the paper I delivered, I talked about the Kotuma. The Kotuma are the colonial police who were given so much immense power by the colonials to perpetrate violence against our people, especially when they wanted to exert taxes. So, I think this has translated or transmitted to our present generation. The police in Nigeria, unfortunately, not all of them, but it's an institutional thing, because currently I'm handling a matter, where a lady who was arrested for fraud was raped right there in the police station by a police officer.

So, you would now begin to think, where can a woman be safe? You're not safe in your home, you're not also safe in the police station. This idea of violence is something that is synonymous with the police. Fortunately or unfortunately, I was also part of the #EndSars, people who supported. My organisation provided support by bringing food daily to the protest ground. That was the way we could support. And because we knew that, if we could get it right, we need to strengthen and build our own institutions.

Some of us have travelled, we have seen the way it is done in other climes. We wanted a replication of that. Recently, I travelled to Ogbomosho, which is a town in southwest Nigeria. And on our way back, I didn't drive, I was in a public transport. We got to a place called Odo Oba. Odo Oba is a boundary town between Ogbomosho and Ibadan, the service network there is not so stable. And this was where these police officers stationed their vehicle. And as we were coming, they stopped our vehicle and they asked each of the passengers, "what do you do?" Then they saw that the vehicle was filled with young boys and young girls, all students. Ogbomosho is a university town. So, there were a lot of young people in that vehicle. We were just two older people in the vehicle, apart from the driver. And they told the young men to bring their phones.

And, of course, I'm a lawyer. And I'm also a human rights activist. I took it up as my duty to ask why they are searching us because I know the law. And the law says that you can only search someone when there's reasonable suspicion. The word reasonable suspicion of a crime, that a crime wants to be carried out or wants to be perpetrated.

I asked the officer very politely, good afternoon, please may I know the reason why you are asking these young men to bring their phones? And the officer told me, of course, he was taken aback because most Nigerians are not confident to confront the police. He was taken aback a bit. He wanted to know who I was. He now said who are you? And I said, I'm a Nigerian, just like you are a Nigerian. I asked you a question. And he went to where they parked the vehicle. There were other members of his group there, other officers. And I think they conferred and decided to call my bluff. And they came back and said, you don't have any rights to ask us what we're doing here. And I told them, I said, I have a right to ask you, I quoted copious parts of the Police Act for them. And the head of the team came and said, Madam, I will shoot you and nothing will happen. That is the reality of Nigeria. And then the young men that were there in the vehicle kept quiet. Out of anger, the police officer who was searching said, everybody come down. It's not only the young boys we are going to search! Everybody, bring your things out, we are going to search! And the older woman there said, Madam, what is your problem? Now, referring to me, that I should have just allowed them to search the young boys and everybody will be on their way.

And I said, but how long are we going to allow these impunities? These boys have not done anything. You can't just begin to infringe on people's rights, because, and what they do is they search these young boys, intimidate them and collect the monies from their accounts. The other boys who were in the vehicle said to me, ah' Mama, that is referring to me respectfully now as an older woman. They are just doing their job. Allow them to search us and then we will all be on our way. And that is the sad part of the whole rhetoric. The sadness is that people have so much accepted these abuses and do not see it as abnormal. They feel it is normal. It should go on.

So, your next question, "is it possible for children and women who have suffered violence to testify about the suffering and experiences by highlighting this issue to the society"? You see, abuse of women and children, especially when it comes to sexual and gender-based violence, for me is no longer statistics but personal. Because if these abuses are not treated as public interest matters and are not treated as social matters, the cycle of abuse continues. In my work, I encourage women. I call it breaking the culture of silence, which is what is very pervasive in our society. When it happens to people, they'll tell you, hush, hush, it happened to me. You don't have to shout about it. Try and move on. And this try and move on, you know, creates damaged adults, people who have not healed from the trauma of these violences. And do you know what it now does? These people who have not healed now bleed on all, every other people, every other person, affecting every other person who comes near them. So, we have a multiplication of damaged people. I do not believe that issues of this matter should be individual matters. We respect that people have their rights, you know, to privacy. People have the right to seek for justice or not to seek for justice. But we want to push this narrative that when it happens to

you, it ceases to become individual, because if you are able to seek for justice, maybe you will be able to save the next victim from being harmed by this perpetrator, by this abuser. So, does that answer your question, number one?

TAMAI: Yes, thank you.

TAIWO-OJO: The second question, “The possibilities and challenges of social media in the context of testimony”. The testimony, I am a lawyer, a practicing lawyer, and the testimonies of survivors from social media can be admissible in court. It’s of course, I know that so far it is relevant, it is admissible, but it must also follow the rules of the law of evidence. And social media has also been a very large platform that helped us to get justice in most of our matters. This program I came, I know there are a lot of people who are watching, and they are from my social media pages. So, we have been able to use, utilize the power of social media to be able to pass our message, garner attention for what we do, all for getting justice. It is a powerful medium. It could be used positively, and it could also be used negatively. So, we try and see that the negative part of social media activism does not affect our work, but we use it to push positive, use the positive part of it to push our work, and make sure that our society is a better one.

Now, family and violence, yes, family is important, very important, like I said in my paper. But when we say family, we mean family is not just by filial bonds. Family is a group of, unit of people who are ready to protect your interests, who are ready to love you. And when these ingredients are no longer there, then it is not a family. That you share blood ties with people does not make them family. What makes people family is the bond of honesty, sincerity, and common goal, you know, working towards a common goal.

I handled a case of Seki. Seki was a 16-year-old girl who had, who has cerebral palsy. She is, she can’t use one of her legs, one of her hands and her legs, she’s affected. And her uncle, her father’s mother, because she’s disabled, her mother abandoned her to her grandmother. Her father doesn’t come around. Now the uncle began to use Seki as a sex slave. Seki, of course, because she’s disabled, could not fight them off. Even her brother, her blood brother, her biological brother was also, you know, raping her. We came in and we were able to move Seki away from that family. In that instance, you cannot say that these are the family of Seki. The family of Seki are those ones who love her, who are able to protect her. If a family is violent, the family is not protecting the interests of the member, the family member, they are no longer family. And I think that they should be able to, get the victim speak up and fight for justice and remove the hindrance of being a family member.

Now, perpetrators. The perpetrators, for me, I do not believe in forgiveness when it comes to abuse. I believe that the perpetrator should be punished. And because punishments of perpetrators serve as a deterrence to other would-be offenders. Yes, your question about now when these people are punished, how do we rehabilitate them? Yeah, it’s an important part of criminal’ process of criminal punishment justice process. The truth of the matter is that we do not have a mechanism for rehabilitating criminals in Nigeria. They are left on their own. And this

is a big burden because some of them go back to this life of crime, because the society does not accept them anymore. And they are not able to get work, they are not able to even live in their homes. So, they see crime as another way of making a living out.

I also believe that rehabilitation should be something that the prison system, you know, pursues, but I'm also aware that the correctional centers now offer skills. Even they make them do so much. if you want to write exams, they have the West African Examination Council (WAEC) center now in even in the correctional center. Yes, in Lagos State, Kirikiri. I know the female department, the female custody center, custodial center, women are allowed to come and write. So what? So yes, there's effort in rehabilitating these people. They learn sewing for those who want to learn. I don't know so much about the male custodial center, but I know about the female custodial center. Thank you.

TAMAI: Can I ask one small question? It's a very small one. Actually, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lagos state government you know, organize an emergency phone call center for woman who has problems about sexual violence or something like that, they can call the Lagos state government's operation center to report and, you know, to call police or whatever. Do you think that phone call system is working well or not?

TAIWO-OJO: It worked, but there was a problem. Because I am on ground, I did this work. Women will call in, there will be responses, but these women will be told to bear. Why? Do you know why? Because the COVID protocol, you must undergo COVID tests to make sure that you are not COVID positive before you can be rehabilitated into shelters. There were shelters willing to accept them. But because the process for getting this COVID test done was so enormous, was so big, it was as if the center existed, but women were not getting any help. Children were not getting any help. We will call some of, some members who are working in the COVID centers may try to help us, but the queue was so long, the population was so long, so little or nothing could be done.

OGATA: Thank you very much Tamai san and Toyin san again and again. Now we will have a 10-minute tea break here. Thank you for being with us for more than one and a half hour everybody including those who on Zoom. Please come back by 15:20 in Japan, and 7:20 am in Nigeria. Thank you.

Engaging African citizens in addressing violence against women and children:

Strategies for action and advocacy

Wakana SHIINO

Introduction: About my research

My major is social anthropology, and I have been doing ethnographic research in Kenya and Uganda. Especially, I have focused on the Western Nilotic Luo people since 1995 and para-Nilotic Lango people in Uganda since 2008. And I have been interested in widows /widowers, 'single' people, house girl in patrilineal societies, and I have been trying to understand and analyze them from the perspectives of sexuality/gender and family and kinship. My main ethnographic writing is *'Ethnography of Marriage and Death of Woman: When the Widow Chooses a Man in Kenya Luo Society'* (Shiino, Wakana. 2008.) and *'Contemporary Gender and Sexuality in Africa: African-Japanese Anthropological Approach'* (Wakana Shiino , Christine M. Mpyangu eds., 2021, Langaa RPCI).

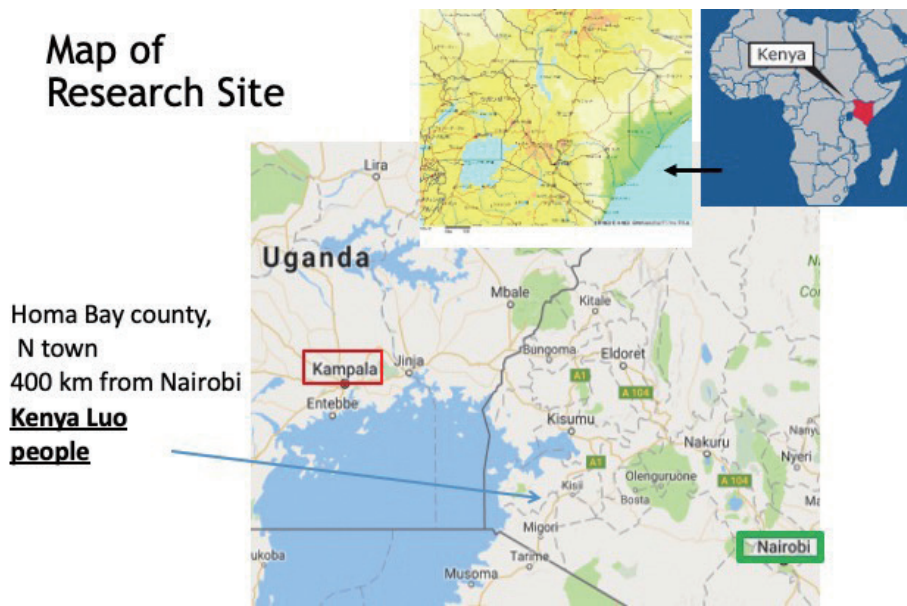
Questions for Ms Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo

My questions for the lawyer and human rights advocate, Ms Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo, are based on the assumption, given the situation in my study area, that something similar is probably happening in Nigeria.

- (1) How can we get ordinary African citizens involved in eradicating violence, especially sexual violence in the field?
- (2) Many international NGOs have come into Africa and this has become commonplace, and there seems to be a situation where people are left to their own devices. Is there a tendency for people themselves to take action on their own? The reason why I would like to ask is because I can't see positive action about these kinds of matters by area people in my field.

The background of these questions

As you know, popularisation of higher education and widening economic disparities in current African societies are increasing. The population of university graduates and MA/PhD holders is also gradually increasing. As a result, more well-educated people are starting to work for the government and International/ domestic NGOs. For example, *Menstrual Hygiene Management Strategy 2019-2024* was published by the Ministry of Health, Republic of Kenya during the Covid-19 Pandemic. This is a well-organized and well-planned strategy by using a lot of academic papers. Highly-educated people are building their careers securely through this kind of work. But there is a gap between the excellent policy agenda and the conditions in the field. In the case of Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM), the strategy showed they would provide free pads for female students, but the reality is that female students received 2 packs of pads in 2020. It was the only one time students received pads from the government.



An excerpt from the presentation slides

Some sexual harassment cases among the primary pupils in Luoland, Kenya.

I would like to show some cases from my field related to the issues Ms Toyin is dealing with. The people of Kenya Luo are agro-pastoralists who speak the West Nile language and have a population of 5.06 million [Republic of Kenya 2019]. Their staple foods are maize and sorghum, which are grown twice a year in two cropping seasons. This study on sexuality was conducted among the primary school students in a small town (called N Small Town in this study) in southern Luoland. The town has a post office, court, offices of international NGOs and political parties, and a large weekly open-air market. The survey was conducted among male and female students from grades six to eight, mainly through questionnaires.

In this comment, I will use ethnographic data which I have collected since 1995 in my research village and N Small Town near the village in the Western part of Kenya [Shiino 2008]. In N Small Town, there are high schools, post offices, and hospitals. In 2019, I and a research assistant who is a teacher at the school did questionnaires for both male and female pupils (STD6-8) on menstruation. And my assistant and myself did interviews with 7 pupils individually in 2023.

Luo society and marriage

East Africa, where the study sites of Kenya are located, experienced British colonial rule and is known to be an exclusively patrilineal society. As indicated by the ethnographies of classical anthropology, patrilineal societies are those in which women marry out and are expected to contribute to the survival of their husband's patrilineal clan by giving birth to a male child, and they find a wife / husband outside of their own clan; exogamy.

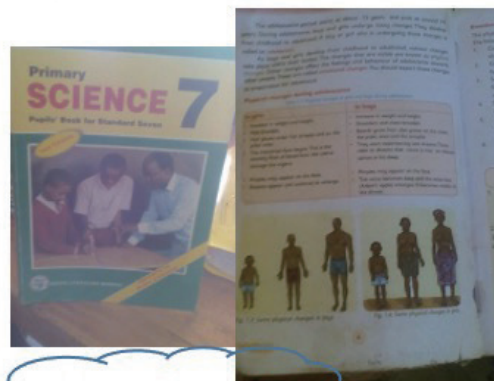
The general condition of education on sexuality and the menstruation

At primary school, knowledge about menstruation and pregnancy is dealt with during science class.

From interviews and questionnaire surveys, it can be seen that boys only learned what they learned in class, while girls heard actual knowledge of **menstruation** from their **mothers** and **older sisters**.

But about **sexual intercourse**, they get information differently.

None of the girls answered that they were taught about **sexual intercourse** by their mothers.



'Avoidance relationship'?

↔joking relationship

An excerpt from the presentation slides

The current condition of sexual education including menstruation at primary school in Kenya

The students have almost no traditional knowledge of sexuality, which was taught by grandparents. Nowadays there is no place or opportunity to share such knowledge since the modern education system was introduced. Currently, knowledge about menstruation and pregnancy is dealt with during science class at primary school. Through interviews and questionnaire surveys, it can be seen that boys only learned what they learned in class, while girls heard actual knowledge of menstruation from their mothers and older sisters. But about sexual intercourse, they get information differently. None of the girls answered that they were taught about sexual intercourse by their mothers. This shows mothers avoid teaching their daughters practical information about pregnancy, contraception, etc. One of the consequences of this situation has been the pregnancy of children in their early teens, who are pupils in primary schools. Next, I would like to show some cases which I heard from pupils and teachers.

Pupil's pregnancy_case:1

In November 2022, when pupils were getting ready for national exams, one girl got pregnant. During the rehearsal day, she came to school as usual but after the rehearsal a certain man came to pick her up by the school gate on a motorcycle and went with her to an unknown place. When the mother was informed, she involved policemen who helped her in looking for the girl and the man. After two days, the policemen found the man hiding in a church very far from N Small Town, they arrested the man and forced him to take them to where the girl was. The girl was found in the man's rented house. He was a family man, but his wife and children were at his rural home. So the girl admitted that she had been having sex with that older man but was pregnant with another man's child. She claimed that her mother did not provide for all her needs, that's why she decided to have sex with men who gave her money. The girl was brought back to do the exams while the man was still in custody, but after doing exams, the mother decided to move out of N Small Town with her because she felt embarrassed about the behaviour of her girl.



Akala Primary School, Kenya, March 2024. Photo: Wakana Shiino

Pupil's pregnancy_case:2

The pupil's mother was a single mother who was doing business through selling cereals. The female pupil had been assisting her mother with the business. In the end, she (13 years old) got involved in sexual intercourse with a motorcycle man (boda boda) who lured her into his house with the promise that he was going to give her more money on top of the money he bought maize with. So she accepted. Thereafter, they had sex more than three times, but then she became pregnant and the mother realized it. The mother asked her who impregnated her, after learning the name and the house of the man, the mother planned to have the man arrested. And because of this, she went and informed him, which made him run to an unknown place.

Cases: sexual abuse by parents or guardians

Even in the semi-urban setting N Small town, some female pupils stay with fathers/uncles working at the trading centre (single-parent household). Some girls from such an environment are suffering from not getting menstrual pads or from serious sexual harassment.

Cases: sexual abuse by teachers and coaches

The principal of this primary school was also arrested several years ago for having an affair with a female pupil. The pupil herself consulted a female teacher at the school, and the case became known. There are several cases like 'A teacher from the village impregnated his pupil at school' over different schools.

Cases: sexual harassment at boarding schools

The roles of teachers in schools and their qualifications as teachers are serious problems. I often hear the discourse that a "senior lady/woman" is in charge of girls matters, but the reality is not working well. Many cases are reported in the media. E.g. 2024.3.11 'Sex abuse in school: The silent epidemic' *Daily NATION*.

One of the reason why these cases happens is that there are several power hierarchy systems in the school and less motivation. Once a head teacher has power in the school, other teachers can not touch the budget for the school or communicate with the government education office. It is easy

for the head teacher to hide something wrong he/she does wrong. The assessment of teachers' performance is in the hands of the headmasters, so they cannot be disobeyed. They are always waiting for someone/ some NGOs to do something for them. Teachers in schools seem to have little motivation to do anything that is needed.

Meaning of sexual victimisation in the home and in primary schools

Today's report is based on the findings of a survey of sexual victimisation in a community of people living near a small town in Luoland, Kenya. What should we think from the cases of the Sexual victimisation in the home and in primary schools? In each of these spaces, where children should be able to feel safe and where they can ask for help, this is no longer the case. In the home, there are cases of gender inequality between parents and daughters being victimised by the bad sexual behaviour of a parent or guardian. In the case of harassment by teachers in schools, the strong hierarchy within the teaching staff in some schools made it difficult for ordinary teachers to confront their superiors.

Brief summary and conclusion

The number of cases of primary school girls becoming single mothers who have not even reached their first menstruation is on the increase. As the result of the increasing number of single mothers, a number of children do not know their fathers or their fathers do not recognise or take responsibility for them. The pregnancy of a child of primary school age is a man's crime. If there is no father of the child, there is no inheritance of land and property for her/him by patrilineal descent. In the most of the cases, the grandmother brings up the child instead of young mother... after that? This in itself is a very serious form of violence. To prevent this from happening people need to create opportunities for society as a whole to think about sexuality and gender once more!

Should people take the opportunity to think about sexuality and gender in society as a whole once more? The introduction of modern education systems after colonisation, the influx of diverse thinking due to globalisation, as well as conservative Christian thinking on sexuality, has almost completely eliminated the function of sex education in each African ethnic community. As a result, many pupils and students studying in primary and secondary schools now suffer sexual violence from pupils and teachers in the same school, from adults in the residential area and even from their guardians. This is evident from Ms Toyin's report and my research.

How can African people create a system in which local people themselves can work on their own for this matter, rather than through the policies of overseas NGOs? So what should we do in the future? Unless African villagers happen to have lawyers like Ms Toyin in every town and village who are active, who understand the position of women and who are immediately approachable, do people just cry? How can the case and the subsequent care, the methods and the philosophy of Ms Toyin's work be made available in other regions and countries, where the government's strategy is politically allowing NGOs to come in and using them? The government's strategy of politically allowing NGOs to enter the country and using them has meant that people have lost the ability to think and act on their own about how to tackle certain issues. How do African people cultivate the ability to lead not only the minds of the well-educated, knowledgeable and economically powerful elite to their own interests but also the minds of the people? This is also needed in contemporary Africa.

Replies from Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo to Wakana Shiino's comments and questions

TAIWO-OJO: Yes. Right. Thank you, Shiino san, for your work in East Africa. In my paper, I mentioned Nigeria and Africa, you know, interchangeably, because the same problem seems to plague the whole of Africa. Like I said, I grew up in the traditional setting in a village, though now a big city, but then it was quite a small town. I grew up with my grandmother. So, I understand these things you say so much. But while growing up, we will not remove, I do not want to over flog a dead horse, but I will still mention colonialism. Colonialism set Africa back a whole lot. Before the colonialists came, menstrual hygiene was a shared issue by the whole home. I will tell you how.

When I first saw my first cycle, my mother gifted me a wrapper, which is what, to show I am a woman, because before the colonial Africa, once a girl sees her menstruation, she's termed a woman. And giving me a wrapper was a significant ritual to show that I am now a woman. It's only a woman that can tie a wrapper, the two wrappers. Now, in those days, once a girl sees her menstruation, her mother calls her in with the aunties or the grandmother, and they tell her, how to keep herself clean and maintain her body. And then the mother goes to report to the father that your daughter has become a woman. And the father goes to the market, either to buy a goat or a chicken, you know, and brings home for it to be slaughtered for that young girl. That is, it is like a rite of passage. So the father knows, when this goat or chicken is killed, the other men even in the house knows our sister, our daughter is now a woman.

You understand me? And immediately, if she was bathing outside before, she does not bathe outside anymore, because she's now entitled to cover herself with wrapper. But when the colonials came, these things became second place, these rituals, this involvement of fathers died. We have what we call Tesho in Yoruba land. Tesho is a black magic, but it's a mechanism that it's only the father that can do Tesho. The father, in order to protect his girl child from being raped or by being seduced by a man, goes to get this something. And when the daughter is around, they mark her or she eats the food or something, they place it on her. So, any man who tries to have forced sexual intercourse with her will not have an erection. It preserved the lady from sexual violence. It is the father, because it's not the mothers that do it, it's the fathers that do it.

When the girl is ready to get married, a sort of ritual is performed to lift that inhibitor from her so that she can, you know, have a sexual marriage with her husband. Now, coming down now, we do not have these things any more. What we have is young girls getting pregnant. You said that not all of them that is raped. As a lawyer, any child who is less than 18 years and has sexual intercourse, it is rape. It is defilement. That is my law self talking. Because a child cannot give consent. A child is a child. It is the adults that are supposed to protect these children. Then we have in situations where you say people are not taking charge.

Before the advent of technology, in Africa, we have a way of spreading information. We will use the gong. I was talking to Kaida san. I traveled out of Nigeria. I didn't tell my neighbors. But my neighbors called me because they did not see me for a while. We have not seen you. What

happened? This was a way for us to pass on messages. The West may see it as being nosy or being a busybody. But that was a way for us to protect ourselves.

So how do we make sure that our people take up you know initiative, do things? I think we need a lot of reorientations. We need for us as a people, it's not to wait for handouts from the West or from other bodies. We ourselves, it's our problem. It's our challenges. In fact, there was a president of Nigeria who said that there were some international agencies that wanted to donate food to Nigeria. America, not even an agency. The United States wanted to donate food to Nigeria, and he said no. Because if they donate food to us, we will become a nation of beggars. Our people will kill the local industry. Now people will begin to wait until food comes. So sometimes it may not be necessarily the effort of the NGOs that need it. It is to galvanize our own people to understand that this problem is our problem. We need to work on it. And how do we do it? It still rests on our government.

There has to be a reorientation. We have to understand. There's a tribe in Nigeria where for you to know that you're a courageous man, a man of valor, you have to kidnap the girl. You don't marry her, you kidnap her, have sex with her. And when she gets pregnant, you now come to seek her hand in marriage. That is institutionalized rape. These are the cultures which are negative that we have to change. So, what we basically need is reorientation. Those things that were good in our past that we were doing, we need to bring it back. And those things that were negative that we were doing, we need to discard them. We need for women to have a voice. We need to encourage women to speak up. And we also need to empower women. Because, let me tell you, if a mother is empowered, do you know that the children will be safer from sexual and gender-based violence? These are the things we need to work on. And it starts with our government. We have to involve the traditional leaders, our chiefs, to be able to achieve that. Two minutes left? ... Does that answer your question, or do you want more enlightenment?

SHIINO: (laughs) Yeah, I agree and... the form of the condition, the society, which produce such young single mothers that form is violence.

TAIWO-OJO: I think Tamai-san can identify with it, because in Makoko (where Tamai san did his research in Lagos, Nigeria) we have a lot of young single mothers. Do you understand me? But it's still boils down to the government. The perpetrators have to be punished. If a girl is pregnant, ask her how did she get the pregnancy. And then the person who is responsible should be punished. And then other men who want to go that way will be deterred. Because I have, in my work, I see a lot of improvement. It's not where we were in 2018 that we are now. I see communities call me that somebody has been raped. Call me before you come and arrest everybody. Do you understand me? Communities have become proactive. I had a case of a 14-year-old girl that was raped by a 65-year-old man. Do you know that it was the community that held him and called us? And when we got there, they handed him over to us. These are the things we are talking about, so the society, community has to be involved.

SHIINO: Where is the community? In the urban city?

TAIWO-OJO: In the city.

SHIINO: People should move towards it.

OGATA: Thank you Shiino san and Toyin san again. So now we are moving to the final session.

Hope for the unknown:

Importance of venturing practices in urban Nigeria

Hidetoshi KONDO

At the end of this presentation, there are questions for Toyin san about her work and life. In addition, underlined are the five (1-5) passages of my opinions over the issues addressed in this presentation. I would most appreciate if she could pick up one of them for her commentary.



Vast expanse of houses in the north of Lagos where most roads are still unpaved, 10th February 2013. Photo: Hidetoshi Kondo

My name is Kondo. I specialize in social-cultural anthropology, conducting field research mainly in Nigeria. My research topics include healings, witchcraft and entrepreneurs in urban Nigeria. Over the years, I have been observing business practices and therapeutic behaviors among those living in Lagos and Kaduna. What has struck me is the common features of both practices. The informants of my extended case studies seem to have a tendency to manage business and medical treatment in a manner of trial and error. While at the initial stage they employed their usual business procedure, they were increasingly switching from one procedure to another or even from one enterprise to another. The same applies to the course of their therapeutic behavior; they often ended up shopping around various treatments and healers unless they got their afflictions healed. What underlays their fluid practices is not their concern with the objective failures of the enterprises or treatments, but the matter of their subjective judgement of the failure often motivated by the encounters of myriad alternative enterprises or treatments. 1. By moving among different alternatives, I wonder if they were renewing hopes for success and resetting a part of their life time and again?

When I visited them intermittently, it was often the case that they seemed to have forgotten the previous failures and told me with enthusiasm about new enterprises or treatments they were doing or going to shortly undertake. I asked them if they were certain of their success this time.



Two traditional birth attendants showing herbs to make remedies for pregnant women, 10th February 2013. Photo: Hidetoshi Kondo



The members of a Cherubim & Seraphim Church in Lagos, 19th August 2019. Photo: Hidetoshi Kondo

They gave me a typical answer, “By the grace of God,” indicating their modesty in that they were keenly aware that uncontrollable uncertainties lied ahead. Nevertheless, they did not look worried about the risk of failure. They seem to share hopeful mentality with gamblers. For this reason, I would like to call them “venturers.” 2.I wonder if uncertainties mean to these venturers that there is a chance of success, if remote, as the answer belongs to an unknown domain, that is, the future and cannot be known until it arrives at the present? In other words, they seem to raise hopes for the unknowability of the particular outcome of their endeavor, hopes for the unknown, so to speak, rather than hopes for the high probability of success of their endeavors

I have rarely heard them mention that they felt responsible for their failures. But rather they complained about external conditions and others who spoiled their business or treatment on purpose. 3.I wonder if they did not critically reflect upon their own conduct, or if they thought that it would be useless to do so, since no one could ensure success by blaming him/herself for failures in the past, given formidable uncertainties; failure is not the mother of success here?

I have begun to believe that their hopeful attitude in business and healing will shed a new light on one of our problems in Japan, that is, difficulties to have hopes. The other day, I watched on TV Tadashi Yanai, chairman of First Retailing, a successful Japanese businessman, saying that the most important thing in business is to make use of what is critically learned from failures.

Many of us still retain the idea that failure is the mother of success, based on the premises that everything can be analyzed in terms of cause and effect to be converted into means and end. The idea aims to increase certainty for success. Conversely, uncertainty casting shadow over success must be reduced. The neoliberal virtue of self-responsibility apparently promotes this idea today.

So, uncertainty is our enemy. It means nothing but risk. We raise hopes only if uncertainty is reduced. The problem is that far from its reduction, uncertainty is rising in our society. This leads us further to self-reflexive action. The more uncertain the society becomes, the more critical we are about ourselves in spite of our inability to avert uncertainty. Consequently, it is very difficult for us to have hopes. 4.Perhaps we should not assume that hope is attributed solely to the reduction of uncertainty by means of self-reflexive action, and realize that there is a different sort of hope, hope which is derived from the very uncertainty and the resetting of life, that is, hope for the unknown. In this respect, I am wondering if we can learn a lot from venturers in urban Nigeria.

At the same time, I also believe that venturers have their own shortcoming. They are inclined to suffer from the problem of trust. It is not that they do not trust people and things. In a sense, they seem to have higher trust than most Japanese I know. The fact that they conduct business or therapies under enormous uncertainties seems to be self-explanatory; without trust in business partners or healers, they would not have started off the business or therapy in the first place. In contrast, I was once told by a businessman in Kaduna after declining his proposal to do business with him that I did not have the guts. Certainly, I didn't. I was not courageous enough to trust him. Venturers seem to trust someone or something in a similar vein to betting. However, they are not good at sustaining the trust they once put it in someone or something. Doubts about the integrity of individuals or the quality of medicine often arise and urge them to switch to the alternatives. It is likely that sometimes they cannot even wait for particular procedures or treatments to take effect. 5.Thus, I wonder if it is crucial for them to enhance the sustainability of trust. But the question is how?

Questions for Ms Taiwo-Ojo

As you are working as a lawyer, a human rights activist and an activist to stop abuse against women and children, you must be facing so many problems to tackle with. If you solve a problem, you might encounter another. On top of this, you might have your own family issues to sort out. While families must play a vital role to help out those in crisis, they cause a significant part of troubles with people in Japan and, I suppose, especially in Nigeria. The problem of the family is that it is not easy to change relationships with family members. My questions are then as follows.

- 1) How would you deal with troublesome family members? Would you tell them face to face to change their attitudes? Would you avoid them in some way? Or would you take a part of the responsibility for the troubles and change yourself?
- 2) What makes you move forward when you feel almost overwhelmed by a flood of problems including unsolvable ones? Is it faith that you have to do something for people in crises? Is

it necessity that you have to earn for your family? Is it the sense of destiny that the God gave you this work? Or is it your expectation that things will get better? How would you find your hope?

Replies from Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo to Hidetoshi Kondo's comments and questions

TAIWO-OJO: Thank you, Kondo san. Your questions make me understand that I'm in front of a sociologist because these are social issues. And we are social beings as humans. Your questions are not far-fetched. These are the realities of everyone here in this room. Because we, no matter how much you have a loving family, there is this person in the family who will be troublesome, who you may want to avoid. But sometimes because they're family members, you may not totally avoid them.

But as I grow older, I have begun to understand that I may not be able to change people, but I will be able to change myself. Now, when I have somebody who I have tried to talk to, as a Nigerian and Yoruba person, we are very polite and diplomatic with the way we say things. My Igbo side would be more confrontational. They will tell you how it is, if you like or you don't like, but they will tell you. But my Yoruba side will say, no, you have to find a way to bring this kind of sensitive subject. Now, sometimes, because I have double heritage, I use my Igbo side, but sometimes I use my Yoruba side. And if I use these two sides and it still doesn't work, then I know that I have to be the one to work on myself. I was discussing with Shirabe San yesterday, and I told her, I said, when somebody is manipulative and you know he's manipulative, you cannot escape from this person. Then you stop being a willing victim. You have to be the one to move aside. Luckily, there's urbanization. Some family members are no longer living communally, like before. I will block you on the phone, or any way you would have access to me. And I would, if it's possible, I may even tell you, please do not come to my place again, because my mental health is very important. One, I am somebody who solves other people's problem, but if I am not good, how then do I solve other people's problem? I have to take care of myself first, before I can take care of others.

That is one of the ways I deal with such issues. Now, yes, like I said, "would you take a part of responsibility for the troubles and change yourself"? Yes, I would. I would, if somebody is being manipulative to me, I may be the one to accept that this person is manipulating me because I agree for him to manipulate me. So, the best thing is for me to stop being a victim of this person. It's in my power, it's a choice thing. And sometimes we may want to feel bad because of course we have emotions. But I think we need to tell ourselves that this is the best action. We should put ourselves first. And it's not being selfish, it's being true to oneself. Because if you don't take care of yourself, you can't take care of others that depend on you. So, you are trying to be true to yourself and to others.

"What makes you move forward when you feel almost overwhelmed by a flood of problems, including the unsolvable ones"? I have a mantra. I don't worry about things I can change because

obviously I can change it. So why worry about it? Work towards it. I don't worry about things I cannot change because if I cannot change it, what is my worry going to do? So that is one of the ways I use in tackling my life. I'm 45 and I don't have a BP problem unlike most African women of my age because I have ingrained it in myself that you don't worry about things you can't change. If you can change something, you work towards it, change it. And if you cannot change something, sleep. Don't worry about it. There's nothing you can do.

KONDO: I have a BP problem...

TAIWO-OJO: (laughs) Maybe you can take my advice.

“Is it fate that you have to do something for people in crisis?”

Well, as a Nigerian, the average Nigerian is deeply religious. And I have also come to understand and that one of the reasons why the army, the police, they allow chaplains, they allow people of faith. It is because faith, religion, has always given hope to people. They believe in something more spiritual, more supernatural, something bigger than you, gives you a sense of purpose, gives you a sense of fulfilment. For me, helping, when I help people, I also feel that I'm doing God's work. I am being an extension of being the hand of God or the finger of God. So, it makes me sleep well when I do these things. People I help, sometimes they'll be like, oh, you did so much for me, but I'm also helping myself by helping them because it gives me purpose.

“Is it necessary that you have to earn for your family?”

Well, yes, you have a duty to your family. If you bring, for me, my major duty is to my children because I brought them into this world. I have to care for them. But fortunately for me, I do not have an extended family that is dependent. I'm a first daughter, but I don't have a family that depends on me because everybody is well-to-do, as in we are comfortable in our individual rights. But I know that in families, they depend on one person. But like I said in my first answer to your first question, you should not give more than you can give because you need to take care of yourself, first of all.

Then, “Is it the expectation that things will get better? How would you find your hope?”

My hope, I find my hope knowing that, well, there are things you can't change and things you can change. And most often than not, I believe, even though I'm a student of logic, that there are things that defy logic. And these things that defy logic, I believe it belongs to God. So, I leave it.

KONDO: I agree.

OGATA: Thank you, Kondo san and Toyin san.

Floor session:

Comments and discussions



At the venue, ILCAA, Tokyo, 9th November 2024

T: Toyin Ndidi Taiwo-Ojo

O: Shirabe Ogata

C1: Comments and questions from the audience 1

C2: Comments and questions from the audience 2

C3: Comments and questions from the audience 3

C4: Comments and questions from the audience 4

O: Now we have ten minutes left. Comments and discussions are open for you on the floor. Let me take some from the floor first, then I'll come to Zoom.

C1: Yes, thanks for the opportunity. In fact, we are very grateful and enlightened by you.

T: Thank you.

C1: I am from Ghana, West Africa.

T: Ghana jollof or Nigerian jollof (laughs)?

C1: Ghana jollof (laughs)!

C1: My comments relate more to what professor Shiino asked you. For me, his comments

constitute an embodiment of everything we have discussed here because the issues you have raised creates impressions of cultural contradictions in Africa, right? It is also about the real and perceived tensions between traditions and modernity. It is also about the internal contradictions in traditions, and modernities. But we must certainly find answers to these contradictions that have found expressions in the various challenges that have encumbered women and girls in your line of practice as a lawyer and advocate for the rights of women and children. From my perspective, we need cultural intelligence to be able to deal with the issues. That cultural intelligence must emerge from a need for us to take the African worldview about the world with all the seriousness it deserves. I will, therefore, begin by saying upfront that, I see the African cosmivision as a composite. At the risk of being accused of essentialization (a nuanced label that is often abused to mug epistemic freedom), I must say that as Africans, if not generally all cultures, we have an idea of a cosmos that presents itself to us in the form of a jigsaw puzzle. In other words, the world presents itself as properly organized and structured to elucidate its own telos and ontological purpose and function. Now, each part of the puzzle must fit within where it's ontologically supposed to be to complete the puzzle. And that's the reality of the African world; that is also the reality of all pre-modern societies. So, sometimes, we may find an aspect of the puzzle that appears not to fit. But that is only if we take that aspect of the puzzle in isolation. If I am to focus my comments on Ghana's intellectual history of gender and family, I will take us back to the both the late 19th century and on the eve of the country's independence. Specifically focusing on the eve of Ghana's independence, the country's nationalists, simplistically referred to as cultural nationalists, were not oblivious to the critical role of men and women in nation-building. Often contracted by the chiefs and other traditional authority figures, these nationalists, including J.B. Danquah and K.A. Busia (great social philosophers of their time) wrote extensively to articulate the Akan, to be specific, social reality. They did not surrender to the subjectivity and relativistic theories of the 21st century world—which had begun taking shape in America in the late 1960s. For this reason, upon Ghana's independence, with all the emerging forces of modernization on the horizon, a major concern of the academics at the time was about the future of the Ghanaian family. These academics, including Prof. Christine Opong, formerly at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, who also trained at the University of Cambridge under Jack Goody, the famous Anthropologist, focused much of their research on the increasing changing trends in gendered roles. This was also a result of more women taking up public responsibilities. They explored family studies from different perspectives, including the fate of children, marital stability and the politics of development. Family Studies was therefore the converging point of interdisciplinary research. The research endeavors of these academics were bolstered by the country's first president and pioneer founder of the Institute of African Studies, Kwame Nkrumah, who also insisted that methodologically, Ghanaian traditions of knowledge should anchor epistemic production. He teased this as *"the gown must come to town."*

T: Thank you sir and I may want to agree with you that to a very large extent. That colonialism is something that, we have not yet grappled with. Probably the consequences and effects of colonialism is, something that we have not yet grappled with properly because we see, our culture we still find it hard to find a balance especially with us trying to achieve modernity, you know, being in consonance with the modern world. We found out a times that we want to cling to our

culture but at the same time want to cling to the pace of the world and that's something you know, that is contradictory sometimes. So, I agree with you that we need to study our culture as a whole piece rather than discordant pieces.

C1: Another issue for your consideration is take the case of menstruation that you talked about. Historically and traditionally, the first menstrual experience of a woman was also about her major transition into the social world of being a woman to undertake all the major roles associated with that gender. It was time for her to learn all the rudiments about personal hygiene and how to hold the fortress of her family together. Also, it was time for her to be educated on all the norms and values of society and her role in holding society together. Contrast all this to today's 'modern' world of wisdom: Today, as part of dealing with challenges girls go through as a result of mensuration, we have puberty blockers in the Western world, eliciting complex challenges. We use expression such as "unplanned pregnancy" in social conversations. But have we considered the plight of planned, paid, and yet failed pregnancies given the increasing trend in IVF technology? Today in Ghana, discussions are emerging about frozen eggs, what ethical issues would arise from this?

T: Which was not the case 20 or 30 years ago.

C1: Exactly. For me that is why we need to consider our world as a jigsaw puzzle. And going by what Professor Shiino identified as a dissonance between elite-minted theories and social realities of local people, we need to re-think the process of knowledge production. Remember, her concern was about the situation in East Africa, where as she observed theories from the universities and corridors of higher learning do not readily align with the lived social experiences of local people. About four years ago, I initiated research in Ghana about unmarried women in the private financial sector. Several of these women I interviewed were dealing with complicated issues of fibroid. The cost of fibroid surgeries is surging high. Yet, the subject is hardly part of both academic and popular discourses on gender in the country. It is not part of the conversations around the so-called affirmative action to rescue Ghanaian women. Meanwhile, from the perspective of genetics, fibroid is more of an African woman's burden than their non-African counterparts. I have wondered why no one is advancing research in the area. But if you come to think about what our ancestors knew about the causative reason for fibroid, we will understand why activists and feminist scholars allowed themselves into self-imposed silence on the subject. After all, our ancestors held the notions that fibroid could be humanly-induced. They used clichés such as "*fibroid is a disease of an idle womb,*" and "*bad girls don't get fibroid, but good girls get fibroid.*"

T: Thank you, I think we will discuss more about this after this.

C2: I don't know if we have time. But I will be very quick. Thank you so much for your presentation. It was interesting. One question I would like to ask you is, is there any kind of educational activity in Nigeria in terms of gender equality, I mean, if there is any initiative e.g. at schools that somehow support gender equality to be taught? This is the first question, and

secondly, I have a personal question to you as a human right activist and human right defender - does your organization or any other organization advocate gender equality to be taught at schools? I wonder, if the schools teach children anything connected to these challenges?

T: Okay thank you so much, there is a subject that is taught from the primary school to the secondary school. It is called security and civic education. So, I know this subject, because I have young children. We do their assignments together and this subject teaches children of course, patriotism, equality of sexes and in a way, how to treat your fellow human beings. But it did not capture gender equality. Because why I would say that Professor Kaida San, said something about the VAPP law which is 2015 Violence Against Persons and Prohibition Act. Now, we have a problem, a big problem. Our men do not want to hear gender equality. For them, it was like eh, oh how the Act is to be passed, they had to replace women with persons. To cover that, we had to mention that this act that we are bringing out is for everyone not just for women. But essentially, it was a vision to protect women. So, this topic in school, there is no topic called women gender equality in that subject. But they teach about not just menstruation but other sexual education topics. Even the boys and the girls, you know take those subjects together, they teach about women becoming doctors, lawyers. So, in a way, it's still the same thing if we had put it as gender studies in primary school. Because what we want to achieve was for the men to see us as equal with them. When you tell these children that a woman can become a doctor or anything they want to become, you are in a way passing the same message that both sexes are equal. Does that answer your question?

C2: Yes, thank you.

T: Alright.

C3: Yes, thank you. I am Peter from Uganda. I have heard a lot from what you said. This situation is not only affecting Nigeria but also Uganda. I have two things. Not only two because there is a lot you have said but I will focus on two. First, there is what Kaida san described ... What does 'san' mean by the way?

O (and the floor): "san", like in a respectful way in Japanese...

C3: Thank you. So, there is issue of policy. A country makes or ratifies a policy but nothing happens. Why? I think you have to ask question, what is the rationale of this policy? Why do we make this policy? Is it because: 1. The policies are pre-conditions by donors for the country to receive aid and indeed countries must receive money to run their government? Donors have criteria for evaluating credit worthiness and will ask, do you have this policy; do you have this framework etc.? Countries qualify for donor support when they meet the criteria on the checklist. But this will not necessarily translate into actual implementation of the contents of this policy. And 2. When governments stay long in power, policy is no longer the issue of the donor requirements. It becomes 'what policy do I have to help me stay longer' and as a result of that, you find that there is a discrepancy between what the policy says and what is on the ground. And

if you are a person working with this policy, it is no longer whether policies are right or wrong. It is what they serve - the status quo. There are scenarios where policies are used to 'politically' manage current problems and the question becomes, 'what policy do I have to address the problem and how do I use the policies for me to stay longer?' This creates a discrepancy between what the policy says and what happens on the ground. Hence there is need to, if I may use the word, reconstruct the importance of the policy. The second question is from the factors affecting many parents especially young women. Since we are talking about what is right and wrong for the children, can adults themselves be perpetrators of sexual violence? Why am I bringing this? I have come across some girls, even at the university, where single mothers or mothers who have separated from their husbands and do not have enough resources to look after the children, try to negotiate with men who can provide for the school fees so that the girl now becomes 'a girlfriend' of the man who is making provisions for the girl's continued education. In a way, you have already compromised and taken away the consent right of the girl. So how do you deal with that?

T: Thank you, sir. Like I said in my paper, I used Nigeria as an example and Africa interchangeably because we have these issues. Am a member of, incidentally, am the Secretary general of the African Women Lawyers Association back home in Nigeria. And one of the reasons why AWLA was formed, you know, was FIDA (International Federation of Women Lawyers). I'm still a member of FIDA, was that when we go for seminars, conventions, abroad, we realized that although we are all women. But we have different challenges as Africans. When Prempeh said that the western women want freedom from marriage, the African women doesn't want freedom. She wants a more structured marriage institution that gives her freedom. You see, while the western woman wants political emancipation, freedom of rights and all that, The African woman was battling female genital mutilation, child marriage, the others don't have those challenges. And that was why the African Women Lawyers was formed. We have our indigenous problems that we need to put concerted effort, and you know bring to the fore. One of the things you said which strikes me is the issue of a mother negotiating the rights of their child. Because I did a paper last month and that was something about child rights. Children in Africa are seen as extension of their parents. They do not have rights. There is a popular proverb we say "children are to be seen and not to be heard". So parents actually take or make decisions on behalf of their children. And that is our own social context and that's where the problem lies because we have come to realize that children are miniature human beings. They also have feelings; they also have rights. And according to the different laws that we have made, they have all agreed that a child is somebody who is less than 18 years. So where a mother or a father negotiates the rights of this child before he is 18, that mother or father is guilty of infringing on the rights of that child. And in my context as a lawyer, we treat such a parent as accessory to a crime if a crime can be established and most often, we prosecute them. I handled a matter, where a 14-year-old girl was married off where Lagos state is the kind of state that pushes children's rights so much. We have a kind of structure that protects children's rights. Now this family with 8 children, married off the 1st daughter who was 14 years old, collected 100,000 naira. I don't know how much it is in yen but its less than 100 USD.

Audiences: 10,000 yen

T: So that was what they married her off. The man who married her off. The father was supposed to be prosecuted. But because we do not have shelter to keep the other 7 children, we opted to prosecute the father who collected the bride's price. So, these are the problems we face. There is a second question you asked that I wanted to address.

O: Because of time, let's pick a comment from Nigeria on Zoom. Lawrence, can you hear me? You can ask, please go ahead.

C4: Hi, thank you Dr Ogata. And Barrister Toyin or Toyin san, thank you very much for your wonderful presentation. My question is regarding Albinos. Sorry if it's a little bit of a digression from what is already being presented. There was a photo exhibition I attended in Ginza, Tokyo a few years back. We were online moving around the exhibition. I got to a particular spot and stood still, filled with concerns and curiosity. The image and caption held my attention at the exhibition for a while and up till now still resonates. That caption read "Africans are racist". So, I stood there to read what the photographer meant by that and it showed the pictures of Albino children scavenging for food from a waste dump. The photo Artist alleged that African women take more care of children who look like them. The Artist also wrote in the photo caption that in some African societies, Albinos are left to fend for themselves and more worrisome, not loved nor cared for as dark-skinned Children! What can you say to that and what is your organization doing to counter this provocative narrative? What enlightenment measures are in place especially as regards the protection and non-stigmatization of Albinos in African Societies?

T: Thank you so much Mr Lawrence. It's still part of a vulnerable person. Now, I would not want to agree with the photographer who said that Africans are racist. Let me tell you the context. You would have to understand that before modernity, there was an era when it was the survival of the strongest. The weak, you have to be strong to survive. Now our culture, it was not just about albino, even with people living with disabilities. They were seen as weaklings. When these things happened, it was as if they were not discarded or made to fend for themselves. But they were seen as people who couldn't fend for themselves, especially the people living with disability. They couldn't farm, they could not go hunting, they were like a burden to the society. A times, they get neglected. But we also must understand that we have a social welfare system. Albinos were not seen as a burden even, they were seen as special being that could be used to make money, am talking about ritual killing now because they believed that they and people with hunch back have this magic something to be able to make money. So, I want to disagree that they are racist. They were seen like Professor Prempeh Said, I hope I got your name right. If you take it in pieces, it wouldn't make sense to you. It has to be taken as a whole for it to be able to make sense to someone. So no, albino, we were not discriminating against them because of their skin color. They were seen as special beings from my own culture.

Post roundtable report

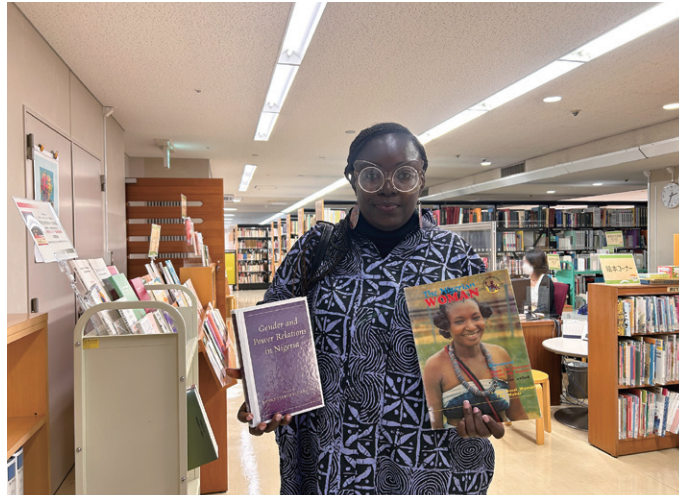


Taiwo-Ojo standing in front of the banner “Campaign to End Violence Against Women underway” at the National Women’s Education Center, 6th November 2024 Abuja

Toyin Ndididi Taiwo-Ojo

Upon arriving in Tokyo, Japan, I seized the opportunity to explore various landmarks, including the National Women’s Education Center. This visit profoundly impacted my understanding of the feminist movement. I discovered that in 1972, a group of pioneering women joined forces to advocate for women’s rights. Their relentless efforts over five years culminated in significant advancements, ultimately contributing to the freedom and liberty that Japanese women enjoy today. What struck me, however, was the paradoxical nature of Japanese society. Despite the relatively low representation of women in government, Japanese women seem to enjoy more rights and privileges than women in other societies where female leadership is more prominent. This observation led me to a profound realization: the key to gender equality lies not solely in the number of women in government, but rather in the political willpower of the government, regardless of whether it is led by men or women.

During my visit to the Nigerian community in Tokyo, I had the privilege of meeting a woman who has called Tokyo home for 40 years. Our conversation provided invaluable insights into the history and experiences of Nigerian migrants in Japan. She shared with me the humble beginnings of the Nigerian community in Japan and the remarkable ways they overcame initial challenges, particularly the language barrier. Her stories were a testament to the resilience and adaptability of Nigerian migrants. Our conversation also touched on the sensitive topics of



Taiwo-Ojo holding some of the books in the library of the National Women's Education Center, 6th November 2024

domestic violence and infidelity within Nigerian couples residing in Japan. She noted that while domestic violence is a pervasive issue in Nigeria, it is relatively less common among Nigerian couples in Japan. However, she observed that infidelity, particularly among Nigerian men, remains a persistent problem, albeit less overt than in Nigeria. These conversations not only deepened my understanding of the Nigerian diaspora in Japan but also highlighted the complexities of cultural identity, relationships, and social issues within migrant communities.

During my conversation with Nigerian men, I gained a different perspective on domestic violence and cultural dynamics within Nigerian-Japanese families. They claimed that, contrary to my previous understanding, domestic violence in Japanese-Nigerian couples is often perpetrated by the women. According to them, Japanese laws strongly favor women's rights, emboldening some Nigerian women to abuse their partners, knowing the men are unlikely to report the incidents. They also shared insights into the cultural differences between Nigerian and Japanese societies. Apparently, many Japanese-Nigerian children, especially those with Japanese mothers, rarely visit or return to Nigeria. This means that Nigerian men married to Japanese women often have limited involvement in their children's lives.

Furthermore, they noted that Japanese-Nigerian children often lack the cultural understanding of caring for their aging parents, as Japanese society provides comprehensive social security benefits for the elderly. Regarding domestic violence, one of the men who has lived in Japan for over 30 years stated that the Nigerian community in Japan typically attempts to resolve disputes internally before involving law enforcement, except in severe cases. Lastly, he observed that Nigerian men living in Japan have adapted to the local culture, embracing domestic chores and responsibilities unlike their counterparts in Nigeria, who often view such tasks as beneath them. Through this exchange, I gained valuable insights into Japan's governance, society, and culture. I was impressed by the country's unique blend of tradition and modernity. This experience also underscored the importance of cross-cultural collaborations in driving positive change and globalization. By engaging with diverse perspectives, we can develop innovative strategies for advancing women's rights and empowerment.



Taiwo-Ojo giving her speech at ILCAA, Tokyo, 9th November 2024

During the conference I was awed to realise that there is a Japanese researcher who has been coming to Nigerian as far back as 1989. In his presentation, Dr Kondo, talked on religion, especially how a lot of adherents believe so much in prophecies and its effect on daily living and activities. One of the implications of over-dependency on religion is the lack of determination and perseverance to see a business grow past its teething stage by owners who tend to veer into another business which they believe will be more lucrative and viable without realising that putting the same energy to be used in starting a new business into the old one could be more meaningful and even be the game changer. However, his presentation also made me realise the futility of over questioning some of these religious acts as some of the priests and their prophecies are sometimes 100 percent accurate, challenging every logical and scientific knowledge of things.

Another interesting part of the conversation was the research of Dr Shiino in Uganda where young girls because of poverty tend to date older men for money and even get pregnant, enabling a cyclic state of abuse and vulnerability for their unborn children. Dr Shiino's research elucidates on why the statistics of statutory rape of minors are not decreasing. The minors, who are not aware that they do not have the legal right to give consent, "willingly" seek out these men (perpetrators), mostly motorcyclists who out of ignorance accept, not knowing or caring that it is a crime to accept such offers from minors. Therefore, there needs to be adequate sensitization of these laws and the consequences of breaking them to affected persons. Perhaps most profoundly, my visit to Tokyo made me realise that there are multiple approaches to protecting women's rights, and that our current methods may not be the only – or even the most effective – way forward. This realization has inspired me to explore new avenues for advocacy and activism.

Listening to Dr Tamai's talk about police brutality, especially the young lady, Tina Ezekwe, was shot during lockdown in May 2020 and before #EndSARS, which was in October 2020 and seeing Japanese police stations very neat and clean as against the shabbiness of most Nigerian police stations has once again reiterated why, the welfare of police should be paramount and the training and retraining a must so that they can meet up to global standards of practice and proper management of crises and protests to avoid what happened at the Lekki Toll Gate in 2020, when numerous unarmed people were shot dead at an #Endsars protest.



Four discussants listening to Taiwo-Ojo's speech at ILCAA, Tokyo, 9th November 2024

Dr Kaida's especially perceptive research in Abeokuta and Kano, Nigeria on domestic violence made me understand the cyclic abuse of women with poverty as a factor and how it greatly underscores the importance of economic empowerment as a means of fighting and winning the war against domestic violence. It is imperative that the people of Nigeria understand the power that poverty wields in this fight and become very pragmatic and intentional about ensuring every girl child is educated and has a skill before marriage. It is also of importance that there is a concerted effort to sensitize men on the need to actually pull their weight financially in the home instead of abandoning these financial obligations to women because they know that Nigeria's patriarchal society frowns on divorce and more often than not, these women are forced to carry out these obligations rather than be taunted as a divorcee.

In conclusion, my visit to Tokyo was a transformative experience that broadened my perspective as a gender activist. I had the privilege of sharing the Nigerian experience with the Japanese audiences, highlighting the resilience and determination of our people in the face of challenges.

Kiyomi KAIDA

I am deeply impressed by Ms Toyin's passion for her work. It is a significant achievement that members of the community have started monitoring domestic violence and expressing their opposition to it. In a country where gender discrimination remains deeply entrenched, gaining the support of men within the community demonstrates the tangible results of her consistent efforts. During my time stationed in Abuja, I encountered several Nigerian NGOs supporting women and children. Many of these organizations were established by retired senior officials, politicians, or their spouses and primarily served as channels for aid distribution. In contrast, I was amazed by Ms Toyin's organization, which operates independently of politics, focusing purely on supporting victims. It is also inspiring to see that her efforts have drawn like-minded volunteers to sustain the organization.

Domestic violence is particularly challenging to address because it often remains invisible to

others, and victims themselves may find it difficult to speak out or may attempt to hide their suffering. Moreover, there is the risk of perpetrators threatening or harming supporters. I deeply respect the courage it takes to continue such work under these circumstances. In a country like Nigeria, where gender inequality is pronounced and discrimination against women remains pervasive, I believe there are many victims of domestic violence. I hope that Ms Toyin's efforts will inspire similar initiatives in other regions and lead to the development of a broader network to combat this issue.

Hidetoshi KONDO

The moment Toyin san began to talk about her experiences, I realized that she was among those courageous people I have seen in Nigeria and who never give in to the powers raging from an oppressive regime to corrupt police. I remember, there was a young man on a bus who refused to get off despite the order of the heavily armed police who purportedly inspected passengers at a checkpoint in order to extort money from them, and a silver-haired man who stood up for him and saved him by negotiating with the police as he was nearly dragged outside. I remember, there was a middle-aged lady who threw her reasonable anger toward an airport official by grabbing his necktie since her airplane had been delayed more than 24 hours without proper explanation being given (apparently this was due to the priority given to an informal arrangement for travelers making the hajj pilgrimage). And I remember, there was this friend of mine who helped me out when a secret policeman rushed into my room. As for Toyin san, she seems to overburden herself so as to help women and children deprived of human rights. I just hope she will deservedly be able to relieve herself from her work once in a while.

Shirabe OGATA

I would have gone to Lagos and would have researched what Toyin is doing for her community, what her community members are doing, and what is happening in the society if Toyin had not been able to come to Japan. But she made it. And I am sure her presence and voice were much more convincing than me presenting a paper based on my own field research would have been. Carrying out field researches is, of course, one of the essential parts of anthropological study, but as far as this project, "Emergence of paths in Africa," is concerned, Toyin was absolutely the right person to speak about the background and the prospects of the paths in Africa on behalf of her community. In her speech and her responses to thought-provoking comments and questions from Kiyomi, Takashi, Wakana, Hidetoshi, and the floor, we were able to learn various aspects of elements of searching for a better life under social crisis in Nigeria.

This was Toyin's first visit to Japan and even her very first travel outside of Africa. In spite of the long journey, jet lag, and temperature and humidity differences, on top of her participation in the roundtable, she paid visits to the National Women's Education Center and several Nigerian communities where she listened to the stories of some Nigerian immigrants including social issues with living in Japan during her 7-day stay in Tokyo. I hope this leads to further researches in Japan for her so we can collaborate again.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude for all help from the staff of the National Women's Education Center and the members of the Nigerian communities in Japan for their generosity during our visits and interviews as part of the research for the roundtable. Also, I deeply appreciate the patience of Toyin's family while she was not at home, her husband, her son and her three daughters as well as that of the staff of her law firm, and the members of the Stop the Abuse Against Women and Children Foundation.

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Co-host of the roundtable on 9th November 2024:

- ILCAA Core Project (Anthropology): Anthropological Inquiry of Sociality: Dynamics of Tolerance / Intolerance in Transcultural Contexts
- JSPS Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B): Anthropological Study of Emergence of Culture in the midst of Social Crisis in Africa (PI: Kenji YOSHIDA, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Grant Number: 23K20563)
- The Research Team for “Nigeria as an Emerging Power in Africa: A Comprehensive Study”, Research Institute for Social Sciences, Ryukoku University (PI: Takehiko OCHIAI)
- 94th ASC Seminars, African Studies Center, TUFS

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