

Perspectives on Feminism from Africa

Edited by

'Lai Olorode

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Dedicated to

Alhaja Sidikatu Alagbo, the Iyaloja of Iwo (Market Women's Leader of Iwo) Osun State, Nigeria and Vice-Chairperson of Iyaloja of Osun State for demanding recognition and respect as of right, and by virtue of her status, from the male-dominated political leadership of Iwo and Osun State, Nigeria.

and

Professor Olatunde Oloko (1931–2010), former head of the department of sociology and former dean, faculty of social sciences, University of Lagos, Nigeria, who reluctantly permitted the editor to pioneer the teaching of a course in Women's Studies in the mid-1980s.

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Series Editor's Preface

The *Carolina Academic Press African World Series*, inaugurated in 2010, offers significant new works in the field of African and Black World studies. The series provides scholarly and educational texts that can serve both as reference works and as readers in college classes.

Studies in the series are anchored in the existing humanistic and the social scientific traditions. Their goal, however, is the identification and elaboration of the strategic place of Africa and its Diaspora in a shifting global world. More specifically, the studies will address gaps and larger needs in the developing scholarship on Africa and the Black World.

The series intends to fill gaps in areas such as African politics, history, law, religion, culture, sociology, literature, philosophy, visual arts, art history, geography, language, health, and social welfare. Given the complex nature of Africa and its Diaspora, and the constantly shifting perspectives prompted by globalization, the series also meets a vital need for scholarship connecting knowledge with events and practices. Reflecting the fact that life in Africa continues to change, especially in the political arena, the series explores issues emanating from racial and ethnic identities, particularly those connected with the ongoing mobilization of ethnic minorities for inclusion and representation.

Toyin Falola
University of Texas at Austin

Preface

Africa could be described as a continent that is in perennial crisis. Its political and economic instability is public knowledge. The people of Africa have remained on the rough edge of this crisis of governance which manifest itself in corrupt enrichment of leaders and high levels of poverty. There is no sector that has been spared the agonies that have been the lot of Africa over the past few centuries. Indeed, scholarship has been fettered as a result. Critical discourse of the state and of the activities of core state actors were readily interpreted as treason. Gender discrimination was a dimension of this imbroglio. Women's work and their activities were regarded as inconsequential and invisible. Under those circumstances, their voices were routinely drowned. Those sympathetic to women's causes were regarded as rabble rousers or busy bodies.

African and Africanist (non-Africans who are nevertheless committed and sympathetic to the liberation of the people of Africa) scholars remain resilient in the midst of profound odds to stamp out feminism through their exposure of the realities that the African people encounter in their pursuit of subsistence. Progressive scholarship has now been aided and given an impetus by the unprecedented tempo of democratization that has been unfolding in Africa in close to two decades now.

The chapters that are contained in this publication are expressions of this new found freedom in scholarship. Those who had previously denied the relevance of feminist scholarship in Africa will discover, through this publication, its robustness in elucidating the struggle of African women who seek to free themselves from the vestiges of oppression through their diverse expressions.

'Lai Olorode
Abuja, Nigeria
March, 2012

Acknowledgments

In more respects than one, an academic work is a collective endeavour. An academic work is a process which has several stages, each step dovetailing into another, and at every point, collaboration is necessary. First, there is the stage of contemplating with colleagues those initial thoughts yet to be crystallised. There is the period of writing, first the initial drafts, then, the final draft, and then editing, proof-reading and the lengthy search for a publisher. There are people, sometimes post-graduate students or research assistants or even spouses, who assist in checking missing references or spelling mistakes and others who have to fill in all sorts of missing gaps. Of course, students are natural guinea pigs for testing ‘strange’ ideas in class.

Really, in the course of writing, there are also costs— some opportunities have to be forgone for the sake of completing a project. We also need other people’s cooperation in order to traverse the hurdles of academic writings. Our loved ones are denied unrestricted access to us while we cultivate scholarship. The ultimate satisfaction, though intangible, is that we are able to penetrate the mind of others and keep conversations alive. By this alone, we contribute to the burgeoning of civilizations and humanistic understanding.

I wish to thank all the contributors to this publication and Carolina Academic Press, especially Suzanne for her help in coordinating the work. Jessica did a good job as copy editor. Mr. I. O. Fakunle and Nurat Mustapha typed up the drafts. Tunde Ojedokun was helpful in inputting some corrections as indicated by the copy editor. I remain grateful to all who contributed in one way or other to the completion of this publication.

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