

Contributions to Political Science

Sharon Adetutu Omotoso *Editor*

Women's Political Communication in Africa

Issues and Perspectives

 Springer

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Women Emancipation and the Politics of Biography in the Narratives of Dr. Bola Kuforiji-Olubi of Nigeria and Princess Elizabeth Bagaaya of Uganda



Adedoyin Aguoru

Biographical Writings and Women Empowerment

Biographical writings are dominant narratives that describe lives. This category of narratives consists of personal experiences that are self-written (autobiography) and those that are written by other persons (biography). Biographical writings can also be described as portraiture of self or other. The fictional as well as non-fictional biographical writing became a popular form of the novel at some point, because the first-person narrative technique it employs enjoyed tremendous success at the great literary market. That it assuages a lot of curiosity about personalities substantively adds to its value. Furthermore, Berger (2010), tracing the discursive shift in African Biographical writings insists that African biography and autobiography thrives (32).

While the focus of this piece is not necessarily on feminist biographers, Jessica Wilkinson's asserts that 'Scholars have variously addressed connections between feminist theory and biography writing...' and this is germane (Wilkinson 2016: 1). In furtherance of this claim, Wilkinson alludes to Sara Alpern et al. whose study pre-establishes the restoration of 'invisible' women through documentation, which in its entirety enlarges perspectives of records. Personal narratives in contemporary times take on performative roles. To Alpern et al. '... the feminist revision of the search for knowledge has sent us to new methods and new places and has encouraged the hunt for new sources of insight into women's realities'. (1992: 263)

Dr. Bola Kuforiji-Olubi's and Princess Elizabeth Bagaaya's non-fictional biographical narratives portray certain shared experiences. Born in the same year (1936) and bred as royalty, the subjects of these works earned degrees in the imperial United Kingdom in the 1960s: Princess Bagaaya graduating with a law degree from Cambridge, and Kuforiji-Olubi with a bachelor's degree in economics from the University

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of London. Both women served their countries in national and international capacities; Princess Bagaaya as a Ugandan diplomat and Kuforiji-Olubi as Minister of Commerce in Nigeria. This comparative inquiry examines how biographical narratives explicate the making of female icons particularly in lives that have been robustly lived. It argues that it enables the celebration of the contributions of remarkable personalities who thereafter become recognized (where they were initially derecognized) and are ultimately emulated. The significance of backgrounds, educational experiences, experiences in the public sphere, gender relations in patriarchal contexts and the eventual emergence of Elizabeth and Bola as female leaders in contemporary Africa and the link between their lives and their socio-political histories are the kernel of this inquiry.

A cursory look at Mason's comparative analogy of the four earliest documented women biographical prototypes written by Dame Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Margret Cavendish and Anne Bradstreet (Mason 1980: 209) typify identifiable features of the earliest forms of female biographical writings. Mason, from these narratives, identifies portraits and significant beginnings of women's histories particularly autobiography written in English. Mason classifies the four under a distinct mode of interior disclosure and also describes them as '... a set of paradigms for life-writing by women right down to our time' (210). From her findings, it becomes even more evident that women desire to write about themselves as well as desire to have their lives written about. In Africa, Belcher (2016: 20) claims that *The Life and Struggles of our Mother Walatta* published in 1672 is the earliest book-length biography of an African woman. As it is in the case of Bola and Elizabeth, this self-revelation can be regarded as a universal crave, a reflection of several other intricate desires of a woman in seeking to be understood. Understanding does take place at some point in the biographical discourse as Mary Clearman Blew in Blew et al. shrewdly highlights the cruciality of being understood in the response of a reader to the subject of her biography:

Her granddaughter told me. "I'm so glad to have read her memoir because it gives me quite a different attitude toward Granny. I'd always thought of her as this arrogant, indifferent, cold person, and now I can see more about her life and understand more". (Blew et al. 2008:198)

Mason argues in favor of certain features she identifies in these four female biographical narratives. She avers;

...the self-discovery of female identity seems to acknowledge the real presence and recognition of another consciousness, and the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some other. This recognition of another consciousness – and I emphasized the recognition rather than deference – this grounding of identity through relation to the chosen other seems to enable women to write openly about themselves (1980: 210).

Julian and Kempe privilege the mystical tradition of personal dialogue with their creator, with Kempe portraying herself as having a multiplied sense of 'vocation': the wife, mother and the pilgrim-mystic. Julian writes as a puritan within the tradition of the spiritual autobiography, whereas Cavendish and Bradstreet in their narratives lean toward secular autobiography. While this effort is not necessarily to situate the Kuforiji-Olubi's and Bagayaa's narratives within these contexts, it is clear that

these feminine self-narratives portray similar role-play. Udu Yakubu, a renowned biographer is the omniscient narrator in Kuforiji-Olubi's commissioned narrative. One imagines the subject would have, at some point, narrated her entire life as she did see it before it was committed into writing. Bagaaya's name in the other instance appears as the author of the *African Princess*. She is also the subject of the narrative who also narrates her life as she did see it.

Suffice to draw an analogy that as in the case of the four different women who narrate their stories in different ways, the lives of Bagaaya and Kuforiji-Olubi portray differences and similarities in experiences, and the emphasis laid on the selected episodes is reflective of what is crucial to each of the subjects. Born within the same period, the narratives about their lives tell stories about the quest of the typical African woman to be emancipated in many ways as possible. Their narratives are therefore stories essential to them as individuals, essential to the generality of women in Africa or the African woman in the diaspora seeking higher educational qualification or career opportunities. More essential are these narratives to biographical and autobiographical narratives of women in Africa.

The contexts of women empowerment, offshoots of several movements, ideologies and theories are reflected in the entirety of the existence of the modern woman particularly in Africa. Despite the diverse and extensive writings on the feminist movements and writings in Africa, the emancipation of women is a common ground, which is seen as the ultimate tool for the liberation of the woman folk. According to Miedema et al, Women's empowerment is the '... process through which individuals attain 'the ability to make choices' under conditions in which choice was previously denied' (Miedema et al. 2018: 453). Narrowing it down to end in itself, women empowerment when promoted in communities is potentially endowed with outcomes that positively influence health, nutrition and childcare. When this is done, women take charge of issues such as fertility, prevention of intimate partners' violence as well as mitigation. The empowerment of women within this context is therefore '...a salient measure of social change ... and a priority embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (2018: 453).

As agency, the empowerment of women remains a 'key concept and major goal in development discourse since the 1990s (O'Hara and Clement 2018: 111). Strong narratives linking women's empowerment with productivity in all spheres of life have emerged since the 1990s, and these conversations have continued in theoretical, literary and biographical narratives (2018: 111).

Gender equality, a core element in the empowerment of women, remains a sensitive issue among the 17 points of The United Nations Sustainable Goals. Consistently rallying into prominence is the social and economic force driving the economic empowerment of women. The development outcomes across nations prove that gender equality is crucial to the boosting of economic growth (IMF 2018) The reduction of income inequality and the promotion of economic resilience and economic diversification among nations has been the United Nation's '... roadmap for ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring that all people enjoy peace and prosperity' (2018: 4). In spite of the progress recorded over the years, gender inequality persists as a

global avarice, several opportunities till date are gender driven, and women remain the greater sufferers in terms of recognition, benefits and most importantly wages.

The 2017 Taormina Leaders' Summit revisited with emphasis, the need to promote women empowerment, as a vital index for creating sustainable development. The essence of the effort is to commit leaders to mainstream gender equality and women empowerment into their policies and strategically tailor the policy intervention to national contexts (2018: 4). Emergent theoretical positions on women empowerment conceptualize it as being content specific and multifaceted (Miedema et al. 2018: 463). In terms of context, it really is an index for marking women's well-being, ability to attain their potential as well as a determining factor for women's health (2018: 463). This engagement therefore adopts a cross-national examination of the context of empowerment of two women and their behavioral outcomes across national, regional and global contexts.

Bonnie Smith's grandly written historical compendium on the changing lives of women from 1700 identifies the changes: theoretical, financial, economic, health related as well as literary perspectives on and about women across centuries. Historically, it establishes that women have, through determination, enjoyed diverse forms of emancipation (1989). This is evident in the manner in which women live and relate with the other gender, or create and recreate cultures. Historically, women have consistently pursued the resolution of the many conflicts that attend being a woman. Critical as well as recreated memories portray the interface of disparity in gender relations. In Smith's words, 'Over the centuries the idea of "woman" has signified something immutable, ahistorical, and constant' (v). These same elements account for the multiplicity of relationships, contexts of identity, stratification in, reproduction, and politics as well as the economics of financial empowerment. The kernel of this interrogation is a shift from the dominant arguments of the theorists on feminism and gender issues to the very urgent question of emancipation that makes it possible for the woman to achieve empowerment and equality in many realms of her existence and the ever changing construct of the society and how this is narrated. The significance of the female biographical narrative once again comes to fore. Women do not inhabit an inaccessible vacuum but daily nurture and influence their contemporaries. More significantly, women lay vital and crucial foundation for the younger generation. Narrating the lives of women documents the challenges, victories as well as the changing lives of women across generations.

The global declaration of the 'Women's Decade' in 1975 became the turning point of government policies and program toward women. Mandal (2013) describes the season as a point at which '...scholars, bureaucrats, and governments ... [began] to pay considerable attention to empowering women' (18). Though the challenges and realities associated with implementing these policies are hydra-headed, they evolve around the essence of empowering women, which is to encourage female participation in all ways. The position is that enabling women to have lives translated into a higher quality of existence; first for the woman and then the societies they inhabit (unwomen.org 2017).

Education has been lauded as the most important means of empowering the woman as it infuses skills knowledge and the self-confidence required in participating fully

in the process of development (UNEP 1994). Women empowerment thus signifies 'utilizing' power in women and girls, so that they can play significant social and cultural roles translatable in several senses; and an utmost importance to this study is political communication. The narratives of Bola and Elizabeth's lives typify women who have gone through these processes in spite of the challenges and odds associated with them before these processes became socially acceptable. It is in this light that their narratives remain instructive.

Tales of Childhood, Education and Womanhood

The narratives of Dr. Bola Kuforiji-Olubi and Princess Elizabeth Bagaaya tell childhood stories of growing up, family ties and the wholesome experience of 'becoming.' The early years particularly the happenings of the epoch are factors that would influence their sense of responsibility and the roles the women would later choose and be called upon to play.

The African Princess is an account of the early years up till midlife of Princess Elizabeth Bagaaya. The narrator portrays how her royal background and upbringing coupled with adherence to the mores of the land turn her into a successful, enterprising and unique woman. She enjoys the benefits of being royalty and an offspring of a wealthy king. She tells of the abundance of love and affection of her father, David Dudi Kyebambe of Toro, showers on her despite the fact that she is female. This instilled a high sense of esteem and self-worth in her. On one occasion as she fondly recalls and writes: '... my father forgot his kingly dignity and shouted my name in joy and encouragement' (Bagaaya 1983: 52–53). Her father proves his love for her by instilling discipline in her, and his position always was that a princess must never disgrace the Royal House (Bagaaya 1983: 35).

Unlike some royalties who saw sending their offspring to school as a punitive exercise, Elizabeth was made to undergo formal and informal education, and she was made to face the realities of life as the father ensured that she studied under the same conditions with other children in her community without any form of stratification. Bagaaya narrates how she and her classmates in Gayaza High School had made an attempt to embarrass a teacher who they did not consider proficient enough to teach them. Elizabeth, because of her proficiency in English language, was asked to lead the mischief-makers. When they were found out, the punishment meted out on them by the school authorities was a three-week suspension from school. In the palace, she received some spanking from the king who was really incensed and who asked '...how could, a princess bring down such disgrace on the Royal House?' (Bagaaya 1983: 35). This makes it evident that Elizabeth was allowed to mingle and grow up freely with her classmates and was as happy as an average child would be.

In her narrative, education for her exceeds the limits of the four walls of the classroom, it encapsulates instructions in skill acquisition, which she describes as

'self-help' (Bagaaya 1983: 33), morals and the totality of her heritage as royalty. She would later allude to these forms of education as her dominant pillar as she began to pursue higher studies. At Cambridge, she recalls, 'First, one's capacity as a young person is stretched intellectually, socially and emotionally. Second, the environment had an effect on the students such that everyone was drawn to excellence' (Bagaaya 1983: 51–52).

Elizabeth will again refer to sound education as the most appropriate way of equipping women for excellent performance and self-assertion. While serving President Idi Amin, she discovers a number of the men who were saddled with certain responsibilities were ill equipped. In one particular instance she observes, 'The exercise was destined to fail even before it took off. Most of the men were uneducated and became easy prey to manipulators...' (Bagaaya 1983: 160). She tacitly implies that her academic endeavors that earned her degree in law were responsible for her perceptions as well as her capabilities, which was acknowledged by the international community when she became a minister. She also describes her training at home as the source of her emotional intelligence. She did indeed bewail the emotional straight she was put in. In her words, she '...had been brought up never to make an exhibition of my sexual emotions...' (Bagaaya 1983: 112). This was evidently challenging as she did conclude when she was able to loosen up: 'I began to feel that I was a person instead of being always a sort of symbol with a public image' (Bagaaya 1983: 112).

Bola: An Indomitable Amazon is a fuller account of the subject's life. More than Bagaaya's, it begins from her childhood and chronicles, her professionalism at midlife and influence at work and in the community till her early old age. Bola, we are told, begins her education in the Emir's palace in Katsina, where she was tutored in English and Hausa languages by one of the queens. Bola's education was interrupted several times because she lived with several relations who had reasons to relocate several times and who often gave her enormous domestic responsibilities. Bola was determined to succeed in spite of the challenges she suffered wherever was home for her. Yakubu notes that 'Despite those stressful moments, her performance in school remained impressive' (2006:19). The rigorous domestic exercise Bola is involved in at a tender age kindles in her the desire to be diligent and to succeed. Becoming a teacher was therefore the first step in a direction that promoted acquisition and disseminating of education, a task in which she excelled. Yakubu portrays a keen person who desires to excel and attain heights that were unimaginable at that period. In her words, 'I was determined...'

...I was going to try as much as possible to make the most of the opportunities that came my way. The only way that I could do that was not to rest my oars as a teacher, but to further my education to the extent that I would be positioned to be economically independent of parents and family. (Yakubu 2006: 32)

Therefore while her contemporaries '...settled for some lower qualifications and would have been married with children' (2006: 47), Bola pursued education and made it to the United Kingdom, where she earned a degree in economics and acquired two

other professional qualifications: one as a Chartered Secretary the other as a Chartered Accountant. From Elizabeth and Bola's experiences, one agrees with Mabel Ewuirihoma that:

...Western education has set the African woman free to affirm herself to some extent in almost every walk of life, as it is evident in the trail being blazed by several women activists today. (Ewuirihoma 2002:109)

Bola, for instance and from Yakubu's perspective, has full consciousness that her qualifications and competence justify and are basis for the appointments she got. It is clear that her education had played significant roles in the national positions she attained. For example, she was appointed Chairperson of the United Bank of Africa in 1984 because she had the qualifications and Yakubu writes that it was unarguable, 'For it was believed that for the first time a professional economist and technocrat was appointed...' (2006: 130). Women emancipation in contemporary Africa has mostly been as a result of the 'essence of qualitative education based on positive mentoring, proper parenting...freewill and determinism' (Ewuirihoma 2002: 153). Akachi Ezeigbo corroborates this in emphasizing that education is vital in raising the consciousness of the woman (1998: 15). Education, which is key to national development, requires a nation laying a solid foundation for the education of its nationals, particularly women.

Bola and Elizabeth would further allude to their religious faith as another strong pillar in their journey, Elizabeth writes of how calming spiritual exercises were in her school days:

In my turbulent frame of mind, the school prayers at the beginning of each morning used to have a soothing effect on me before I had to face the daily pressure of academic work. (Bagaaya 1983: 41)

Bola in her case anchors her survival all through the turbulent years: narrow escapes from death and calamity upon her belief that some divine powers were on her side and that God had a purpose for her life.

Bola a descendant of a royal lineage continually celebrates her culture and indigeneous origin and is able to synchronize this with Western education. However, she understands and appreciates her culture and the cultures of other ethnicities as well as that of her country where she is awarded several chieftaincy titles across ethnic groups. As a child, Bola revered roles of the elders and was an obedient child who would hardly have a contrary opinion to her parents until her very mature years. Elizabeth, we are told, also deferred to her father and later her brother, Patrick Kaboyo who became king in his stead.

Maturation: The Venturing into the Public and Political Sphere

...Bidima's reflection on visibility in the public sphere in Africa focuses on the question of 'representation.' To him, the indices that should influence post-colonial states are diverse:

...consideration needs to be given to matters of ethnicity, to how new social classes are constituted, and the relationship between politics, religion and sexuality (2014: 61).

The contributions of Princess Elizabeth in portraying the dignity and uniqueness of Africans in the West remain immeasurable. Time and again she proved to be proud of her African roots and she displayed that home and abroad. She had notable achievements that brought her tribe and country to limelight. The most challenging of all was her work in government. However, she always sought opportunities to display her culture, and one of such was her presentation of a traditional African drum to the Sherborne School for Girls in Dorset, England, at graduation. Princess Elizabeth realized that she was presenting 'one of the world's greatest inheritances from Africa' (Bagaaya 1983: 44).

For the Princess of Toro, activities that surrounded the death of her father David Dudi Kyebambe of Toro and the coronation of her brother Patrick Kaboyo opened up a new phase. She integrated herself politically in Uganda hoping to work with her brother but was faced with the shock of President Milton Obote's tyranny. Shortly after the burial of her father and before the coronation of her brother, the Toro Prime Minister was informed that 'Milton Obote had arrested five of his cabinet ministers and Colonel Opolot, the head of the Ugandan Army, replacing him with Idi Amin' (Bagaaya 1983: 65). Kwame Nkruma, the Ghanaian President, had also been overthrown, and the strategic implications of these events were evident. On the day of the coronation, Obote abrogated the independent constitution of Uganda and deposed the President in a *coup d'état* in Kampala.

From Bagaaya's point of view, Obote had begun to exert himself dictatorially in Uganda. He was evidently jealous of the followership the new would-be king was enjoying. He proceeded to send the kings and their families out of their palaces rendering them homeless. She could not but state;

Obote was alarmed, specifically by my brother's appeal to the younger generation so he decided to strike the final blow. On September 7 1967, he abolished the Kingship of Toro, Bungoro, Buganda and Ankole (Bagaaya 1983: 72).

The abolition of the monarchy and the disregard shown this institution by the Obote government necessitated the Princess's self-exile in Britain. There she actively engaged in modeling, first upholding the Ugandan Culture, and at the peak of her modeling career, she ventured into a successful acting career where her engagements comprised acting and filmmaking. She starred in several films and she was the lead actress in *Sheena* and in a film based on Chinua Achebe's seminal novels, *Things Fall Apart* and *No longer at Ease*.

Princess Elizabeth's role as an international model was to effectively work as an ambassador of her nation. Her first modeling experience was for the purpose of 'raising funds for the eradication of polio in the Commonwealth' (Bagaaya 1993: 104) which Uganda was a member of. She clearly justifies her choice in modeling *vis-a-vis* taking up a career in law which she studied and was eminently qualified to practice;

My sole consideration in the making of the decision was which of the two careers would be the most effective way of symbolizing, projecting and thereby preserving the touch of my black culture... to make an important point, both to myself and to the world at large regarding my beloved country (Bagaaya 1983: 106-7).

She had what it takes to make an emphatic statement about Western airs of superiority and she took advantage of it. It is on record that she said:

A major consideration in making this decision was which career would be the most effective way of symbolizing, projecting and preserving the torch of my black culture... Modelling was considered a rather frivolous thing to do, and I had a hard time convincing my friends and advisers that it would help me achieve my goals. Modelling was a means to an end for me enabling me to make an important point regarding my beloved country, Beauty is not one's own but rather a reflection of one's people, one's country. It is an asset one holds in trust. At that time, a black model appearing in top magazines was rare. I wanted to destroy the myth of white superiority in terms of beauty and sophistication (New African Magazine 2011).

Drawing from the above assertion, Elizabeth's choice of modeling could be classed as her way and manner of communicating politics. In this case, her political communication strategy affirms her loyalty to her nation as well as the peoples of Africa. She equally serves a cultural reference point to Africans in Diaspora.

General Idi Amin on January 25, 1971, staged a successful *coup d'etat*, which ousted Milton Obote. With this change in the political climate, temporary normalcy was restored to Uganda. Amin called for exiles to return to Uganda and lifted up a lot of bans and restrictions that had been placed by the previous government.

In Kampala the prevailing mood was one of sheer euphoria. Amin had lifted press restrictions...had invited all the hereditary rulers back... (Bagaaya 1993: 116).

Princess Elizabeth was appointed a roving Ambassador in Amin's cabinet; this put an end to her exile and acting career. Her diplomatic career was a huge success, and without doubt, her academic qualification and professionalization ennobled her diplomatic relations. This earned her promotion as well as recognition within the international community and she rose to the level of Foreign Minister. She attended several conferences where her position impressed a more positive image of Uganda and Africa especially on matters relating to international relations, and very often the focus was on the Ugandan versus the imperialist agenda within the international community. Notable among these was the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, UCLOS2, fitly incorporated into the political discourse of the *African Princess*.

Undoubtedly, Elizabeth's greatest impact was in diplomatic relations. With a Head of State that was infamous, Princess Elizabeth served as the light of Uganda both

as roving ambassador and Foreign Minister. She was particularly dynamic when conflicts peaked between Uganda and other nations or international bodies, like the railway crisis between Uganda and Kenya (Bagaaya 1983: 156). Princess Elizabeth approached diplomatic relations with exactitude. She negotiated within the spaces she occupied and took it upon herself '... as Foreign Minister to arouse confidence abroad, to soothe hostilities, and to encourage state visits' (Bagaaya 1983: 166). Her poise and her capabilities were of great benefit to Uganda particularly because she was representing a nation that had a controversial Head of State. She was also particularly eloquent, and all her speeches were marked with great conviction and persuasion. One of such speeches was the catalyst required in securing a loan for her unpopular country at the Arab League.

She remained loyal to the Amin-led government until President Idi Amin made several allegations against her, the foremost being her insensitivity and her unresponsiveness to his interests. This led to her incarceration and her subsequently proceeding on another self-exile until the Amin Government was overthrown. Princess Elizabeth of Toro through her narrative not only tells her story but also portrays her involvement in the history, social life and politics of Uganda. *The African Princess* covers the period of Elizabeth's childhood through her academic pursuit, career and rounds off on her post self-exile years and her marriage.

Bola: An Indomitable Amazon essentially portrays Bola as a professional who becomes a political figure because of her intelligence and assiduousness. In 1976, without prior contact with the then Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo, she was appointed Chairman of Ogun-Oshun River Basin Authority (OORBDA) (Yakubu 2006: 63). President Obasanjo having seen her performance that early in her career, recommended her to the subsequent Head of State for a ministerial position: it had become evident that she had excelled in diverse ways in the entire portmanteau she had been privileged to handle. Her qualifications coupled with her assiduousness and absolute dedication created more opportunities for her in the public and political sphere. She was appointed as Chairman of the United Bank for Africa (UBA), elected as the first female President of Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), invited to represent Nigeria as a prominent business person at the 50-member Business Council for Sustainable Development (BSCD) and she was, before the end of her career, appointed a Member of the Interim National Government to head the commerce and tourism portfolio.

Bola recorded outstanding results, which transcended Nigeria and affected the continent of Africa. As the Chairperson of OORBDA, job creation and food availability became attainable, and the projects she embarked upon provided employment directly and indirectly for thousands of people. Her administrative activities at the dam projects and agricultural sectors were areas that provided employment. It is on record that by December 1979 the senior staff strength for the first time rose up to 72. In embarking on agricultural projects, she had took cues from nations whose economies depended solely on agriculture. By November 1978, 1450 kg of grains per hectare of maize was harvested in Ilaro, a vegetable garden and a maize plantation were set up in Abeokuta, a cocoa plantation of five hectares of land where kola-nuts, citrus, banana and plantain were cultivated, and a fishery was also set up.

Irrespective of the initial stiff resistance that she faced from the men she had to work with as Chairperson of the United Bank of Africa (UBA), Bola and her team placed the bank in the forefront both in Nigeria, Africa and in the international community. Under her leadership, the bank was regularly placed on the number one spot in the country (Yakubu 2006: 142). As of this time, the bank rose to the position of the third largest bank on the African continent and in the July 1986 issue of *The Banker*, it appeared as the only Nigerian Bank that was rated among the first five hundred banks in the world. The bank had begun to show tremendous promise growing in assets and policies that further endeared it to the nationals as well as the banking sector. Between 1986 and 1987, there was sharp increase in staff strength to match the projections of expansion. According to Yakubu, 'in subsequent years, the growth had become rather astronomical' (2006: 143). Her style of leadership created jobs and monitoring ensured that there was requisite output from the employees. In Yakubu's words 'If Bola ever desired an opportunity ... to rewrite the story of the women folk in Nigeria, that opportunity came as her appointment as the Chairman of UBA.' In many different ways she changed a lot of many Nigerian women through her position in the UBA.

Through her attitude and comportment, she demonstrated that 'the endowment of intellect is not the prerogative of the male sex and that women are a necessary force without which dreams of development would crumble' (Yakubu 2006: 161). In the bank, she became a role model and mentor to many of the female staff; she motivated them greatly toward personal development. She encouraged the ambitious among them to take up professional courses in higher institutions in the state and federal universities in Lagos State. Several of these women proceeded as far as master's degrees and professional degrees like Master in Business Administration (MBA). She played diverse mentoring roles formally and informally, prodding many of those she mentored into professional practice and membership of professional bodies like Nigerian Institute of Management where she was a first female member and later a fellow.

Under her, the structure of the bank and the banking industry began to change rapidly as deserving female members of staff were promoted to ranks and management positions previously occupied only by men. At this time, a woman became the Managing Director of UBA Trustees Limited, a subsidiary of the United Bank for Africa, and this was also unprecedented. Beyond the corporate world, Bola began to recreate the UBA public image to promote and accommodate women. Beginning from the UBA slogan which ab initio had been 'Wise men bank with UBA and women too with UBA' (162), Bola practically disbanded the conspicuous lower stratification of the woman by changing it to 'Wise men and women bank with UBA.' The repositioning of women in financial matters was thus greatly acknowledged by the women folk. Her inauguration of the UBA Women's Forum was to concretely promote women empowerment. It began as a customer relation program designed for and only attended by women but snowballed into the start of a new era for the women folk in Nigeria.

The following excerpt from an appreciation letter written to her by one of the women portrays the level of impact, her commitment to the forum she had established had on the women of Nigeria.

I wish to start by expressing how impressed I am by you as a person. Your enthusiasm, foresight genuine interest and dynamic kind thought for the plight of women of this county in organizing that forum ... the revolutionary stride you have initiated will go a long way into change some aspects of the banking system, not only in Nigeria but in other developing countries. It is wonderful to have an opportunity for women to gather in such a number and discuss ways of improving their lot and their financial predicaments ... with allies of your caliber I can sight the dawn of a new day in the struggle for women's uplift (not women's liberation) in the country. I have interacted with a lot of women during the days of political campaigns. I share their agony of abject poverty. Your interest in the womenfolk is real and you approach your work with enthusiasm and determination... (Yakubu 2006: 164).

Clearly, the women's 'uplift' in rural and urban areas was the biggest impact of Bola's professional life. The UBA women's forum was an uncommon innovation. It captured the attention of the cream of the society who also shared the burden of womenfolk. The then first lady, Mrs Maryam Babangida attending the forum is quoted to have said:

I pray that you bear in mind our marginalized people, particularly the rural women. You should endeavor to rescue them from the hands of money lenders ... encourage them to use banks and ... have better to access to finance their activities (164–5).

From that point onwards she collaborated with the wife of the President of Nigeria, Maryam Babangida, on her existing national projects: MAMSER, Better Life for Rural Women and the Women's Trade Fair. The credit scheme for rural women (CSRW) was launched and became the most outstanding innovation of Bola at UBA. It was the peak of culminating successes giving UBA unprecedented publicity and popularity leaving popular comments in its trail. Over 120 cooperatives and groups were established with organized credit facilities transforming Nigerian women to medium and big business owners.

Locally and internationally the scheme received great applause. For instance, the African Development Bank acknowledged the innovation and immediately proposed sending observers to the forum '...to gain insights into the "novel developmental approach" in Nigeria' (169). The World Bank sent a delegation led by Mr. Jasdiq Singh representing the World Bank Women in Development Commission based in Washington. The aim of which was to '... discover the initiatives the bank had taken in banking as it relates to Nigerian women and to identify possible areas of collaboration between the World Bank and UBA.' Singh upon his visit described the scheme as commendable and globally unique. The Canadian High Commission and other agencies began strategy sessions with Bola seeking collaborations on the scheme. In 1990, the Canadian Government invited Bola to meet with individuals and organizations that were willing to collaborate as well as explore other trade opportunities with Nigeria (169).

Bola's industry, the staggering management and business image could not but arrest the attention of royal fathers across ethnic groups in the country several of

whom gave her titles commensurate to her industry. Oba Yesufu Ashanike, the Olubadan of Ibadan in Oyo State conferred her with a prestigious title; *Asiwaju Iyalaje* of Ibadanland literally meaning ‘the Leader of Businesswomen in Ibadanland.’ The Governor of Oyo State in his good will message on her installation ceremony remarked that he had followed her successes and enviable achievements in the business world, which he claimed, made him proud of her. He specifically referred to her contributions to the economic and social transformation and her comportment and carriage which in his words ‘... contributed immensely in giving the women folk in the country a new image which is doing our great country proud’ (171–2). Oba Sikiru Adetona, the Awujale of Ijebuland, installed her Otunba Ayora of Ijebuland. The Alake of Egbaland also installed her as the first Suada Egba. Notable Kings in Calabar and Imo and Cross River states conferred three other titles in recognition of her impact on the society in rapid succession (171 and 172).

It is intriguing that she remains humble despite her significant contributions. Bola is quoted to have said:

My tenure as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the United Bank for Africa (UBA) stands out as the golden opportunity for the employment and the crystallization of knowledge acquired in all my professional pursuits and perfected by real life and work experiences (173).

One is also impressed that she regards the awesome responsibilities she bore as a golden opportunity, which she seized to contribute to the success of her society. Irrespective of her posture, Bola had become a voice in the Nigerian economic sector and beyond. The media engaged her and used her opinion as headlines in contentious issues. The media sought her opinion, and international bodies and other governments also sought her opinions. For examples, the *Daily Times* of September 30, 1985, reported Bola’s view on the contentious IMF loan in a caption, ‘IMF is Way Out.’ She had contacts with visiting Canadian business people to Nigeria and provided them with answers to specific issues that concerned them.

Bola was unanimously elected 25th President of Institute of Chartered Accountants of **Nigeria** (ICAN). As the first woman to occupy that position in the history of the institute, her mission statement was crisp and to the point:

I will continue to acquit myself creditably and relentlessly for professional excellence and greater achievement for the Institute and mankind in general, while making contributions to the nation’s economic recovery (182–3).

Bola being result oriented swung into action; as the president of ICAN, she was expected to be the forerunner in protecting the interest of the body and she did. Under her leadership, ICAN accomplished a lot, and it ensured that down to the grassroots level of government officials was sanitized about economic and financial ethics. Other significant appointments that she graciously bore include the representative of Nigeria on the 50-member Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD) based in Switzerland and membership of the Interim National Government. She performed excellently in the 50-member council, and this made room for her in the United Nations among other societies. Bola took advantage of these platforms to promote Nigeria and Africa and was indeed a worthy ambassador in all regards. She

time and again impressed it upon the G8 in particular to have relationships that will be beneficial to the Third World countries.

Bola continually forged ahead despite the political instability in her country. One would, in fact, see her as a stabilizing influence in the political economy of Nigeria particularly during the military era. After the June 12, 1993 crisis, Bola was appointed a Member of the Interim National Government, and she was assigned to commerce and tourism. The contradictions the ING constituted notwithstanding, Bola proved her 'faith in one nation' by accepting the national assignment and put in her best until the government was overthrown by another *coup de etat*. Her dedication portrays the will of an individual in driving a national course and not ethnic ideologies.

The successes of Elizabeth and Bola in many regards enabled other women to envision the capabilities inherent in women, thus assuming their rightful places within their societies, which had not trusted women with such responsibilities ab initio. The subsequent years witnessed pressures to allow equal opportunities to women from the grassroot to the government and from the private to the public spheres narratives of whom ought also to be documented for posterity.

Suffice to quote Bidima's perspective on the politics of narrative:

The notion of narrative is important for the constitution of the democratic sphere because to be subject to law is to see oneself defined by a word: that which separates, and that which accompanies and reconciles. Moreover, democracy is above all a narrative, as it is there that the subject speaks, and narrates the arrival of the law, discord and connection... to say and to narrate in a free space is the foundational stories of democracy—though not without handicaps and imperfections... (2014: 75).

Press Battles and Images of Bola and Elizabeth in the Media

Bola and Elizabeth's greatest moments were documented by the press. Though not as influential and penetrative as the social media and other forms of media in contemporary times, the media outfits, particularly the print media concurrently documented factual and notional impressions about the women most especially because of the groundbreaking and path-finding roles they played in their generation. They ostensibly captured the moments and were sharp responses to the audacity of courage exhibited by Bola and Elizabeth.

The male dominated media, being an influential source of information and communication, truly reflected the patriarchal influence of the generation on female activities. The role the media played in providing information for the general public and also publicizing public opinions is therefore dominant in reportage on Bola and Elizabeth. For instance, Bola who had played unprecedented roles in her country as a woman could never escape the scrutiny of the media. The media was instrumental in publicizing her feat. The media reported her achievements with admiration because she surpassed the limits the society had placed on women and womenfolk. Headlines of the reportage include: 'Lady Succeeds Expatriate as Boss of a Firm,' 'Nigerian

Woman Appointed MD' (Yakubu 2006: 64), 'A Woman Industrialist and Chairman of the United Bank of Africa...' (Yakubu 2006: 154) and 'Achievement for Nigerian Womanhood' (Yakubu 2006: 59).

Very often the media was used to slander her and report the challenges she had in her marriages. One of her ex-husbands gave a magazine a full interview about living with her as her husband. Bola just like her global counterparts had to contend with diverse societal notions and opinions sponsored and promoted largely through the media. It definitely was a source of discouragement particularly to women treading 'men's path.'

In Princess Elizabeth's case, we find a similar context. There were two major allegations against her by several magazines and newspapers across Europe. First, they had alleged that she was expecting a baby when she had not even got married. The second was the circulation of the photograph of a nude model posing. This image made the rounds as her image in spite of her claim that she was not the model. To Elizabeth, propaganda '...repeated often enough...takes a ring of truth, at least in the mind of the public' (Bagaaya 1993: 208). Princess Bagaaya's vindication was that all the allegations were found to be baseless, and apologies had to be printed in newspapers and said in the open court.

These women used their lives in portraying the African womenfolk in a new light. Their expressions of boldness and audacity to pursue have given impetus to the African woman of their age and in contemporary life.

Conclusion

Non-fictional biographical writings have the wherewithal of assuaging the curiosity of people about persons regarded as enigmas and icons. Uncannily, it unravels how a person, and in this case, the womenfolk is able to perform feats. Blew et al. (2008) affirm that most people hold a popular opinion that 'if that person was able to get from one end of life to the other, there is hope for [them] me in the end' (196). In her opinion, the fact that a subject got from one end of the day to the next, managed, survived, absorbed blows, picked up and went on typifies what the biography narrates. She therefore concludes that '...biography gives us hope.'

Biographical narratives especially that of ordinary people lends even more understanding and gives more hope. The other angle is the role it plays, an important media and medium of documenting and preserving narratives of the lives of persons who lived remarkable lives; who were famous in their lifetime and whose significance and memory have faded. Biographical narratives, particularly narratives of women, bring individuals and their significance back to life reinforcing the significance of their personalities and the contributions to the period in which they lived. This also makes the narratives sociological. Biographers also do the service of pushing specific subjects to the reading audience. Researching about a life and writing about person does suggest that they are important in very many ways.

The drive behind women emancipation in Africa is to enable women engage their freewill. The patriarchal society necessarily made up of families and communities impose patriarchy as a way of life, suppress women and deny them of their rights. The responses to these challenges portrayed in the lives of these two African women have to a certain extent engendered the gradual eradication of gender-based prejudices at all levels of social stratification, largely due to the veritable catalyst of sound education. Ultimately, biographical narratives of women in public spaces have hitherto not been situated largely within feminist perspectives of political communication in Africa and would be hoped to be engaged as such henceforth.

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