

Fatima Adamu



[African Feminist Thinkers: Our Voices](#) [1]

I have been teaching at the Department of Sociology, Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto since 1986. Since then, I have been involved in research and teaching on gender issues at local, national and international levels. I have secured some research funding on women and health, women and decision making and women and religion, women and the state etc. I have also done some consultancy jobs for national and international bodies on developing National Gender Strategy, Promoting women's rights under Shariah legal system, and gender mainstreaming.

My teaching experience in the area of women/gender started in 1988 with the introduction of two courses at undergraduate level titled 'Women in Society' and 'Sociology of the Family' by the Nigerian University Commission. Since then I have been teaching Women in Society except the periods I was away for my studies. However, my participation in the 1st International Conference on Women in Africa and African Diaspora in 1991 that took place in Nsukka, Nigeria was for me the 'it' that introduced and gave me a wider picture of gender and feminist studies. Imagine a young junior, inexperienced and unexposed lecturer in a mist of renowned African and Black Women and Feminist scholars and being courted by them to support different positions (White versus Black, Western versus African, plus men versus women only) that emerged as a result of conflict that erupted the first day of the conference. As I listen to the papers and reflect over the conflict that erupted over the presence of white participants at the conference, I said to myself I must read more theoretical literature on women and feminism. Thus, the incidence at WAAD conference was the eye opener for me. It introduced me to the politics of positioning and difference in global gender and feminist studies and activism and transformed my views on the need for women/gender studies to be political.

My membership and participation in a network called 'Network for Women Studies in Nigeria (NWSN)' has greatly sharpened my knowledge on women and gender studies. The inspiration I got from the NWSN workshops is the need for the production of knowledge on women and gender studies in Africa. I became sensitised on the need to challenge and question some of the western driven concepts and theories that are imparted as knowledge in Africa. At the workshop I was introduced to the contributions of such great African scholars as Amina Mama and Obioma Nneameka. I hope to start working on a book project on gender studies in Africa

for the benefit of our undergraduate students in Nigeria. My exposure to books on my society (Hausa) in university libraries in Britain and my displeasure with the interpretations of some of the materials further strengthened my determination to remain in gender and women studies field. Another inspiration is the label one bears in the university by being seen as a feminist and women activist. This is a label I strongly feel I have a responsibility to protect and promote through teaching, research and community service. A Hausa proverb says 'a person with a burnt body cannot be afraid of the smell his charred body'.

My biggest achievement is acting as a role model to others and to be able to use my knowledge on gender studies for political purposes such as championing women's issues at both the levels of my extended family, community, and the state. Another achievement is the institutionalisation of women and gender studies in Usman Danfodiyo University. There is a course in Gender and Feminist studies in the Department of Sociology as part of our postgraduate programme. The Department of Geography is running a Masters programme on Gender, Environment and Development that was introduced by Prof Dora Shehu and where I play an active role. Currently, the Usmanu Danfodiyo University is planning to establish a Centre for Gender Studies. To crown it all, what I cherish the most in my near two decades of teaching women and gender studies related courses is when both male and female students begin to appreciate the 'other' perspectives of viewing women and gender issues that I teach them.

As I reflect over my achievements and challenges, I wish for more synergy between the knowledge we produce through research, and impart through our teaching and our activism. We need to connect more and establish a political relationship with the teeming women's population of Africa whose life have changed little as a result of our three decades of women and gender studies in Africa. Every gender/women studies body in Africa should have a community as constituency for action, different from the issue based approach of our current gender practice.

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