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bers of women folk are elected into leadership positions where they can effectively participate in decision making processes'.

Joy Ogwu in her presentation argues that the issue of gender oppression must be looked at from the view of a synergy of an economic and political points of view. According to her, the most significant obstacle for the woman is basically economic. Women's limited participation in politics, she contends is an expression of their being economically underprivileged.

The impact of government sponsored women's organisations forms the kernel of Abiodun Idowu's contribution in the third chapter.

Margaret Vogt examines the military and women in politics and concludes that the military in Nigeria by its culture and orientation is not used to operating on equal terms with women hence the difficulty of accommodating them in government.

'The military probably without deliberately doing so, has entrenched a system bias against the extensive involvement of women in government, because they themselves have evolved through a strictly sex-segregated world.'

Onowummi Ogunsola and Adesina Sambo examine in the succeeding two chapters the related issue of women in Intra party politics and Women and the struggle for elective office during the transition period. Both address the difficulty of the woman politician in making a breakthrough in intra party politics having to run against a structural operation dominated by men which is not too sympathetic to the cause of women.

Sambo concludes: 'the lesson from the experience of women's struggle for political power in the aborted third republic is clearly that the chance of success in elections are contingent upon the effective control of the structures of political parties.'

This, she added, must be aided by the adoption of affirmative action, which is supposed to be a government-initiated advocacy for the special rights of women. Mary Kanu signs off the section with an examination of the role of the media in the campaign for women empowerment. She blames the media for under-reporting women politicians, but also enjoins the women to invest in publicity like their male counterparts.

In the second part, the reader encounters some of the key players in the struggle for women participation in the politics of the Nigerian Third Republic. Quite a revealing profile except that these were silent on the less than complimentary role some of them played even against some of their own. Often times, oppression is made possible only by the complicity of some members of the oppressed class. It is interesting to note that in spite of the many odds against them quite a number of women made significant contribution to the political process.

Some of these women no doubt will serve as an inspiration to others wishing to follow in their steps. But the reader might want to know if Glory Kilanko of Women in Nigeria (WIN) is a politician or pro-democracy activist. She did not belong to either of the two government sponsored parties. She probably would have been more useful in the book as a resource person on the role of women-focused NGOs. This is a piece of work that goes beyond the usual sloganeering, a well contrived document that should ginger the desired response from both the 'oppressed' and those who serve as their oppressors.

- Adeniji is a literary arts reporter with the Guardian of Lagos.

Write Me From Iowa

Chukwuemeka Ike,
TO MY HUSBAND FROM IOWA.

The major interest is in the writer's response to America, to chat shows, women priests, party politics, the treatment of American Indians and of writers, to library facilities, super markets, and so on and so forth. Other considerations, for example the persona's Nigerian citizenship and Anglicanism, contribute to individuality. Given the 'Author's Note' and the tenor of the chapters, the
The presentation of the writer picking up ideas and becoming aware of new responsibilities are the most interesting of the book. But even they are pursued in a somewhat dilettante way so that even the undertaking to interview fellow participants is never pursued rigorously. All in all the book remains on the level of a well-written travelogue to be read with pleasure, and with admiration for the careful way in which facts and experiences have been shared. One can enjoy the asides, the notes that are jotted down for the attention of those in Nigerian universities and governments. One can be surprised by figures and learn some history. There is a 'gentlemanly' understanding that these factual elements will never amount to anything as substantial as a programme or as intellectually challenging as a thesis.

While there is, despite the decision to speak through a female persona, nothing earth shaking in Ike's new book, there should be admiration for a job well done, and thanks for insights into life in the United States and on a Writers' Programme.

Metaphors of Womanhood

Bose Shaba


The River will become a tongue. Under the tongue are hidden voices. Under the tongue is a healing silence. I see the river. I see Grandmother.