

Gender, Power and The Politics of Memory: Weaving 'Just' Into Transitional Justice in Nigeria

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Abstract:

Recognizing gender-conflict intersections, the vulnerability that is institutionalised by patriarchy renders women most affected during periods of repression and systematic human rights violations. This study takes a historical approach to problematise Nigeria's 1999 Oputa Commission from women's perspective. By discussing how issues are prioritised amidst nuances of the politics of memory, the study analyses present-day transitional justice processes in conflict-ridden Nigerian communities, especially the northeast and northcentral zones. It presents an intercourse between the academia and civil society to build practical methodologies for policy environment to connect ideas with deployment of resources for integrating women into transitional justice initiatives. As a descriptive and prescriptive study, the hair metaphor of "weaving" alongside the idea of 'symbiotic interactionism' is deployed to discuss how to bring the 'just' back, in matters of transitional justice. Ultimately, the work argues that understanding transitional justice from a gender perspective is power itself.

Keywords: Gender; Oputa Panel; Power; Politics of Memory; Weaving; Transitional Justice

Introduction

Closely linked with conflict resolution, historical memory, social justice and peacebuilding, transitional justice (TJ) captures either fresh or stale events. It is restorative in nature, as it aims at getting appreciable justice for the wronged; retributive in trying and bringing criminals to book; and memorial in its process of acknowledging, exposing and documenting the past (Elster 2004). While emphasizing the need to right wrongs across aggrieved communities, the process of transitioning from grief, pains and losses experienced during conflicts/crises, to peaceful coexistence is a long and complex one requiring strategic communication (Omotoso 2015). Engaging communicative principles for social justice (Omotoso 2020a) are expected to result in reconciliation, peace and stability. These rely largely on reflection, documentation and the will of

governing bodies to effects outcomes of such processes to the letter. Subsequently, by taking up cases of infringement and charting paths for healing (Nagy 2008), Teitel (2003) avows that transitional justice connects with internal political transformations based on genuine responses to redress transgression that emerge over a period of breakdown of law and order in a community (Roht-Arriaza 2006). Bearing all these components in mind, post conflict societies consider reconciliation as key to peacebuilding (Rigby 2001; Ojedokun & Ajayi 2015). Despite widespread accord on the necessity of transitional justice, in Nigeria, limited attention has been paid to gender in transitional justice issue and processes; for instance, how are issues ranked as important? How much attention is given to the nuances of the politics of memory? Whose history, whose memory? Whose voice is heard or not heard? Who is mainstreamed, and who is 'otherised'?

With a pervasive notion that truth-seeking and truth-telling are foundational to community healing, one wonders if all wrongs can be put right including psychological and biological outcomes of rape, displacement and loss of loved ones. These for women and girls in conflict-torn communities, connects with possibilities of irreconcilable goals amidst more complex issues connecting with justice (Leeblaw 2008). Reckoning with a wealth of literature that affirm how transitional justice processes could risk or reinforce exclusion of certain groups (Chinkin 2003; Mertus 2004; Bell & O'Rourke 2007), we argue in this work that facing the past in transitional justice could risk the exclusion of certain persons/groups. We appreciate the complexities of exclusion in TJ and how it complicates 'justness' in the expectedly reconciliatory outcome for women and girls. Consequently, we briefly examine Nigeria's past attempt at transitional justice to navigate a future TJ which will not be a lip service amidst the ever-rising ethnic conflicts and terrorist attacks since the 2000s.

Given that Nigeria is not a standardized case in TJ discussions, our focus on Nigeria examines failures of the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission, popularly known as the Oputa Panel and attempt to reveal that Nigeria hold much potential to illuminate new perspectives in preparation for the unavoidable TJ processes across conflict and/or terrorist infested parts of the country. With the idea of 'weaving just' we conceptualize gender justice through a historical approach; looking at a brief narration of the 1999 Oputa panel from the perspective of the rights of women and the role played by civil societies. We do this by interrogating present-day transitional justice processes in northeast and northcentral Nigerian communities experiencing exclusion, conflict, displacement and loss of livelihood. From these, we establish that it is not primarily about whether and how women remember differently, but also about how their experiences are different, and therefore produce other narratives and memories than those that are centralized in existing processes.

Following sections of this study will provide a brief analysis of the 1999 Oputa panel as a case study for transitional justice in Nigeria; historicise TJ in Nigeria, highlighting the politics of memory; and, draw lessons and proposals from trends in civil society knowledge about practical methodologies of weaving 'just' back into transitional justice in Nigeria by integrating women into transitional justice initiatives.

Understanding TJ via the 1999 Oputa Commission in Nigeria

Transitional Justice (TJ) refers to the ways countries emerging from periods of conflict and repression address large-scale or systematic human rights violations so numerous and so severe that the regular justice system will not be able to provide an adequate response (ICTJ 2017). The UN Secretary-General characterized transitional justice as the full scope of components which may incorporate both legal and non-legal strategies, including global entertainers at an alternate level or none by any means, and indictments, truth-chasing, compensations, institutional changes, verifying and excusals (Secretary-General 2004). Along these lines, temporary equity stresses two expansive thoughts; retributive and therapeutic justice. Retributive justice underlines bringing to account culprits of common liberties infringement while therapeutic equity centers on the casualties of infringement and how to address their passionate, financial and social requirements through remuneration, pardoning and compromise (ICTJ 2017).

From an ethical viewpoint, Krotoszyński (2017, 12) describes transitional justice as “the concept of justice which is concerned with the treatment of the wrongdoers and the victims of human rights abuses conducted before a liberalising political change.” Describing transitional justice from legal/non-legal perspective, Mani (2002) avers that it involves addressing “the structural and systemic injustices that led to conflict” through reparation and compensation. With reference to the value of transitional justice, the United Nations Security Council (2004) held transitional justice valuable in its being past- and future-oriented. Yet, Krotoszyński (2017, 12) notes the interconnectedness of the various perspectives to transitional justice stressing that “through political decisions the values are transposed to legal and social institutions” (Krotoszyński 2017). In the conflict management sense, TJ should be locally driven to achieve reconciliation in a just manner; it must be process-driven, rather than outcome-driven, it would factor cultural diversity and negotiation.

Studies on Rwanda, Sierra Leone and South Africa also affirm a systematic operationalizing of gender in transitional justice (Oomen 2005; Manjoo 2009; Oostervel 2012). Following the Rwandan massacre, transitional justice measure was set up likewise to help mend the injuries made by the emergency. Two level methodology (philosophy) to transitional justice was set up; The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (a unique global court) and Gacaca courts (a local area put together methodology for preliminary base with respect to standard laws). The huge development of the Gacaca conventional strategy was its capacity to attempt almost 2,000,000 cases within a brief period. To manage the unusual issue of overseeing situations where enormous number of its residents were blamed for cooperation in wrongdoings against humankind, it was important to receive an unpredictable technique, basically dependent on the Rwandan customs, to speed up public compromise, harmony, control exemption, and advance the way of life of law and order and regard for basic liberties (Duthie 2008). The Gacaca court framework offered an option in contrast to temporary justice component, in any case, the issues that Gacaca courts confronted, however basic, were not impossible. The analysis zeroed in on unreasonable preliminaries, debasement, uncouth adjudicators, and legal favoritism.

The shortcomings of the cycle were over misrepresented contrasted with its positive effect on the nation of Rwanda (Kirkby 2006).

Sierra Leone experienced common clash which went on for a very long time. The conflict left numerous individuals assaulted, thousands executed, ruined and tormented. By 1999, the Government and the Revolutionary United Front (a radical gathering) consented to the Lomé Peace Arrangement (LPA), a nonaggression treaty which tried to end the common conflict and build up Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In June 2000, President Tejan Kabbah set up the commission. By 2002, the TRC presented its last report which found that defilement was the essential driver of the common conflict. Most of the culprits were adults and the casualties were largely ladies and youngsters. The regular infringements were constrained removals, kidnappings, discretionary detainments, killings, pillaging, and plundering. Likewise, progressive government's maltreatment of the utilization of capital punishment and crisis power additionally added to the discontent and possible clash. The Commission, in this manner, suggested intentional battle against debasement, creating another bill of rights, freedom of the legal executive, reinforcing of the parliament, stricter control of the security powers, devolution of force and local financial independence, the incorporation of youth and ladies for political cooperation and the foundation of an organization to carry out repayment programs. The Lomé Peace Agreement conceded amnesty to all groups in the contention which were maintained by the commission (Millar 2011).

In South Africa for example, to manage the post-politically sanctioned racial segregation period, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up and designed in a court-like way. The TRC was set up by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995. The consultation meetings were communicated live on public TV to advance awareness among its kin. Notwithstanding the imperfections credited to the TRC, it was declared effective (SAHO 2011). The Truth Commission reported criminological records of infringement that cannot be questioned. The records confirmed various instances of assault, torment, political deaths, death in confinement, and the consuming of people alive by the politically sanctioned racial segregation government. Albeit the TRC could not have mystically joined the country however it assisted with mending some torment and forestalled the re-visitation of political viciousness, accordingly, establishing a solid framework for harmony and peacefulness in South Africa (Chapman 2007).

From the foregoing, scholars have registered skepticisms about processes, systems and approaches to transitional justice. For instance, Kasapas (2008) assert how limited and deficient trials, truth commissions and reparations could be, despite their being useful tools for achieving the goal of national and individual reconciliation. Gready and Robins (2020) argue that the evidence base of transitional justice is weak; as the idea is over-burdened and under-conceptualized. Ojedokun and Ajayi (2015) note the inability to curtail persisting enmity and bring perpetrators of human rights crime to justice as a major tailback in TJ.

The Oputa Panel represents one of Nigeria's attempts towards transitional justice. The

Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission, popularly known as the Oputa Panel was constituted on June 14, 1999. The Panel chaired by Justice Chukwudifu Oputa was charged by President Olusegun Obasanjo (who came from prison to the presidency), to review past authoritarian regimes and the human rights abuses in order to address human rights violation and cases of abuse, foster national cohesion and establish Nigeria's burgeoning democracy. The scope of investigation spanned from 1966 to 1999 when Nigeria began to settle into democratic rule. The commission's mandate was to explore common liberties during the time of military from 1984 to 1999. This was to be done by bringing clashing networks together to establish common freedoms breach and instances of abuse under Nigeria's military system then to pursue compromise of the different communities and groups so that peace accords between various Nigerian communities may be developed to achieve institutional changes (Nnamani 2011; Pilay and Scanlon 2007). By considering the encounters of survivors of the military system, the commission could only hear 150 of up to 10,000 casualty memories including workplace violence, human rights violations and other forms of deprivations that were gathered. It became a source of entertainment for the nation as viewers were glued to their TV, fascinated by some of the gory details unearthed. These exposed the personality of persons associated with violations (Bakiner, 2016) as the report revealed "information and proof, that the military was basically answerable for the tirelessness of common liberties infringement in the nation" (HRVIC 2002). Among the cases prescribed to be examined were the homicide instance of Dele Giwa, Chief MKO Abiola and Chief Kudirat Abiola (Oderemi 2005). Of the many personalities invited to the panel, very few including President Obasanjo, General Oladipo Diya and Major Hamza Al-Mustapha (Abacha's Chief Security Officer) showed up. General Muhammadu Buhari, General Ibrahim Babangida and Abdulsalami Abubakar deliberately ignored the commission's call with disdain (Solanke 2012). This attitude upset human right lawyers and a host of Nigerians masses (Isaacs, 2001) and contributed to setbacks of the panel. Also, the commission suffered inadequacy of finance and sufficient time to cover the many petitions brought to it. Assessing the Oputa Panel, Nwagwu (2006) held that, the order of the commission was counterfeit and not possible inside the period characterized by the terms of reference. The Commission exceeded their deadline of 90 days because the allotted for the task was inadequate (Guåker 2009). Besides, the commission needed clear and complete legitimate instruments for implementation. Government was also accused of taking sides with the military elites by constraining the commission's autonomy and subsequently disappointing Nigerians with the outcome (Akinterinwa 2001). Overall, the Commission's reports showed that the Nigerian publics were all the while requesting equity. The volume of the petitions submitted reasonably attests that Nigeria is troubled with numerous uncertainty and deprivation. Although the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission was one of the main popularity-based action taken since independence to go up against injustice, it was marred by leadership's unwillingness to see the process through.

The commission presented its last report to President Obasanjo in 2002; it was not until 2005 that the report became public knowledge. It was released not by the government who set up the panel in the first place but two dissident groups, the Nigerian Democratic Movement and Nigeria-based Civil Society Forum (Bakiner 2016). The government suddenly realized that the Oputa panel was unconstitutional and proclaimed that only states had the powers to set up tribunals. This made it difficult for anyone to do serious business with the outcome, including the gender analysis that would have exposed the level of commitment to gender justice among others. Moreover, there has been no visible attempt to address the issues to date.

The politics of memory: the 'who' questions

Memory as cognition is the capacity to store and retrieve information. It may be classed within the private sphere since it connects with innate interpretation of experience which may be recalled when triggered, yet scholars have also noted the possibility of misremembering (Wang & Wang, 2003). The implication is that should personal memory be distorted, collective memory often augments it so as to make sense of what is being recalled. This allows the personal to become political without a clear grasp of its import, even though as feminists argue the personal is always political (Hanisch 1970). Still, personal memory risks being subsumed into the collective, specifically considering the status and personality of persons involved in the process of recall and retrieval. Politics of memory may be explained within procedures of controlling, organising and supervising how events and incidences are remembered. Rufer (2012) identifies two levels in politics of memory; first is state politics of memory, which approaches past injustices from judicial-political point of view including setting up public agenda to discuss the violent past, enactment of public memorial ceremonies, and establishment of museums among others. Second is the non-governmental approach to politics of memory, which involves civil society organisations, Human Rights Groups and international agencies who speak for the unheard masses and brings their cases to limelight. In both instances, institutions proffer how emotions are remembered, forgotten and/or silenced.

This introduces the 'who' question raised by Omotoso (2013) to weigh a person's worth against the power s/he holds in determining what reaction will be elicited. By extension, this raises the need to explore not only the personality of the 'who' in question, but to also factor in gender and class (Omotoso & Faniyi 2020) in the discourse of politics of memory. Memory in TJ becomes political as subjects relive and relay painful experiences with no assurance of redress. That the Oputa Panel unearthed memories of violence, suffering, deprivation and loss is not a problem, what is worrisome is whose history and whose memory was prioritized at the hearing? How are issues ranked as important in processes of transitional justice? Within contexts of memory-distortion, 'false memory' and 'forgetting', either personal or collective, politics of memory brings political agents into TJ processes in unprecedented ways, allowing them to use power and influence to determine how experiences are recalled and how events are documented and/or discarded.

Suffice to say that memories of several epochs in Nigeria's history have been largely politicized. The Biafra war of 1967-1970, the Maitatsine uprising of 1980-1985¹, the Ogoni killing of 1995, and more recently, the boko haram insurgencies (2002-date) are each laden with the masses' versions against government versions. Equally notable is the need to reiterate how historians, storytellers, artistes, writers and public commentators among others present these cases. Works of Akachi Ezeigbo, Chimamanda Adichie, Chinua Achebe, Obafemi Awolowo amongst others on Nigeria's history and many more tell various versions resonating with memories and memorials. It then brings to bear the 'who' question in multiple dimensions including, who memorializes? Who documents? Who determines how things are to be remembered? That the Oputa Panel left several issues unattended not only bred disgruntled citizens, but also called attention to many other silenced groups including minority ethnics, people living with disabilities and women.

Herstoricizing TJ in Nigeria: TJ Beyond OPUTA PANEL

In a country of diverse people like Nigeria, with a population of over 200 million people (2012 estimates) the politics of memory often reflect deliberate structuring for forgetting thereby determining how injustice would be addressed and how history would be written. The way and manner with which Nigeria's attempt at transitional justice was undertaken under President Obasanjo's administration brought critical eyes to enable a gender lens in the discourse.

Within the limits of the Oputa panel, not many women were allowed to present their cases. Women are more likely to remember events differently from men because of how they are caught within such events; the implication is that women's memories may not correlate with collective memory. Women also run the risk of being ignored, misconstrued, and reconstructed within the collective space under an assumption that their fatalities are already captured within men's losses. The argument here is that when personal memory faces collective memory some things are cast off, suppressed, or even recast. Subsequently, some histories deliberately sidetrack the memories of women, and these have considerable impact on how justice is served.

Beyond Oputa Panel, historicising TJ in Nigeria, has shown key trends of voice, inclusion and justice with gender connotations. For instance, from south-south region of Nigeria, the "fish farming businesses of women in the riverine areas such as the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria are often threatened by oil spillage (yet these are downplayed) "on grounds of being feminine and lacking rational basis" (Omotoso 2019, 35). Reports from the farmer-herder crises ravaging the middle-belt and parts of south-west Nigeria shows how women and girls are drawn in through rape, abduction and other forms of violence. The Boko Haram crisis which has continued to ravage mostly the northern part of Nigeria has taken various tolls on women, from using young girls as arms and food stuff carriers to recruiting them as suicide bombers thereby feminizing terror in Nigeria (Onuoha & George 2015, Bawa 2017).

Boko Haram insurgency which menacingly threatens national security has recently evolved a

gendered dimension laden with victimization of women for sexual gratification and other domestic purposes (Zenn and Pearson 2014), to recruiting women as suicide bombers (Marks 2014; Bloom 2010; Bawa 2017). Resulting from these are internal displacement, death of loved ones, deprivation of women and girls from educational facilities and more. These effects of Boko Haram insurgencies bring on memories of various sorts which have been addressed by Government and Civil societies.

Government interventions have included provision of camps for internally displaced persons (IDP Camps), food items and healthcare services. Civil societies have also contributed in the form of relief materials, psychosocial support, media engagements, series of advocacy programs, petition writing among others. Development programmes and civil society are asking the questions; whose voice, whose narrative whose experiences are prioritized (Salihu & Hadiza 2021).

Weaving just: A civil society perspective to integrating women into transitional justice initiatives.

When justice systems exclude women or downplays their memories, it indicates inadequate spatial spotlight as a manifestation of social exclusion whose outcome is social injustice. Spatial spotlight prioritizes how women are positioned across spaces and how this connects with their welfare and holistic emancipation for positive transformation (Omotoso 2020a, Badru & Omotoso 2014). To this end, “to conceive of space as gendered requires that we look at those permissions and restrictions that are placed on men’s and women’s access to certain spheres of cultural life” (Ajisogun & Omotoso 2018, 98-99).

Symbiotic interactionism becomes a theoretical structure for weaving ‘just’ into transitional justice. Symbiotic interactionism is a pragmatic ethical standpoint proffered for the sustenance of a wide range of issues such as grassroots governance, women in leadership (Omotoso 2020c), intra-feminist partnerships, social inclusion and social justice (Omotoso 2020a). Founded on the principle of collective ideals and tactics for attending to women’s encounters of violence and systemic oppression, a synthesis of the terms symbiosis and interactionism suggests partnership and support which collapses gender-based barriers and places premium on social processes as products of human relations between actors seeking to accomplish group goals (Omotoso 2020c). Within TJ discourse, stakeholders are to consider all as necessary elements whose memories cannot be swept under the carpet if transitional justice must be effective.

Therefore, weaving ‘just’ in the context of this work embodies TJ by conceptualizing it within weaving metaphor in alignment with earlier scholarly works on hair (Omotoso 2018, 2020b), and tapestry work (Salihu & Mahdi 2010). Here, we present the industry of weaving as a public good “valued by humans, particularly cherished by women, and can be owned by individuals without hoarding. [In a sense, weaving whether hair or cloth] “can be non-rivalrous as its availability to one does not deprive others” (Omotoso 2020a, 123). ‘Weaving’ thus becomes “a foundational claim to our cultural traditions and legacies of women” (In Conversation 2015, 86), productive time -use, occupation that centres women’s industry, and by its combined intrinsic values as a social and economic good; it also becomes an act of healing.

Within our civil society perspective to integrating women into transitional justice initiatives, we propose a consideration of the following.

First, is the need to recognize the intersection of gender and conflict: Those most affected by conflict and its resultant effects of displacement are women and children. The men are either dead, conscripted or shamed into leaving by a ruthless patriarchal norm, which labels a man who cannot provide for his family, as a failure. Again, the vulnerability institutionalized by patriarchy renders women most affected. It will be difficult for a woman who has never been to school or 'allowed' to engage in paid work all their lives to swim when unexpectedly thrust into the murky waters of a sole provider. Understanding the intersection of gender and conflict requires research on conceptual evolution linked to policy. Traditional concepts and stereotypes of who/what is a household head, a breadwinner, the weaker sex; have become challenged and are inadequate to explain the experience of disorientation and denial, which requires transitional justice interventions. As is also necessary for government, civil societies measure emerging indicators of a safe space, the sex for food tragedy unfolding at the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, along with a lack of basic amenities necessary for a life of dignity for every displaced person, especially women and girls. A framework which explains the new power relations thrown up by conflict is essential to crafting a response that will be just and adequate to plan for the lives affected.

Second, is the need to understand power and powerlessness: At the heart of understanding, TJ from a gender perspective is power itself. Power dynamics in the narrative of the offended versus the offender can be relational and transferable; it could strip the person violated of their victimhood. A colleague once narrated an instance of a man seeking redress before a TJ court in East Africa for the rape of his wife. The husband argued that harm was done to him because his wife was raped, as spite to his dignity. He was, therefore, the primary aggrieved. The question is; what about the voice and dignity of the person who suffered the violation directly? If patriarchal norms relegate her experience to a secondary location because she is considered the property of the man, is that Justice?²

Thirdly, will a bifurcated lens be needed to understand abuse and violation? In the TJ issue process, how is an issue defined as important? Where do we locate the constant violence against women in the domestic sphere, or their experience of exclusion in the political sphere – massive instances of exploitation, injustice and indignity? One in every three Nigerian women has experienced violence. Surely that is a mass violation. Certainly, if we were to go by numbers, it would count, but it does not. Boko haram insurgency would however count. While not in any way denigrating the import of displacement on anyone's life, civil society engages how the power to amplify or to diminish experience is wielded, and this is something that should be of concern to gender analysts watching the transitional justice space.

Fourth is weak psychosocial and physical care necessary for closure in TJ process: Closure is essential to humans. Civil Societies work to show the true and final state of affairs and not

necessarily the propaganda engaged by government structures. As a part of the rite of passage of pain, this belief is demonstrated in the importance of burying the dead, no matter the nature of their demise. Closure is not an event; it is a process which begins from awareness that one's experience matters and has found empathy; that a person has the right first to feel they are victims before they can begin the transition to the desired state of a survivor. If victimhood is not given, survivorhood will be hard to attain.

Fifth, accountability and redress are crucial: For TJ to be effective, it must be rooted in accountability and redress for victims. It is not enough to declare that the goal is 'total reconciliation' as was the federal government's goal for the Oputa panel. The process must be a safeguard for the future and proof of the commitment of government and society to 'never again' allow such atrocities to happen.³ When rights are violated whether through state oppression or genocide or at an Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) Camp where safety nets are supposed to be provided to people running from persecution, it is a bad deep, long torturous personal experience. When state responses are designed, however, they come across as quick fixes, with a palliative distribution of relief (which should be a first and not the main aid) and quick narrative snapshots of what happened. For gender it is an add-on, shake over or stir in approach and seldom an analytical perspective on the design of the intervention. Therefore, in the personal versus collective memory, herstorizing TJ points attention at what happens when a person remembers an event differently from how others remember it, and particularly when that person is a woman.

Conclusion: Attention to the Visible and the Invisible

Within the descriptive and prescriptive framework of this study, we have spotlighted the othering of women within TJ drawing examples from Rwanda, Sierra Leone and South Africa. With a specific focus on Nigeria's Oputa Panel, we established how the voices of women was suppressed and has remained so within emerging conflicts and crises across parts of Nigeria. Within the frames of Boko Haram insurgencies ravaging the northeast and northcentral Nigeria, the politics of memory has been shown to submerge, women's personal memories into collective memories which is often the crafting of the state. We introduced the theory of symbiotic interactionism which allows for a weaving (as found in women's craft of the hair and clothes), of intents, voices and action towards the achievement of gendered TJ. Such an approach suggests a mix of studies from the academia, investigative journalism, photography and advocacy to assert and preserve women's memories, activate agency and influence policies, thereby ensuring that any TJ does not suppress the voices, experiences, memories, needs and aspirations of women and girls, seeking justice, fairness, peace and progress.

Overall, this study recognizes that if conflict is inevitable, then transitional Justice remains unavoidable. As the article has shown why it is important to pay attention to the nuances of the politics of memory while also mainstreaming gender into the processes, it becomes pertinent for women to participate at every stage of the preventive, protective, promotion and prosecution

stage of peacebuilding. As a multi-stakeholder process, government agencies need to be trained and retrained, such that indicators to measure gender responsiveness are in place. This in turn calls for independent monitoring evaluation with lesson ploughed back into design from the stage of design to reintegration. The telling should inform social learning and discourse across generations and States' response should not be presented as an event that diminishes the memory of the experience of violation. Furthermore, civil societies must also watch out and guide the State, to prevent drama and theatre built around the telling, from overcoming the substance of what the survivor tells. They must help ask the questions; and so what? And so, what next?

Downplaying women's experiences in TJ heightens their vulnerability. It reiterates assertion that "vulnerability is not a function of what a person or group lacks, but a question of what oppressors seek to either ignore or cultivate in society, in order to sustain their oppressive roles" (Omotoso 2020a, 126). In the manner with which Tunisia called its own TJ platform, the Truth and Dignity Commission,⁴ dignity matters as civil society helps government to put the 'Just' back into justice, in matters of Transitional Justice.

Endnotes:

1. See Isichei, E. The Maitatsine Risings in Nigeria 1980-85: A Revolt of the Disinherited. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 17 (3) (1987): 194-208.
2. Conversation on a Panel on Transitional Justice at IPSA conference, Brisbane 2018.
3. <https://www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice>.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tunisia-politics/tunisia-truth-commission-says-many-rights-abuse-cases-yet-to-reach-court-idUSKCN1R7245>.

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