

1 **WOMEN, NIGERIAN NATIONALISM AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES:**
2 **INTERROGATING THE NEGLECTED, 1900-1960**
3
4

5 **Abstract**

6 Nationalism and political activities were the cornerstone of group and national
7 consciousness amongst the citizens of Nigeria. These struggles, which went through different
8 phases, were not carried out solely by men, as most available documents would have us
9 believe. The extent and the nature of women's involvement in these struggles were
10 determined by the needs arising out of a particular history and the nature and length of the
11 struggle itself. Adopting subaltern and African feminist theories, the paper relies on
12 documentary evidence to demonstrate that the protest movements women engaged in during
13 the period under study were nationalist in orientation and involved in political activities as
14 well. The paper finds that Nigerian women crystallised a nationalist struggle by strategically
15 emphasising the need to question the link between the political policies, forest ordinances and
16 regulations, and monetary policies of the colonial government and authorities, and the impact
17 of these on their lives and those of their communities. In conclusion, the paper is a revisit of
18 an important period in Nigerian history and of women's experiences and contributions during
19 that period.
20

21 **Keywords:** *Women, African feminism, Nationalism, Nigeria, Subaltern theory*
22

23 **Introduction**

24 Nationalism is associated with patriotism, a citizen's love for their nation-state.
25 Nationalism is used here to mean "the consciousness on the part of individuals or groups of
26 Africans, of membership of a nation-state either already existing or to which they aspire, and
27 of a desire to achieve political and economic development as well as the cultural revival of
28 that nation-state" (Boahen, 1970, p. 2). In the Nigerian context, this love began as protest
29 marches in the first decade of the twentieth century. It was ignited by the people's social,
30 political, and economic grievances, including those of women. On the other hand, political
31 activity of women is used here to mean "women's effort to influence the allocation of
32 resources and values in their communities by appeals to the leadership and their own
33 participation in that leadership" (Mba, 1982, p.ix).

34 There are several approaches to classifying Nigerian nationalism. However, it seems
35 that two of these approaches are more common. The first is the holistic single-phase

36 approach, as may be seen in the works of eminent scholars such as Ajayi (1962, 1964),
37 Ayandele (1966), Olusaya (1973, 1980), and Alagoa and Enemugwem (2015). This approach
38 has illuminated Nigerian history and the channel through which nationalism passed in its
39 journey to independence. This, in turn, has helped in no small way to diminish the effect of
40 any due emphasis on a water-tight periodisation in the history of Nigerian nationalism.
41 Worthy of mention about this approach is the lack of emphasis on women's roles.

42 The second approach is the two-phase approach popularised by Coleman (1958),
43 namely the earlier or primary resistance and the later movement or nationalism in the true
44 sense. According to him, "between the collapse of the Congress Movement in the early
45 1920's and the arrival of Nnamdi Azikiwe in the late 1930's, there was comparatively little
46 nationalist activity in Nigeria" (p. 201). He puts the latter movement in 1948 during "the
47 provocative constitutional proposal of Governor Sir Arthur Richards and the emergence of
48 the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons and the publication of its Freedom
49 Charter"(p.308).

50 Coleman's categorisation has far-reaching consequences for the rise of nationalism in
51 Nigeria. Firstly, it focuses more on the influence of external factors, including constitutional
52 developments and political parties, on the rise of Nigerian nationalism. Secondly, it tends to
53 treat nationalism as a phenomenon that ended at independence, once self-determination was
54 achieved. Thirdly, in treating lightly, and labelling as primary resistance all that happened
55 before the turning point in 1948, important events were disposed of from the mainstream of
56 nationalism, since nationalism was seen as a purely political phenomenon and not as a
57 complex phenomenon in which socio- economic, socio-cultural aspects developed side by
58 side and provided the main push for the political factors. Lastly and most importantly for this
59 paper, like the single-phase approach, the two-phase approach pays little or no attention to

60 women's contributions, which mostly fall under Coleman's classification as primary
61 resistance.

62 However, contrary to what is generally held about the role of women, they participated
63 effectively in stimulating the rise of Nigerian nationalism. They took part in several aspects,
64 but the most outstanding include socio-economic, socio-cultural and political aspects.
65 However, because of Coleman's two-phase approach, these protest movements have been
66 treated lightly, rather than as epochal events that provided major props for the political
67 factors. That women have a history worth researching and documenting is no longer
68 debatable, hence the emergence of women's history. Women's history is used to include "a
69 reconstruction, a retrieval of women's experience, expressions, ideas, and actions and their
70 ongoing functioning in a male-dominated world on their own terms" (Irom, 2019).

71 The Nigerian society, being a patriarchal one, clearly manifests the social
72 categorisation of women as being inferior to men and, therefore, not capable of or suitable for
73 a position of leadership (Irom, 2023). This was the situation for some communities even
74 before the incursion of colonialism, when women had token representation on the Oba's
75 council in Yoruba land, with the Iyalode or Erelu representing women's interests in a council
76 comprising mainly male title chiefs (Awe, 1977). Also, the Onu and Ada in Igbo land have
77 some political and religious influence (Williams, 1992). The dominant Islamic tenets and
78 traditions in the Northern parts of the country ensured that women were not accorded any
79 visible political rights or participation in society (Lebeauf, 1963; Mba, 1982).

80 The introduction of electoral politics in Nigeria in the 1920s under colonial rule, with
81 a limited franchise based on property and economic standing, ensured that women were
82 disfranchised, as colonial officials regarded only men as heads of families and controllers of
83 production. According to Mba (1982), the reason for this was that "the British administrators

84 worked for a government in which there were no women at any level, and therefore they did
85 not expect or wish to find women involved in government” (p. x).

86 Thus, for the most part, the literature on Nigerian nationalism and political situation
87 has pursued the subject mainly from male-centred perspectives. This did not, however, mean
88 that women did not contribute to the political process at all. The paper attempts to reconsider
89 some aspects of the role played by Nigerian women in both nationalism and political
90 activities that culminated in independence. This focus on women is necessary to redress the
91 imbalance in the treatment of women in Nigerian historiography, since these protests were
92 not unique in themselves but rather part of a historical pattern. Subaltern theory as adopted in
93 this paper is hinged on Antonio Gramsci’s (1971, p. 54) reflections “...on a research
94 programme on subaltern historiography which has not been recorded by historiography.” In
95 this paper, the subaltern becomes both a socio-historical category and a perspective of
96 observation (Das, 1989), thereby redressing the exclusion of women in Nigerian nationalist
97 historiographical accounts. African feminism, apart from acknowledging women’s
98 contributions to knowledge creation and the emergence of new ways of learning about the
99 world of women, their interpretation of that world, and their experiences in society, has also
100 been shaped by African women's resistance to Western rule (Mikell, 1997). In particular, in
101 the colonial era, African women fought side by side with men and communal perceptions
102 were encouraged as African women were part of nationalist struggles against colonialism
103 (Mama, 1997). This was possible because African women had a different starting point, as
104 their roles grew from a long tradition of female integration into collective structures. Hence,
105 the African feminist perspective is broader, encompassing the communities and societies
106 from which they come and in which they live.

107

108 **Women and the rise of nationalism in Nigeria**

109 Women of southern Nigeria traditionally had an important place within the socio-
110 political structure of their communities. This traditional social power of women, supported by
111 specific women's societies, was eroded by the imposition of British colonial rule in the
112 second half of the 19th century, characterised by a male-oriented leadership, ideology, and
113 structure (Henn, 1984).By the 20th century, women had been ousted from their primary
114 political and administrative functions in society. Their only stronghold remained in the local
115 marketplaces where the traditional women's organisations continued to be the leading force.
116 With regards to the socio-economic aspects of Nigerian nationalism, Nigerian women began
117 as early as the 1920's to question the basis of European exploitation.This, in turn, produced
118 mass reactions from the traditional women's movement against the colonial government's
119 attempt to encroach on their economic base. They demanded justice and fair play as part of
120 the nation-building process and resisted, even unto death, acts aimed at poor living and
121 working conditions (Irom, 2022, 2024).

122 Since 1901, women in the southern part of Nigeria have combined nationalism and
123 the struggle for independence with attempts to address the colonial administration's socio-
124 economic policies and their impacts on women's status and quality of life. The formation of
125 the Lagos Ladies League by Mrs Charlotte Obasa to combat infant mortality and malaria by
126 distributing quinine to children points to women's integration into collective ventures that
127 impact the community. Although the League declined in 1908 as "an active but private
128 adjunct to the Medical Department" (Tamuno, 1966, p. 304), it was reactivated in 1923 under
129 a new name, Lagos Women's League, and its activities now went beyond mere providing
130 medical services. They criticised the colonial government for failing to provide housing for
131 its African officials, failing to provide the scope for employment for both educated and
132 uneducated women and failing to provide more schools for girls, since "both sexes must be
133 equally and fairly educated in order to ensure a true nationhood" (Mba, 1982, p. 220). The

134 League spearheaded the agitation against the government's proposal in 1930 to close down
135 Ikoyi cemetery for Africans because there was no room left, and in 1931, the policy was
136 reversed.

137 The government proposed retrenchment in the civil service in 1934. Mrs Charlotte
138 Obasa led 500 members of the League on a protest march to the secretariat. In the petition
139 handed to the Deputy Chief Secretary, it was suggested that, rather than retrenchment,
140 salaries be reduced. The women's petition was regarded as sufficiently important to be
141 debated in the Legislative Council, and the government reduced the proposed retrenchment.
142 The League also had wide political concerns. When the Richards Constitution was debated in
143 the Legislative Council in March 1946, the League, led by its President, Charlotte Obasa, was
144 at the forefront of agitation against it (Coleman, 1958; Sklar, 1963; Olusanya, 1982). It invited
145 the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), the
146 Nigerian Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and market women to a sponsored mass
147 meeting on 10th April 1945. The sole aim of the meeting was to debate the constitution, after
148 which the meeting decided to send a cable to London. The cable included the rejection of the
149 constitution and a vote of no confidence in the unofficial member of the Legislative Council
150 (Olusanya, 1982). Along with other women's organisations, such as the Women's Welfare
151 Council, the Lagos Women's League continued to work to promote the welfare of women
152 and also campaigned independently for other socio-economic reforms.

153 The revolt of the market women at Calabar in 1925 was a major violent revolutionary
154 uprising aimed directly against the colonial economic system. This revolt was sparked off by
155 the government's attempt to encroach on the women's traditional territory, the local
156 marketplaces, and impose the payment of market tolls from market women whose incomes
157 were above the poverty line. The Native Authority did not erect lock-up shops, open sheds,
158 nor provide basic amenities, yet without adequately consulting the women, they demanded

159 tolls from them. As a result, the women of Calabar boycotted the markets and preferred to
160 sell from the verandahs of their houses, thus creating food shortages for the Europeans and
161 their servants (Bassey, 2016). They were forced to retreat, humiliated, but no life was lost
162 because political and military might had superseded constitutional rights. The distraught
163 women whose nascent nationalistic impulse had driven them to demand a simple
164 constitutional process were left to bemoan their fate. This was the beginning of women's
165 nationalistic impulse.

166 In 1928, Mr R.K. Floyer, the Assistant District Officer, began counting women's
167 boxes of clothes and trinkets in Queens Town and other riverine areas to tax their owners,
168 who were women (Jaja, 1986). Although the District Officer for Egwanga, Mr Whiteman,
169 had allayed the women's fears that they would be taxed, the African members of the
170 assessment team had told them that they would be taxed 2/= or 3/= per annum. It was in the
171 midst of this confusion that the news of the women's war spread like wildfire.

172 In 1929, women had already begun to bear the burdens of taxation imposed on men,
173 due to the intertwined nature of the village economy. For example, while in Andoni an adult
174 male was levied 8/= per annum, adult males in Owerri and Ogoja were levied 5/= and 7/=
175 respectively (Igwe, 2002). The household or village income could not be computed solely
176 from male production, so women had to share the burden of taxation as wives, mothers, and
177 widows, paying for their young sons who had no income. The trouble started when, in
178 October 1929, on the initiative of an Assistant District Officer, a fresh headcount of men,
179 women, and livestock was to be conducted. For the people, the obvious conclusion was that
180 the counting was a prelude to taxing women. The actions of the warrant chiefs buttressed this
181 belief because they misunderstood the instructions and also believed that women were to be
182 taxed. The protest that resulted from this singular misunderstanding was exhibited in the
183 tragedy known as the Aba Women's Riot of 1929. Afigbo (1972) suggested that the label

184 'Aba Riot' was inappropriate because it did not reflect the accurate picture of what happened
185 or the women's own intentions. As he rightly pointed out, Nigerian women who took action
186 against the British administration in 1929 termed their movement 'Women's' War' *Ogu*
187 *Umunwayi* or *Ekong Iban* (p. 238).

188 The women in Aba, South-Eastern Nigeria, were strongly opposed to the imposition
189 of taxation; hence, over 10,000 women carrying sticks, described as noisy and appearing
190 ready to fight, marched around the township. It is on record that this war spread to other
191 areas, such as Owerri, Ikot Ekpene, Opobo, Itu, and Biase. However, there were no lives lost
192 in the face-off between the police and women in Aba. "British soldiers killed eighteen
193 unarmed Ibibio women at Utu Etim Ekpo in the Abak division and thirty-one women in Ikot
194 Abasi. As far as official records can tell, the killings at both places represent all the casualties
195 in the women's war of 1929" (Ndem, 1988, p.31).

196 Three remarkable things are worth noting. Firstly, on many occasions during the
197 disturbances, individual women refused to identify themselves except as *ohand'inyom* (the
198 women is the English translation of Igbo *ohand'inyom*, which means literally "a gathering of
199 women/women's movement) in acknowledgement of the sex solidarity which united Igbo,
200 Ibibio, Annang, Opobo, Andoni and Ogoni women. In his elaboration, Perham termed it
201 "spirit of womanhood" (1937, p. 214), a definition which Gailey (1970) adopted. Secondly,
202 among the demands these women made to A.R. Whiteman, the Divisional Officer who
203 summoned them for a meeting, was that apart from the government not taxing women, the
204 "women do not want any man to pay tax. District Officer response: I will inform the
205 Government" (Isikalu, 1988, p. 60). Thirdly, the incident was the first in the nation's history in
206 which any group of people laid down their lives for what they believed was a national cause.

207 In Lagos, along with women paying water rates and tenements rates Madam Dabiri
208 countered the argument that women were not affected by the taxation of men thus: "if a

209 husband has 25/- and then pays 15/- for the new baby and 10/- for the wife and then in walks
210 the tax collector, what is this man to do under the circumstances? Are they all in that house to
211 starve? Do you still say that women are not affected directly or indirectly now?" (Mba, 1982,
212 p. 200). In 1932, three years after the women's war in South-Eastern Province, rumours
213 spread in Lagos that women were to be directly taxed. A delegation of market women
214 representatives was immediately sent to Major C. T. Lawrence, the Administrator of the
215 colony. He assured the women that "if anyone should come and tell you that you women
216 have to pay tax, whether he be a clerk or khaki man (policeman), take hold of him and tear
217 his clothes and bring him here to me" (Mba, 1982, p. 201)

218 Women, apart from protesting for their own interests, also protested for the good of
219 the community. Traditionally, the land had never belonged to women, but when the
220 communal land was threatened, it was the women who confronted the administration and
221 defended their community rights. In Obubra, the dense rainforest, composed of high forest
222 trees such as iroko, mahogany, ebony, and red ironwood, among others, presented economic
223 advantages in terms of forest cover, as evidenced by the colonial Forestry Ordinance and
224 Regulation in 1906. This ordinance led to the constitution of the ten Forest Reserves in the
225 former Ogoja province from 1916 to 1928. The 717-square-kilometre Okpon River Forest
226 Reserve in Obubra territory was among (Irom, 2018). The implication of this ordinance was
227 far-fetched on the socio-economic existence of mainly women. This was because, as long as
228 the economy was tied to the land, land became insufficient for cultivation. Whenever the
229 women tried to show their dissatisfaction, the government of the day would often use force to
230 restore order.

231 By 1932, the ordinance was relaxed, and some land returned to the original owners.
232 However, the restriction on the free felling of trees was not removed from the returned land.
233 This meant that, apart from insufficient land for farming, the women, in particular, could not

234 obtain firewood for cooking. The colonial government entered the closing month of 1934
235 satisfied with its policy on forest reserves, the structures put in place to make the government
236 work, and the assumption that its policies had been accepted. However, for Obubra women,
237 this ordinance did not in any way improve their economic base, hence:

238 Over 1000 of them held a two-day violent demonstration,
239 requesting the removal of cement boundary pillars used to
240 demarcate the reserves. The women refused to be intimidated
241 by truckloads of police reinforcements from Enugu. Instead,
242 they attacked the village heads, destroyed their property, and
243 accused them of selling their lands to the Forest Department for
244 reserves (Irom, 2018, p. 125).

245 Sixty-three women were arrested in Apiapum for interfering with the demarcation party. As a
246 result of this opposition, the lieutenant governor ordered adjustments to the demarcated area.
247 That was the only time peace was restored (Mbah, 1982). In 1935, women in the Itu and Uyo
248 divisions of Calabar Province staged demonstrations against the surveying of land. The
249 demonstration only stopped when the District Officer gave them a white paper declaring that
250 the surveying of the land did not mean that the government intended to take their lands (Mba,
251 1982). In 1937, the women of the Ibeku clan, Bende division, also refused to allow
252 inspection of an area at Isieke for a forest reserve (Mba, 1982).

253 During World War II, the British administration introduced compulsory food
254 distribution and price control. This brought about control over the prices and distribution of
255 garri, a by-product of cassava that is grown and processed mainly by women. The women
256 were the hardest hit when government agents came to buy from their markets at fixed
257 government prices below normal. At the same time, wartime shortages and rising prices
258 worsened the situation. It was against the backdrop of this economic pressure that, in October

259 1944, a government agent came to Ikot Ekpene market and purchased garri at the
260 government-fixed prices. To the women who produced garri, this action heralds the
261 government takeover of their cassava farms (Jaja, 1986).

262 To fight back against this threat to their livelihood, there was a mass demonstration
263 beginning in November 1944 by women armed with branches of cassava sticks and leaves at
264 Nto Edino, Ikot Abia, Odoro Ikot, and Mbiaso- all in the Ikot Ekpene area (Jaja, 1986). The
265 unrest continued for several weeks and was marked by several violent incidents. The two
266 issues of taxation and garri control were intertwined, as the proceeds from the garri trade
267 helped women contribute to the men's tax payment. By the end of December, the show of
268 force had effectively contained the women's agitation. In the months that followed in 1945,
269 the garri controls were eased, which relieved the women of their immediate grievances.

270 In the west of Nigeria, Alimotu Pelewura, a Muslim illiterate, was the leader of Lagos
271 market women for over half a century until she died in 1952. She organised formidable
272 resistance to colonial policies. Most importantly, demonstrations related to the food
273 distribution monopoly during WW11. In December 1940, she led a protest of 7000 women
274 who marched to the Glover Memorial Hall to register their grievances against having to pay
275 taxes owed by unemployed husbands and male relatives. She is said to have threatened to
276 direct women to close down all trading activities if the government did not honour their
277 demands. In 1944, the government offered her a monthly allowance of seven pounds and
278 recognition as the official leader of market women if she stopped mobilising women against
279 wartime emergency policies. Instead of succumbing to this corruption, she continued to
280 mobilise women in rural areas of Ijebu-Ode and Sagamu who worked with her to ensure that
281 foodstuffs were not taken to Lagos unless the women's demands were met (Falola
282 & Aderinto, 2010).

283 By 1946, women's nationalistic impulse manifested itself again. This time, it was in
284 Abeokuta, and the traditional ruler was at the centre of the conflict. It was alleged that the
285 then Alake of Abeokuta had decreed that the Egba women must pay tax. Moreover,
286 responding with what may be termed a characteristic opposition to the despotic act of a ruler,
287 reminiscent of the experiences of the Calabar market women of 1925, and women's war of
288 1929 and Obubra women's revolt of 1934 respectively, the Abeokuta women, led by Mrs
289 Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, stormed the palace of the Alake in 1946. The Alake was forced to
290 flee his throne (Sani, 2001). These women scored a historic political victory. The outcome of
291 this woman's resistance included preventing the taxation of women, having some warrant
292 chiefs dismissed and others prosecuted, influencing the selection of new chiefs, and
293 appointing a few women as court members.

294 By November 1950, pioneer oil mills had been established in Calabar, Eket, Ikot
295 Ekpene, Uyo and Opobo (Ikot Abasi) Division of Calabar Province. These oil mills soon
296 became the reason for uprisings against the colonial authority. The Lieutenant Governor of
297 Eastern Nigeria, Sir James Pyke-Nott, was the first to rationalise the incidents by identifying
298 both the economic and political reasons for the women's actions in Calabar Division in the
299 following words:

300 It would seem that the women feared that if their menfolk sold palm
301 fruits directly to the mills, they would be deprived of their traditional
302 share, the kernels, upon the sales of which they depend to meet the
303 significant expenses of their household. This is a legitimate and
304 understandable fear (Jaja, 1988, p. 22).

305 However, Pykenott also "complained about other depressing instances of mob rule which had
306 followed in quick succession" (Jaja, 1988, p. 23) in Calabar Division. Others occurred in

307 Owerri Province, where “there were major and protracted disturbances” (Afigbo, 1972, p.
308 95).

309 In the Rivers Province, one important feature of women’s activity during the period
310 under study was that they bore the burden of fending for their homes when men went into
311 hiding, not necessarily to evade tax payment but because the poor and inefficient collection
312 system made them the innocent victims of harassment, flogging and imprisonment (Alagoa,
313 1972). In defence of their community, inumivitamamunbgo, which means “only women who
314 were nursing children were involved in the protest” (Gabriel, 2002, p. 175), occurred in the
315 Udekama community in 1925. In this protest, nursing mothers rose in arms against the
316 desecration of their lands by prisoners and warders. The community had traditional practices
317 performed by nursing mothers. One of them was for the women to assemble at a designated
318 part of the community before proceeding to bathe in *the river*. This gathering, apart from
319 protecting them from the fear of attacks by wild animals and evil spirits, also allowed them to
320 share their experiences as nursing mothers and exchange ideas about domestic life. It was on
321 one of these trips to the river that they met some prisoners, supervised by warders, who were
322 cutting an okaka, a large tree of religious and economic significance, without the consent of
323 the elders and chief.

324 These women went back home, reported to the men, and pleaded with them not to
325 attack the prisoners and warders, probably for fear that the colonial authority would imprison
326 the men. These nursing mothers mobilised themselves, laid siege to the prisoners and warders
327 and attacked them. In the usual tradition of colonial rule, the District officer demanded the
328 arrest of these women. When the colonial police came to arrest them, they went along with
329 their newly born babies. The District officer cautioned them against acts that would breach
330 the community's peace and released them.

331 In 1950, Bille women protested against visiting European medical doctors who tried
332 to give powdered milk to school children in Bille. The women's protest against what they
333 understood as the Greek gift forced the doctors to leave the community, thereby closing
334 schools (Syer-Digbani, 2002). The Kalabaro women reacted against a Supreme Court
335 judgment over their fishing rights, said to have been expropriated from them by the Okrika
336 people of the neighbouring fishing settlements. The upshot was the Ochokorocho massacre
337 perpetrated along with their men, possibly to wreak vengeance against those who had taken
338 benefits under unjust colonial laws (Mba, 1982).

339 From the above examples, it is clear to see that women had been bitten by the bug
340 called nationalism. This period, which Coleman classified as primary resistance, can instead
341 be termed a period of revolutionary and continuous nationalism; continuous because there
342 were protests in almost all parts of Southern Nigeria, with the most intense in the South-
343 eastern parts of Nigeria. These women seemed to have had a premonition of the country's
344 future political development. So that when Nigeria subsequently moved into the era of
345 political activities, especially in the form of political parties, a period of later movement or
346 nationalism in its true sense, according to Coleman's classification, Nigerian women were
347 ready to make their contributions. This forms the subject matter of the next section.

348 **Nigerian Women and Political Activities**

349 Politics, especially the formation of political parties, was the one area in which men
350 maintained open dominance and almost complete exclusion of women, it has sometimes been
351 claimed. However, even in this area, which appears to be exclusively male, women's
352 contributions must be acknowledged. With the founding of the pioneer political party, the
353 People's Union (PU) in 1908, the women's wing, known as the Women's Union, was
354 inaugurated by Mrs Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa, the wife of Dr Orisadipe Obasa. As a
355 cultural nationalist, she used the wing to mobilise men and women in Lagos, both Nigerians

356 and non-Nigerians, as well as chiefs into party politics (Alagoa&Enemugwem, 2015). The
357 Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) also had a women's wing when it was founded
358 in 1923 (Sklar, 1963). With this development, the stage was set for women's wings within
359 political parties to cater to women's political activities.

360 Subsequent developments will show that, because women were unfairly treated within
361 political parties, they took bold steps and founded their own political parties. One such person
362 was Lady Olayinka Abayomi, who was involved in the formation of the Lagos Youth
363 Movement, later the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), in 1934. Despite the existence of a
364 Ladies Section and the recruitment of women, the NYM, like the previous parties of the
365 period, had no women in its executive committee or other political-making positions. On
366 May 10, 1944, in Olayinka Abayomi's home, the inaugural meeting of the Nigerian Women's
367 Party (NWP) was held (Odin, 1982). The formation of the party was a significant
368 contribution of women to nationalism and political activities. However, it was also an attempt
369 to challenge the belief that Nigerian women were cheated by both the British colonial
370 government and Nigerian men, hence they must demand their rights.

371 One of the female leaders who is remembered as one of the most colourful and
372 dynamic political leaders of this period was Olaniwun Adunni Oluwole. Initially an itinerant
373 preacher and later a champion of workers' interests, she participated in the 1945 General
374 Strike. After the strike, she turned her attention fully to political activities since she became
375 convinced that "the only way workers and other Nigerians could achieve better living
376 conditions was to drive the colonial exploiters away." (Olusanya, 1982). A great admirer of
377 Herbert Macaulay, she made herself available for campaign meetings and lectures and early
378 in 1954, she announced her intention to start a political party of her own. In May of the same
379 year, her intention found fulfilment when she founded the Nigerian Commoners Liberal Party
380 (NCLP). At the inaugural meeting of the party held in Mushin, Lagos on the 29th May, 1954,

381 she expounded the three main objectives of the party to include: Firstly, opposing
382 independence in 1956 since, like some other nationalists, she believed Nigeria was not ripe
383 for self-government(Awo, 1960; Padan, 1986). Secondly, she promised that the party would
384 not only work for the recognition of the rights of Obas and their release from the bondage of
385 pseudo-politicians, but would also oppose the constitution, which aimed at creating disunity
386 in Nigeria, wrangling amongst political leaders and exploitation of the masses and fair
387 treatment for the common man and woman. Thirdly, the lofty ideas expressed by politicians
388 in Nigeria were intended to secure support for themselves, which they would exploit to
389 feather their own nests (Olusanya, 1982).

390 The officers of the party at its formation were Miss Adunni, President, Mr M. Sanni,
391 Vice President; Mr L. Aromire, Treasurer; Mr T. Oduntan, General Secretary; Mr I.
392 Dawodo,the Financial Secretary, and four assistant secretaries are responsible for spreading
393 the party's aims and objectives. The party was active in the old Western Region and
394 particularly in Lagos. As a party leader, Adunni was firm and successful. These successes
395 were evident in two areas. Firstly, although founded by a woman, it was not a female party as
396 such, but a party composed of men and women and in which the men formed the majority.
397 Secondly, in the 1954 general election, the party's candidate, Mr D. L. G. Olateju, defeated
398 the NCNC and AG candidates and won a seat in the House of Representatives from Osun
399 North (Ikurun) in the Western Region (Olusanya, 1982). This was barely six months after the
400 party's formation. With her death in 1957, NCLP went moribund.

401 Another party worthy of mention here was the Commoners People's Party (CPP),
402 founded by Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti in 1959. Her party, the National Council for
403 Nigerians and the Cameroons (NCNC), which initially supported her candidacy for a seat in
404 the House of Representatives, later endorsed a man, prompting her to run as an independent.
405 This singular action divided the party into two factions and culminated in the NCNC's loss in

406 the general elections. It was when NCNC expelled her from the party that she formed the
407 CPP, an independent party to fulfil her political dreams. The party whose symbol was the lion
408 of Egba lasted only a little over a year because it lacked support(Mba,1982). These minor
409 parties, like those formed by men, became viable only in alliance with one of the three major
410 parties. From its inception, the NPC opposed the enfranchisement of women, thereby limiting
411 women's participation in political parties (Odey, 2023). The NCNC and the AG had women's
412 associations, but patronage was based primarily upon the administrative structure of a
413 regional government (Sklar, 1963). In the end, they joined the three major political parties
414 and heraldedNigeria's independence.

415 **Conclusion**

416 The paper demonstrating women's visibility as partners in the processes that
417 culminated in independence in Nigeria disagrees with Coleman's first classification of earlier
418 or primary resistance. Since nationalism was not only a political phenomenon, the increasing
419 numbers of women mobilised for the anti-colonialism campaign give credence to their
420 conviction that they were hindered by colonialism, especially its obnoxious tax regimes.
421 Hence,their conscious contributions to nationalism as members of a nation-state to which
422 they aspired, and of a desire to achieve political and economic development, as well as the
423 cultural revival of that nation-state.In the second classification, which is the later movement
424 or nationalism in the true sense, women were equally not found wanting in political activities,
425 which culminated in the emergence of political parties.

426 This is because the circumstances in which political parties developed were colonial,
427 and the opposition to colonial policies by female nationalist movements was translated into
428 political activity and the formation of political parties. Women's involvement in political
429 developments and political parties revealedbroader political concerns than mere reactions to
430 economic issues and their impact. Although they were told their roles in society were

431 pacifiers and that they were not expected to compete for what was popularly believed to be
432 political office or a position of authority, they struggled for representation. They attempted to
433 form political associations and parties.

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