Through A Man’s Eye: A Woman’s Cartooning Dilemma

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Abstract
The cartooning profession continues to become a male dominated profession such that it seems to alienate the woman from practice. This study focuses on one of such event that led to a woman being able to make only one strip that meets the newspaper’s cartooning tradition yet, she got moved away from the cartooning unit. Her work is discussed and compared with the male cartoonists that work in The Guardian Newspaper. This paper posits the need for women to take their plight into their hands and create lee ways out of the challenges partly created by them; as they condone oppression with a bloodless fight.

Keywords: cartooning, gender, oppression, female

Introduction
The cartooning art form in Nigeria has been in practice for over seventy years now, and during this period, about seven women have been found to have practiced the art form. This study is borne out of a doctoral work titled Rethinking the cartooning epistemology: The female cartoonists in Nigeria by Otu, John Ozovehe. It reveals seven women that have been in practice for about twenty-five years in some newspapers, where male cartoonists have been and have continued to practice the art. These female cartoonists are Folashade Adebare, Concord Newspaper; Ronke Adesanya, Daily Sketch, Vanguard and Nigerian Tribune Newspapers; Ijeoma Nwogu, Nigerian Tribune Newspaper, Promise Adaora Onele, The Sun Newspaper; Emilia Oniegbo, Punch Newspaper; Uche Uguru, Nigerian Pilot and Gloria
Joboson, *The Guardian Newspaper*. The study reveals that scholars exclude the works of female cartoonists from scholarship and as at the time of completion of this study, no woman cartoonist was found practicing the art form. It is pertinent to note that this challenge is not restricted to Nigeria; it is existing elsewhere in the world. The focus of this study is on Gloria Joboson, who was allowed to make only one strip and was transferred to the Library Unit of *The Guardian Newspaper*. This is borne out of the interview with D.D. Onu, the Chief Cartoonist in the newspaper, that ‘she is not a cartoonist’. It implies that Joboson is not a specialist in cartoon, and cannot be tested overtime, she therefore needs to learn the art, during the period of four months Industrial Training.

Drawing, painting and sculpture has been practiced by both males and females, yet without the quality of the works produced, leaving a trace of the gender of who the author is. Practitioners of all the three fields have different styles of expressions in their depictions and continue to lure buyers and admirers alike to their works. The field of cartooning in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world has a very low percentage of women practicing the art form. Donnelly (2013: 3) adds that

The New Yorker had women cartoonists in its very first issue in 1925, but the numbers have always been very low. The subject of women in cartooning was not something I examined closely until 1998. I was invited to be on a panel of women political cartoonists at the Editorial Cartoonists Association convention.

This absence or low number of female cartoonists as expressed above by a female cartoonist of over twenty years is a worldwide phenomenon that does not seem to have an end in sight in some countries. Dewar (2005: 1) on her meeting Andy Donato, an editorial cartoonist at the Sun explains that “He told me to come up with three cartoons before he finished his wine, and I beat him. I went home and inked up one of them and it went into a slot in the paper on the day the staff cartoonists’ work could then be featured.” Dewar’s story shows the male defined world that continues to stand as a hurdle that can still be jumped by women. This makes it a wonder at when there will be a greater influx of females getting into cartooning practice with a
situation of constant presence of female cartoonists that will no doubt expand the cartooning epistemology. Sax in Golon (2007: 3) affirms that “The bottom line is that the brain is just organized differently in females and males. The tired argument about which utensils is “better”, a knife or a spoon. The only correct answer is, “better for what?” This simply explains that the capacity to depict in drawing, painting or sculpture is what can be developed in both genders. The question of ability and competence does not arise, therefore, both gender should be encouraged fairly without bias. This further implies that the mind of a woman holds equal beneficial competence that can impact positively on all and sundry in the cartooning art form.

Gender and cartooning
The Education, Audiovisual and Executive Agency (EACEA) (2009: 11) explains that

The most pronounced gender difference in achievement of girls is in reading. On the average girls read more than boys? Girls’ advantage is consistent across countries, different age groups, survey periods, and study programmes...Boys are more likely to be amongst the poorest performers in reading. In Mathematics and Science, girls are more likely to perform at lower levels in approximately one third European education systems.

This statement clearly favours the females’ competence in the ability to derive greater inspiration to make cartoon strips since the end product of a third of the art form are to be read and visualized. Apart from gag cartoons that seldom require the use of text to explain the depictions, the words and image type of cartooning are areas where a female will equally fair well just like their male counterpart. EACEA (ibid: 16) holds further that “Western feminists in particular have been interested in shaping a progressive position on gender issues in education. Feminism here is defined as the commitment to the political, social, and economic equality of women, which draws on and has instigated a variety of movements, theories, philosophies and campaigns.” All these attempts are geared at creating a level playing ground for the female gender, which this study draws a parallel from. This all round equality for women should have a check-list that should
be monitored so as to assess the level of women participation periodically.

In South Africa, Hartman in Martin and Barnard (2013: 1) aver that “The challenges women face in attempting to penetrate successfully and persevere in historically male-dominated work environments emanate from traditional gender hierarchies and norms that prevail in the family and society. Despite gender equality and empowerment, the household unit has a traditional structure – and still has – that makes males the dominant gender”. It is important to note that the cultural background of some males does play a negative role in their decisions over what a female should or should not do. This is also coupled with such male’s perception of the ‘weight’ of the job type, and their mind set on which job a gender can do. This may not be unconnected to why some male cartoonists will ordinarily find it absurd to have a female make strips, or attempt at making strips even with a Fine Arts background in the secondary school. The salient segregation that exists on who practices the cartooning art form keeps the female gender away from the cartooning profession. For the males, they migrate from one newspaper to the other, while a few others in more than one newspaper.

It is important to note that Ronke Adesanya is the only female that has worked the longest in *Daily Sketch, Vanguard* and *Nigerian Tribune* newspapers for about ten years, while Promise Adaora Onele worked in the *Sun* newspaper as a cartoonist making strips and a comic for about five years after a stint at the Post Express; now rested, as a writer and cartoonist. Wong and Cuklanz (2014: 253-4) report that

Only a handful of women comic artists throughout the past 30 years of the development of Hong Kong comics were able to make their way into the industry and publish their work. Like work by male cartoonists, those by women artists are very gender coded. Most of the works by women comic artists are love stories and soft-hearted cartoons with the major female leading characters targeted at same-gender readers...women have been discouraged from participating in humorous genres, and have been discouraging them from entering into fields such as stand-up comedy and comic
art...Comics constitute a specific genre of humour that has also been traditionally used to objectify and stereotype characters and to entertain predominantly male audiences.

Above is an open discrimination against female cartoonists such that they are restricted to a genre that is believed to only originate from the women; romance. This implies that ‘men are not romantic’, as it is perceived as a female behaviour. This perception inhibits the female cartoonists from expressing their opinion in other cartooning genres that would have broadened the content and perspectives of the works produced. While in the earlier days of cartooning in America, Robbins (2014: 2) reminisced that

The next revolution for women cartoonists came in the forties, with the advent of the comic book, which contained more pages to fill, and needed cartoonists to fill them. During the war years, more women worked in comics than ever. With male cartoonists overseas, as in other industries, women stepped in, drawing exciting female characters for comic books...drawing girl detectives, counterspies, jungle girls, and girl commandos,... and of all the women cartoonists of that period, two stand out: Tarpe Mills and Dale Messick.

It is important to posit that communism and democracy simply makes the situation different from females in the two nations of Honk Kong and America despite the great difference in the period mentioned by the authors. Be that as it may, it is clear that the absence of the men in the case of America gave the women the much needed chance to find a place to prove their competence in the print media. Today, suffice to point out here that the female cartoonists must device new methods of gaining grounds for the chance to have their works published just like the male cartoonists.

Anker et. al. in Newman et. al. (2011: 3) explain that “Gender segregation is a pervasive and widely documented form of social inequality and labour market rigidity in which women and men are expected to work in culturally defined occupational roles dominated by their gender.” This is evident in the early post-colonial era of
Nigeria where women that sought jobs were stereotypically expected to take to nursing, teaching, secretarial jobs, cleaners among other less seemingly demanding job types. As observed above, this segregation however affected mostly middle and lower class members of the citizenry across the country. Macpherson and Hirsch in Arnts et. al. (2014: 1) opine that

Occupational segregation by sex appears as an unwanted feature of labour markets for number reasons. First of all, the fact that a certain part of the population is excluded from or at least has difficulties to obtain access to, a certain range of occupations may yield labour market rigidity, and therefore reduce the ability of an economy to adjust to change. Second, occupational segregation is wasteful of human resources. If it drives education choices, certain abilities in the population might remain undeveloped. Finally, it may be directly detrimental to women. It supports perpetuation of gender stereotypes, which may have an adverse effect on many economic and social variables e.g. poverty and income inequality.

The above pointers are the effects of segregation on the female and female cartoonists that may have discouraged more women from getting into the profession to practice. This somewhat makes the years they have spent producing comics and strips to seemingly make the works ‘extinct’. The eyes of scholars, mostly male in the cartooning art form also have the tendency of being wary of thinking that there is a possibility of a female or more that might have practiced the cartooning art form. The use of pseudonyms by some male cartoonists might make a male scholar think it is a male hiding under a female name. Dada Adekola at a time used the name REGINA as a pseudonym for some time and that made the first author to think it was the depiction made a female cartoonist.

Medubi (2014: 63) explains that “There are no statistical data to collate public perception of cartoons, but personal interviews and reports reaching cartoonists themselves testify to this changing attitude.” The changing attitude should therefore quiz the seeming absence of female cartoonists in the past, and the present situation that
USAID (2008: 3) adds that “Achieving parity in enrollment remains a critical objective and is fundamental to gender equality. However, focusing on access as the primary issue for girls can undervalue the importance of quality and relevance...Educational relevance is increasingly seen as a critical dimension of improved quality. Relevance refers to the degree to which the education provided is applicable and relates to learners’ present and future.” Efforts like these stated above practiced in America is what is needed to drive parity in the cartooning profession. The meant parity here is one that is merit based, and that is blind to the applicant’s gender. This will on the long run show a positive practice in the search, employment and retention of female cartoonists in the field of practice.

Sharma (2014: 2) posits that “Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women. More women are involved in careers in the communications sector, but few have attained positions at the decision-making level or serve on government boards and bodies that influence media policy.” The statement above clearly opens up the hurdle that can be jumped to end the absence of female cartoonists in the print media. Perhaps, if members of the editorial board from the top down to the bottom have more females, especially in a newspaper that has an existing cartooning tradition, there might be a chance of female cartoonists working in such a media. Super in Lau et. al. (2004: 178) defines career maturity as “A constellation of physical, psychological and social characteristics; psychologically, it is both cognitive and affective. It includes the degree of success in coping with the demands of earlier stages and sub-stages of career development especially with the most recent”. This brings to question why there is a male-inspired assessment of the competence of a woman in most spheres of life and work. The demand that exists in most work types have seen women succeed, especially in surgery, medicine and banking. These jobs are those that were among others, previously held as the male type jobs. For cartooning, the risks are less, yet may be imminent with regards to how much attention politicians in particular pay to the cartoons that focus on their activities. One of such female cartoonist in Africa is Celestine Wamiru of Kenya, who lampoons political players with satiric zest with a subversive edge to it.
Methodology
The methodology adopted for this study is the expository research method because it attempts at revealing hidden events and facts about why an event persists. Adogbo (2009: 34-5) avers that “The primary objective is to unfold a knowledge; it could be a claim about the existence of God or… the efficiency of a particular medicine…the secret of nature such as information of man, mountains and minerals.” This is brought to bear on the study to reveal how a female cartoonist in a particular newspaper that remains male-dominated got stopped from practicing beyond just one strip. The strip she made falls within the ambit of the newspaper’s cartooning tradition both in thrust and presentation. For content analysis, the strip made by Joboson will be presented, described and compared with the works of the male cartoonists in The Guardian Newspaper. Interview was conducted with cartoonists that have and have not worked with female cartoonists. The interviews were used to further guide the study in understanding the general opinion of the male cartoonists.

Limitation of the study
Efforts to contact cartoonists on their opinion remained difficult, though a few responded to the request on their comments on the place of female cartoonists in the profession. The editors of newspapers and magazines that have cartoonists refused to respond to the question.

Data and narrative
A cartoonist, D.D. Onu in The Guardian Newspaper affirms that Gloria Joboson was a student of Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, where she obtained an Ordinary National Diploma. She participated in the mandatory Industrial Training Scheme to enable students gain work experience that led her to a six month practice as cartoonist in The Guardian Newspaper, Lagos. The strip below published in the mode of presentation common to all cartoonists in newspaper, holds the depiction of political cartoons. The work posits that corruption is a word that characterises the activities of a majority of Africa’s leaders as presented in the second panels. In the first panel, it highlights a decision that should be common among all African leaders with the aim of reducing corruption at all cost. Again, the character to the right of the second panel describes the attitude of African leaders while in office. This he concludes in the last panel to hold an opinion that many
African leaders lack the willingness to fight corruption because they are involved in it too.

In 26th July, 2015 reply to an email on the place of female cartoonists in Nigeria, Samsideen avers that “I will say it wouldn’t make any difference if we have a female cartoonist in the industry. I have come across one before, while working with BusinessDay Newspaper. She came for an interview, and worked with us for almost a month. Personally, I don’t see anything special about a female cartoonist, although, it’s quite good because we have very few female artists out there not to talk of a female cartoonist. To me, all that matters is the creativity; that is what will stand you out either as a male or female cartoonist.”

His starts with a view that makes it seem as though the presence of a female cartoonist will not make any divergent impact in the cartooning field. This runs parallel with the stereotypical mindset of Onu who rules that Joboson is not a cartoonist; despite the fact that she was only given chance to make a strip, and is not enough to prove the competence or the lack of it in any gender. The reason the female cartoonist he mentioned left after a few weeks is not stated and the fact that he had forgotten her name is an indication that there was bias held against the female gender in the cartooning profession. He however seem to give in to a possible competence in the female as he admits the need to assess both genders on merit, using creativity as a yard stick. Moreover, the gender that will decide which work is creative enough for employment in a male dominated profession leaves so much to be desired.
Plate 1: *The Guardian Newspaper*, February 21, 2006

The less iconic strip will irk any leader in that the Liberian leader is a woman and that ordinarily will be taken as an insult on the maleness that pervades any culture to be compared with a woman; though it is not intended in the work. Perhaps, the fact that she is also a female cartoonist will heighten the anger on discovering that the cartoonist is a female. The depiction of the two main characters change posture from the first to the last panel. The conversation that exists between them will take less than a minute to perform, hence justifying their posture in relation to the appropriateness of the postures. In the last panel, the depiction of the mouth shows that the shock and perhaps disgust at the conclusion that many African leaders are froth with guilt at being able to fight corruption. This is further held firmly with the question and exclamation marks.

In the distant background to the left of each of the panels are two figures that depict a male and a female with a tray on her head. Though, they are progressively depicted in silhouettes, the postures of the duo in each panel show that they are not an afterthought. They are a deliberate act of the cartoonist to create scenery instead of the plain mannerism that characterise the strips of the other cartoonists. The intention basically is to create the illusion of depth in the caricature
mode with the style of depiction common in the newspaper. By the third panel both subjects are equally done with their conversation and leave, heading opposite directions. It is important to add that the female figure seem to pause to rethink over the main point of discussion while the male figure walks away; since the cartoonist has ended the main narrative in the third panel. Again, the conversation to a large extent, though mute to the reader, is indicative of a romantically themed one instead of the politically driven discursion held by both main characters in the foreground. McCloud (1994: 99) explains that “The panel acts as a sort of general indicator that time or space is being divided. The durations of that time and the dimensions of that space are defined more by the contents of the panel than by the panel itself”. McCloud has been able to define and identify the various canons cartooning and making comics and this is evident in the strip that Joboson has made. This is also adhered to by all the other male cartoonists in The Guardian Newspaper. Whether she is aware of this canon or not, her work has shown the competence required of her to make cartoons by observation, especially in The Guardian Newspaper.

In an interview held on 18th March 2013 with Onu explained that the quality of work Gloria made does not qualify her to be called a cartoonist. He added that only one of her works was approved for publication in her brief stay while on IT. Oyinade et. al. (2013: 28) hold that “...the belief in traditional societies such as Nigeria, that women are presumed to be less competent to men and their place is in the kitchen”. This implies that Onu’s position about Joboson’s ability to make cartoons is informed by his view of who a woman is and not based on the work done. The amount of discussion generated from just one single strip published is a pointer to a possibility that could have helped her learn the trade in as short as six months, improve on her cartooning ability and expand the cartooning scholarship. The next four strips are those of other male cartoonists that make strips in The Guardian Newspaper.
Plate 2: *The Guardian Newspaper*, August 29, 2010

The next strip below by Sehinde Obe (Obe Ess) depicts a conversation between a journalist and the former president; Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, using the less iconic level of depiction. The figures get depicted in an oblique line from the first to the last panel due to the amount of words used in that descending order. Note the use of movement streak in the third panel on the figure to the right to capture the essence of his turn away from the journalist so as to answer the question in a coy way. Note that he has the strip numbered ‘1110’ on the bottom left of the last panel.
Bisi Ogunbadejo uses the least iconic level to spotlight the state of the nation’s political class over what informs their choice of running mate. A good number of Ogunbadejo’s strips ordinarily depict male subjects in most of his works which accounts for the general maleness that pervades society itself. This situation unconsciously or consciously holds out against the female gender in being able to find a place in professions like cartooning.

The theme of the strip further sets the tone of the thrust of the massage to explain the over deteriorated condition of the nation’s democracy. Tim Edun takes a swipe at the qualification of many of the banks when the consolidation of many of the ailing banks started. He however presents the unending nature of the problem in the third panel of his strip with a worst case scenario. The scenario is that of the specialisation area of those employed as a basic reason for the failure of many banks.

On the top of all the strips is a theme that sets the tone for the reader and primarily for the cartoonists to drive the narrative through in the three panels. With Gloria’s work presented before these other four male cartoonists strips, the study is at loss at what Onu would rather outrightly hold as yard stick that makes a good cartoon vis-a-vis his opinion that she should not be called a cartoonist. Her consciousness of the good use of her panels in the fashion of the newspaper’s style of strip presentation makes it impossible to hold against her an inability in making cartoons. It is therefore a poor sense of judgement to use just one work to prove that a person, even a
woman lacks the competence to produce cartoons considering the fact that she was even undergoing an industrial training at the time.

Fapohunda (2012: 20) avers that “The ongoing economic crises and the gulf between job creation and the growth in the numbers of job seekers have worsened the employment situation for women and men alike. But women face greater vulnerabilities in the labour market because of their relative lack of education and training...the continuous heavy burdens of unpaid domestic work, child-bearing and child-care, which restrict the time and energy available for income-earning activities”. The study observes that the male dominated nature of cartooning has now led to the absence of female cartoonists in any of the nation’s newspapers and magazines. Divers perspectives have to go beyond race and get up to gender-divers perspective. This is due to the fact that most of the perspectives held by some males has the tendency to be biased and patronising than actually serving the needs of women. For instance, the comic strips made by Ronke Adesanya namely, Virginia; tale of a city girl, Innuendo and Petticoat all depict female figures spending its panels on issues and views held by women of the world around her. It is important to add that the male figures depicted in the comics made the females equal and are positioned in an advantageous position. In joboson’s strip, she used two male figures to present her discussion on politics since most women rarely discuss political issues. Perhaps, she depicted two males also to tease out confidence in her ability to make strips from the male colleagues in The Guardian Newspaper.

This is not far from what Makama (2013: 115) holds that In Nigeria, it is observed that the womanhood is reduced to a mere infidel and second-class citizen; hence, there is the commonality of general belief system that the best place for women is in the ‘Kitchen’. This trend has brought about tremendous misrepresentation of women right at the level of the family down to the circular society. The Nigerian society is patriarchal in nature which is a major feature of a traditional society. It is structure of a set of social relations with material base which enables men to dominate women.

It is important for the women folk to also rise above this by ensuring that they are at the cutting edge of qualities expected of anyone in any
field of practice. This will go a long way to improve the place of the woman in any field; the strip made by Joboson will pass as almost as any of her former colleagues work. The women that are aware of the challenges women face must come up with practicable suggestions to reduce the derogatory way in which women are treated.

Moore and Payne (2010: 3) explain that
The men whose work appeared in these same anthologies tell a similar story, too: the comic-book editor who told me he didn’t put many women creators in books because ‘you have to go out and put pencils in their hands’, meaning: teach them to draw. The editor who told me gender doesn’t affect his work, but who failed to acknowledge that he is financially supported by his wife. The artist who told me he doesn’t think about gender at all. The other one who said he didn’t know anything about gender. A different one who wrote that he was not in the habit of checking genitalia before decreeing merit, yet argued vehemently against a wide swath of women artists as under developed, untested, immature.

The various hypocritical views mentioned above are from creators and editors, which simply show a staunch inhibition that hinders many female cartoonists from getting into the profession. The first one posits that many or perhaps all women, despite those who have undergone a Fine Arts programme, lack the skill to depict. This is not informed by any test they might have been subjected to, but a clear cut negative opinion about the capacity of a female to make cartoons, and paucity inspired by the on-going school of thought that cartooning is a male specific job, and that a female must learn differently from the mere attending of an art school. Kingsley Okoronkwo (Kaycee) in 27th July, 2015 response to an email asserts that:

The issue of the absence of female cartoonists in the country is not a case of discrimination but a case of stereotyping of certain professions. Cartoon assumed to be a job for men not only in Nigeria but all over the world. Contrary to your imagination, there are no deliberate attempts to screen women out of the
profession but rather they show little or no interest in cartooning. Throughout my ten year sojourn in the cartoon section of Punch newspapers, no single female cartoonist came to seek for freelance or permanent job whereas we had hundreds of males coming every year. We are always eager to have females working with us but they seem to be shying away from the profession. It surprises me because in my years in higher institution, we had 70% females but you find out that when it’s time for practising they opt out for other professions they feel are female friendly. It’s not only in cartooning, you hardly find women as illustrators or designers in advert agencies. You hardly find female web designers. There are a few of them practising painting or sculpture.

The bars of discrimination and stereotype exist whether Okoronkwo believes it or not especially when a particular gender or group of persons seem extinct in any given profession. It is worthy to note that Emilia Oniegbu worked in the *Saturday Punch* as a freelance cartoonist for close to four years working along-side many of the male cartoonists in the *Punch*. Oniegbu’s strips were also published the same days those of Okoronkwo and the other male cartoonists like John Tosin, Bennet Omeke, just to mention a few were published. The maleness that characterise cartooning is evident in Okoronkwo’s statement above. It is unfair to accept that women shy away from cartooning in the face of the good number that graduate from the Fine Arts Departments of the various tertiary institutions that offer art courses.

Ijeoma Udeh (new Nwogu) in a 10th August, 2015 reply on the place of female cartoonists in the profession explains that I do not believe there is a difference in any art work done by a male or a female. Art work is art work. I don’t think I can tell the sex of an artist from a cartoon drawn by the artist. But women being who they are may want to use the medium to emphasize sensitive issues relating to the female gender, the home and matters concerning children, not that male cartoonists cannot do same. I guess a female cartoonist art work will generally encourage other women, girls to draw, erasing the belief that it is a 'guy-thing', thereby increasing the number of women in the
field. The study is not aware of any female cartoonist practising the art form today, which is indicative of the near possibility of any of a lower chance of any more female cartoonist in the near future. The path way of more females making cartoons has been closed by the absence her type that actually studied medicine at the University, made comics strips and cartoons in the Nigerian Tribune for about four years. Since she believes it is the work of an existing female cartoonist that will create the chance for more female cartoonists, it is therefore important for female cartoonists to make themselves and their works visible over platforms other than the print media where the cartooning profession seem to stand as a deliberate male made profession. The fact that it is not possible to tell the work of a male cartoonist from the female is the reason to rethink the stereotype that stands as a barrier against the female cartoonist. Perhaps, since political cartooning covertly stands as the preferred choice of genre, female cartoonists in Nigeria should brave it and make strips that may possibly earn them the place in the profession without being discouraged by any opposition that may not 'trust' their competence. They should move to other newspapers until they finally find the required acceptance of their person, creativity and competence.

It is important to make clear the way out of this seeming male only inspired problem as Aidoo (2009: 514) avers that;

If anyone protested that none of these was any different from what male African writers had to confront, my response to that would be: ‘But of course not.’ There could not be any earth-shaking differences. Indeed, if we thought that anyone was providing us with a platform from which to prove that African women writers were different in any way from their male counterparts, or that they faced some fundamental problems which male African writers did not face, some of us would not really want to use such a platform.

The challenges faced by many women especially the ones that will not give in to opposition can be surmounted by perseverance and speaking out in the face of any of such challenges. This will hasten the
process of viewing the woman as an individual that has an equal capacity to practice any field when faced with unequal chances.

Uzoamaka Nnuji’s reply of 1st August, 2015 holds thus, Well I feel opinions of some female artists would be of help. Again these are not the best of times for Nigerian cartoonists as the bad economy and the internet have shrunk newspaper patronage. Way back in time when the economy was good and there was a boom in cartoon journalism, there were a few female cartoonists then. I can’t remember their names now. Why there are always few or no female cartoonists is a matter for more investigation...cartoon journalism is essentially a Fine Art thing, a field dominated by the men folk.

Nnuji’s call for investigation over the absence of female cartoonists may be inspired by the fact that he is not aware of any female that may have practiced in the Newswatch magazine’s past. It is important to point out that Mary-Anne Aipoh and Elizabeth Shultz both made strips and illustrations in the early days of the magazine. His allusion to the bad economy being a reason for the absence or low number of female cartoonists does not prove the absence of females in the cartooning profession. There are other professions where remuneration is poor, yet women are still found practising; teaching in public and some private schools and petrol station attendants. These are equally tedious jobs that have their requirements, yet the cartooning field still poses a hurdle that must be jumped by female cartoonists.

Conclusion

The need for female cartoonists in the profession is not inspired by the fact that some more than seven had practiced for about thirty years in the over seventy year history of cartooning in Nigeria. But it makes the mind wonder why a gender seem extinct in a particular profession in an age where the lines of gender stereotypes is been erased. All the female cartoonists and newspaper editors contacted refused to comment on the general theme of the absence of female cartoonists in the profession. Yet, it leaves the area open for continuous inquiry until the silence over the matter. It is important to state that the females that
have practiced the art form must on their own take advantage of the social media such as Twitter and Facebook to publish their works since it is free to assess in comparison with working in the organised sector of the print media, albeit the difficulty in getting places as cartoonists.

Many male cartoonists have been publishing their works in the past till now, and this gives impetus to the female cartoonists to do the same. There are numerous funding organisations that can fund such projects with the aim and purpose of demystifying the seeming drought of female cartoonists. This should in turn make the female cartoonists target young girls at various school going age brackets into participating in cartooning workshops aimed at the girls.

References


Interviewed persons

Uzoamaka Nnuji, cartoonist, Newswatch newspaper, Lagos state.
Kingsley Okoronkwo (Kaycee), cartoonist, Owerri, Imo state.
Jimoh Bodunde Samsideen, cartoonist, animator and graphic artist, Lagos state.
Ijeoma Udeh, former cartoonist, Nigerian Tribune, Lagos state.