

Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife
Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies (CGSPS)



Community Assembly-Bearing Witness (CA-BW)

The Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies (CGSPS) announces her monthly Community Assembly where members of Obafemi Awolowo University community and her immediate and larger host communities would, through narratives that are either biographical or autobiographical, bear witness to some of the phenomena that women and men have to grapple with, and which somewhat, shape their lives. We have in mind women and men's experience of: menopause and andropause, disability, infertility, formal and informal polygamy, on-line violence, diversity and social justice issues in the workplace, fathers who enabled and ennobled their "girls and women", "awon iya kogberegbe" (mothers who brooked no nonsense), masculinity, etc. We want to explore how the meaning each individual makes of her/his experience of the phenomenon being examined is shaped by gender and gender relations. We would like to know whether individuals who tell us stories believe some aspects of the stories shared as discriminatory or non-discriminatory, whether or not they serve the cause of social justice, and whether or not they improve the well being of the persons involved, their families, co-workers, communities and the nation.

We bear in mind that contemporary issues/phenomena do not have the same effect on persons who experience them. We also are aware that different social, cultural, historical, economic, political, and technological contexts, impact person's experience of a phenomenon and therefore lead to either a positive or negative interpretation of the experience. We want to explore how women and men, here and now, experience the phenomena listed above, and, while not romanticizing, we want to explore our parents' and grandparents' experience of the phenomenon under scrutiny, in whatever shade it manifested in their time, if indeed it manifested. We would explore positive nodes of lessons from the past that we could graft into the present and how present discourse around specific phenomenon may not necessarily become hegemonic or remain at the troubling edge. Our aim is to produce knowledge, provide fresh insights on the phenomena in focus, promote mutual learning, and improve the well being of individuals within families, workplaces, communities, the nation and nations.

Methodology

We would adopt narrative methods rather than formal paper presentations by experts because we want to ground our analysis of the phenomenon and the issues raised, in the real life experiences of women and men, and girls and boys. We want to listen to the analysis, interpretation and re-interpretation provided by the persons who share stories, and thereafter, a group of panelists would undertake a second-order construction of meaning, or at times, a heuristic analysis of the narratives presented. There would also be audience participation in the analyses and discussions. We are open to traditional, indigenous, modern, post-modern, post structuralist, neo-colonial and post-colonial perspectives on the phenomena to be scrutinized. While we would not be dismissive of the disabling aspects of the experiences shared, we want to examine the enabling and ennobling portions of the experiences, and the life giving and life enhancing parts of the experiences. In other words, we want to explore the positives that could emanate from the experiences and the positive interpretation of life experiences that the story tellers and panelists can provide.

Output

With the consent of those who share their stories, we hope to produce a CGSPS occasional paper from each of the community assemblies. We would name the editors of the CGSPS Occasional Papers series, while the Occasional papers would be the joint product of the story tellers (if they want to be named in the publication) and the panelists. We would be willing to provide support within available human resources to those who share their stories if they have a need for it.

Call for Participation in the CA-BW

We call on fellows, associate lecturers, gender focal group members, research group members and friends of CGSPS to signify their wish to participate in the community assembly either as story tellers or panelists. Prospective panelists should please note that they would work with three other panelists and the series editors on stories told on the phenomenon of interest at the Community Assembly to produce an occasional paper. The Centre would name the Chair/discussant of the panel. The Series Editors of the Occasional Papers are: Prof. O. I. Aina, Prof. M. A. Olateju & Dr. Sola Ajibade.

But you do not have to be a story teller or a panelist to attend the Community Assembly; just join us at the Community Assembly, encourage others to attend and share their stories, and pass information about this programme to your friends, colleagues and networks.

The First Four Community Assemblies

- The first community assembly will explore stories of “*Awon Iya Kogberegbe*”; mothers and grandmothers who brooked no nonsense, and had (or has) peculiar takes on the construction of femaleness and maleness and on gender relations. **Date: Wednesday 26th October 2016. Time: 4:00pm.**
- The second community assembly explores the phenomenon of *infertility*. **Date: Wednesday 16th November 2016. Time: 4:00pm.**
- The third community assembly would explore stories of *fathers who enable(d) and ennobled* their daughters and wives. **Date: Wednesday 14th December 2016. Time: 4:00pm.**
- The fourth assembly explores the phenomenon of *formal and informal polygamy*. **Date: Wednesday 18th January 2017. Time: 4:00pm.**

Venue: Erelu Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi Centre for Gender Building

If you would like to participate in any of the CGSPS Community Assembly-Bearing Witness programmes *as a story teller*, please send an e-mail to: centreforgender.oau@gmail.com, to express an interest in sharing a story that is either biographical or autobiographical at the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th assembly. On the subject line please indicate **CA-BW I or II or III or IV: Story Teller**.

If you would like to participate in any of the CGSPS Community Assembly-Bearing Witness programmes *as a panelist*, please send an e-mail to: centreforgender.oau@gmail.com, to express your wish to serve as a panelist at the assembly. On the subject line please indicate **CA-BW I or II or III or IV: Panelist**.

Story tellers and panelists should please provide a very brief description of themselves and the work they do in the body of their e-mails, and also plan to arrive the venue of the assembly 15 minutes before the beginning of the programme for briefing.

Signed

Olutoyin Mejiuni, (Ph.D).

Acting Director, Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies.