



**Joycee Awojoodu- Miss Enugu 2008**

**Assignment # 5**

**Women in Nigeria**

I am truly honored to stand before you all today at the 2009 Nigerian Women Conference here in our lovely and magnificent capital Abuja! As an ambassador of change, I am honored to be invited by such a profound man as our President Yar'adua. As a woman I can identify with every woman in the audience in some way, shape or form and I am aware of the struggles we face on a daily basis. Although our obstacles seem tough and they sometimes feel like hurdles that are too high to jump, I am here to attest to the fact that we can get through anything, all we need is Faith and support.

One topic that is of high importance is: the HIV/AIDS pandemic that widely affects our people. Unfortunately, women take the center stage in any attempt at halting the spread of HIV/AIDS because they are the most affected. Leaders across the world agree that women are more infected, more affected and bear the brunt of the HIV/AIDS epidemic yet little progress has been made in the area of addressing the rights of women. Gender inequalities affect women's access to the interaction with health services, including those for HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Women's access is affected by childcare, restricted mobility and the lack of treatment literacy and specific reproductive health concerns. All of these issues are not adequately paid attention to or taken into consideration the way they should be. My solution to this issue is **government**



**intervention.** I believe that we need the government on my signs to effectively experience change on a grand scale. Organizations such as the National Youth Network against HIV/AIDS (NYNETHA) here in the US need to collaborate with organizations based in Nigeria to create resolutions. Although organizations like NYNETHA exist, we are still missing an organization that is devoted to women. Our women need to be educated and literature needs to be passed out so that we as a people our informed of the repercussions of this terrible disease, and how it is spread around.

This brings me to my next topic: the education of our Nigerian Women. Many reports indicate that the economic recession since the mid 1980's is the leading cause that affects women's education in Nigeria. As a result of increasing cost of education, most parents, especially in the rural areas, prefer withdrawing girls from school, instead of boys. To stop these occurrences, some State governments have passed edicts granting free education to girls up to certain levels, in other states, women with children are allowed to attend school and it is considered an offense to withdraw a female child from school before a stipulated age. In addition, early marriages, which in many cases is what prevents girls from attending school, is frowned upon by several states and women's organizations'. A Women's Education unit was established at the Federal Ministry of Education to encourage women education. Subsequently, all State Ministries of Education did the same. The Miss Nigeria in America organization has a significant program named **Project Women's Education (Project WE)**. The intention of the



program is: “Education and Literacy among Nigerian women.” I am a strong advocate for this program, and it is one of the key objectives of the organization. Besides typical school education, the program focuses on “the advancement (Social, Financial and Sustainability) of the Nigerian woman through education.” I stand by the program and agree with the solutions that have been brought up to end the issue of non-education. We must provide scholarships for the less fortunate so that they are able to attend school even when they do not have the funds. Similar to what some states have done we must condone parents who do not send their girls to schools and make sure that we are actively in the community enduring that each young girl makes it to school.

In order to achieve the things I have mentioned, we must focus on our rights as women. Women’s Rights are another huge topic that often gets looked over. Nigeria is traditionally a male dominated society though women make up half of our estimated 120 million populations. In spite of the advances in education, since the pre colonial times, women still lag behind in all areas of national development. Nigerian women face barriers to full enjoyment of their rights because of ethnicity, culture, religion or lack of education, many Nigerian women encounter specific obstacles related to their family status or to their socio-economic situation living in rural, isolated or impoverished areas. The traditions in Nigeria can be characterized as a system of beliefs and practices which put women in a position of inferiority. The inferior status of women is protected in the name of tradition, culture and religion and has deprived women of their rights as Human

The logo for Miss Nigeria in America features the words "Miss Nigeria" in a large, elegant, black cursive script. Below "Nigeria" is a small crown icon. Underneath the cursive text, the words "IN AMERICA" are written in a smaller, black, all-caps serif font.

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beings. Although I mentioned this last, I believe it is the most important topic struggle that we must overcome. We can attempt to fight for education and fight for better healthcare in the area of HIV/AIDS but without women's rights and without being treated equal, how far can we go? I applaud all you women that came to the conference. You have all taken the first step necessary to see change. Now we must join together as a family and a network. I am dedicated and committed to seeing huge strides being taken towards the advancement of women in my lifetime. Now we must raise up young girls who will see the importance of our efforts and who will take the mantle and run with it. President Yar'adua, I sincerely thank you for inviting me, and I am believing that you will join with our efforts to see our women lifted up towards equality. Now let's join together to go out and achieve the prize: equality for our women!