



Global Africa

THE AFRICAN METROPOLIS

STRUGGLES OVER URBAN SPACE, CITIZENSHIP,
AND RIGHTS TO THE CITY

Edited by
Toyin Falola and Bisola Falola



ROUTLEDGE



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Struggles Over Urban Space,
Citizenship, and Rights to the City

**Edited by Toyin Falola
and Bisola Falola**

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A case of city prostitution and precarious livelihoods

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Introduction

Urban spaces constitute hotly contested arenas of social experience. Thus, by their very nature, tensions between inclusion and exclusion arise among the city's pulsating beings. This interplay of competing interests tends to play out through the individuated and group goals that engage its occupants, and often focuses on competition over scarce economic resources and power. The matter of who is entitled to what resources and the persistent presence of conflict marks urban spaces as essentially political. To be sure, policy and politics regulate the operations of occupants, drive the granting of entitlements and benefits, and management where and for whom deprivations and lack of access falls. In this wise, contestation of rights is integral to the construction of social relations within urban spaces. These contestations are, as the following narratives aptly reveal, tied to struggles over belonging and access to space and livelihoods.

In one of those loose talks typical of leaders in the Nigerian federation, a former governor was alleged to have said that not everyone should live in, or be found in, Owerri, the state capital. His convictions were varied and were aimed at stemming the tide of hardship which had gripped many urban dwellers, who were now preoccupied with seeking outlets of protest. With this statement, he indicated that those faced with excruciating hardship and the fiscal challenges of city dwelling may find reprieve by moving to rural areas where survival was largely seen as less demanding. Owerri was not a place that granted the well-being of everyone.

The former governor more so may well have spoken to an unannounced policy aimed at stemming an influx of people from streaming into the capital city and adding to those who could claim the need to be served by the city. He may well have considered Owerri as a *select city* fit for people with definable means of livelihood and sought to peg a minimal fiscal requirement for those who wished to live there. How right or wrong he might have been is beyond our investigation here, but it is not difficult to underscore his perception of the city as *select* and exclusionary. This perception would imply that the city, as a social space with unique challenges, requires not only properly informed and better remunerated persons to occupy it but also people with the moral value and temperament to sustain urban life.

In that wise, there are people thought to be more fit for rural rather than urban spaces. To a large extent, the aged, the poor, the downtrodden, handicaps, the destitute and the mentally unstable, artisans of less endowment, street traders and beggars, to mention a few, may fit the category of "unfit" and also produce a city with a downward socioeconomic. These set of persons are often thought of as "low life", as the real source of squalor and irritation, and considered as suitable for life outside the polis. Thus government may well be presuming that the city becomes more amenable to manage when its demographic structure derives from a small and select few, who hold professional occupations and properly tabulated to ensure the taxation necessary for the city's development, rather than from the aforementioned group of the low-income or high-needs who may lack the fiscal capacity and temperament to fit as city dwellers. This perception is certainly ironic given that several of those mentioned command fiscal capacity that compares favorably with, if not better than some preferred professionals. This is also besides the fact that a city depends on occupants with varied roles and that contribution to the creation of a city and an urban social fabric lies beyond that of fiscal capacity.

Howbeit, no matter where you may be coming from, it is commonly perceived that citizens (and even more radically inclusive residents) of a state are all equal stakeholders of its resources. The truth of the matter here is that all of those that may be classed as unfit for the city are the ones who need the city the most and can be said to constitute the rationale for adjudging the city its metropolitan status. It is not the professional class of people found therein that makes a metropolis what it is, but the fact that its collectivity demonstrates the capacity to accommodate all shades of interests including pickpockets, plain shirted rogues, hoodlums, and all manner of social miscreants alongside celebrities, bureaucrats, and white-collar professionals thought to be thoroughly bred in civic values.

By this perception, the city is inclusive by measure of its social space rather than just by the values considered to be held by its residents, or those of a particular class. Thus it is difficult to talk about a metropolitan Ibadan without its currency counterfeiters, Sabon Gari without a multitude of Suya (meat) sellers, Lagos without area boys/girls,¹ and perhaps Owerri without its booming hotels and night clubs. In all these cities, spiced and un-spiced activities contribute to the city's animation. Hotels, brothels, drinking bars, and guest houses constitute institutionalized dimensions of that animation as regularly attraction of all manner of persons, civically disposed or otherwise. One candidate that renders a city as animated also includes the city's comforters or prostitutes.

For others, the animations of the city and its inclusiveness can prove overwhelming and offensive. A governor of one of Nigeria's western states was credited with being provoked by the overbearing presence of the Ibos in his state, which suddenly nudged his appetite to reduce their number via calling for their exit from Lagos.² In his wisdom, too, it would pass not only as a measure for demographic reduction but also a source of reprieve in the repatriation of those who were unduly flooding the city and weighing down its capacity to attend to its 'own people'. The need for a secure space for 'his own people' appeals to matters of who can belong in urban spaces and in dense environs of finite resources. It is the case, however,

that the constitution recognizes the need for every Nigerian, from wherever, to choose and stay wherever s/he decides to stay; yet the said governor, a renowned lawyer by profession, elected to ignore these constitutional freedoms.

Suffice it to say, *ab initio*, these sets of people that the governor now wants out can correctly say that their forbears were inextricably associated with the development of Lagos state, which gives them a right to the city. The governor also failed to recognize that several Igbo people had won elections into public positions in his state to show how far away the state has moved from being dictated by primordial proclivities. For sure, if the efforts of their forebears can be traced to developing the city and they currently contribute as well, then so long as they operate within the framework of the law, they can argue for legitimacy as valid stakeholders whose unique presence adds to the metropolitan disposition that defines a city. The fact that the governor included prostitutes and area boys and girls in those targeted for exile is noteworthy as it concerns which people are characterized as both owners and beneficiaries of the city, and which ones are one or the other or neither.

One last narrative focuses on a close conversation among some 'comfort ladies' who were at a popular nightclub in Owerri, Imo State capital. One comfort lady was of the opinion that Owerri was becoming oversaturated and limiting their chances of profiteering. The implication was that the influx of comfort women around the clubs and hotels was driving down prices, and limiting their financial enterprise within both a shrinking profit space and urban space. One lady suggested that it was time to move to Abuja, Nigeria's capital city, where the market of politicians and the new rich is more lucrative; the other was of the opinion that, following the message from her close friend in the business, moving into Lagos means making it big. She embellishes the story with a tale of how her associate has sent a lot of money home and is helping her family build a blockhouse with corrugated iron sheets to replace their mud and thatch roof house. The dominant theme in the ensuing discourse points the way to the economic value of city prostitution as a prime driver of engaging in that business and as what determines the economic mobility of comfort ladies.

These narratives highlight a number of issues crucial to the matter of urban spaces, human rights, and notions of development. First, it is the case that the state of 'Man' (*constitutive of male and female components*) is a key measure of development and the reason for the provision of infrastructural spaces and social arrangements. Man, therefore, is attracted to spaces where benefits can be derived as well as where one's fortunes can be improved. Second, the lure or attraction of particular interests can pull people to create and inhabit different types of social spaces. Thirdly, the right to choice and to choose what modes of living and freedoms best suits one's desires compels respect. Fourth, these desires, spaces, and choices over where to live and how, will create conflict and the need for resolution; within power imbalances and spatial restrictions, will transpire. These conditions, which characterize the choices people make about lifestyles and livelihoods, and the parameters of this choice, especially as it relates to discordant social relations and the occupation of urban environs, are where our examination finds meaning, relevance, and debate. Some would argue that the pursuit of a livelihood is a

human constant, and that irrespective of what it is, if you cannot change it, one can at least accommodate it. Others, however, would prefer to eliminate certain livelihood patterns citing innumerable dangers it inflicts on others or on those who may not like its social or moral implications. Our interest is not to contest the issue of relativism or absolutism characterizing patterns of livelihood. We rather endeavor to examine carefully the case of city prostitution to see how it has contended with questions over its acceptability in urban social spaces and its persistence as a form of livelihood. In tracing the history of these concerns and examining prostitution's current manifestation in African urban spaces, particularly Nigeria, we also aim to contest for its accommodation within an ostensibly restricted social, physical, and symbolic space of the city.

In what follows, we examine definitional issues associated with our study. Thus, politics, human rights, urban-urbanism, city, livelihood and prostitution, are the key terms for scrutiny. Next, we situate a framework of analysis in the discourse of the politicization of prostitution. This is intended to push our analytical effort to establish the identity of the prostitute, an identity that reveals the gender bias that has shaped and stifled analysis. Furthermore, we examine concerns about the experiences and challenges of city prostitution in Nigeria and its impact on the lives and livelihood of the prostitute. Lastly, we examine factors contributing to the rise of city prostitution and the implication this holds for cities and their ability to equitable promote the security and well-being of their inhabitants.

Concept clarification

From the onset, there is a need to clarify the terms of the study. Much as the natural sciences provide a contrasting dimension by defining their exact terms, the social sciences exhibit a disposition to being inexact.¹ Yet recognizing that terms are largely characterized by multifold meanings² must not deter us from clarifying these terms as we mean it in the context in which we deploy them.

The key concepts in this study include Politics, Urbanism, Space, City, Human Rights, Livelihood, and Prostitution. There is no doubt that these notions are repeatedly mentioned in the context of everyday human interactions. In our case, it is to Man, both *male and female*, that we refer to as social beings, and by which we mean a pulsating, feeling, and supposedly reactive/interactive entity. The extent of his sociability remains a subject of constant scrutiny and persistent interrogation largely on the impact he/she exerts not only on the social and environmental system but also upon the self. Therefore, Man is aptly a definitive entity who is often led by the force of his/her convictions and of the laws and extant cultures. In so saying, we mean to situate Man in the context of the collective social existence that s/he often tenders and alters. In examining the sociality and politics of this social existence within man's created environs, geographers, sociologists, and development experts find it useful to accord a bifocal view of environment into the *rural* and *urban* for ease of analysis.

There are as many conceptions of *Politics* as there are political scientists contending with crafting its meaning. Thus one in search of a specific meaning of the

term is apt to be disappointed. There are, however, some markedly useful efforts aimed at clarifying it to suffice for an objective understanding. From the classics, Aristotle would have us believe that the core of what defines the political must be sought for within strict confines of the public realm. In other words, the notion of politics allows us to focus on the public affairs of people. That would imply that individuated or private concerns fall outside of the reach of the state, which provides the overarching platform for public affairs to take effect. Politics, then, relate to the public affairs of pulsating beings living in society, one in which decisions taken are expected to affect all.⁷

In the realization that such public decisions are mainly decisions about power and the distribution of scarce resources, the opportunity for agreement and disagreement makes the idea of conflicts and compromises inevitable features of that social engagement.⁸ For Harold Lasswell, these decisions are about who gets what and how?⁹ Easton had this in mind in defining politics as the "authoritative allocation of values".¹⁰ Thus public decisions do not happen in a vacuum, they involve prioritizing and resolving societal problems in the hope of attaining beneficial outcomes for all. Politics has tended to refer to rule-relationships between citizens, on the one hand, and the managers of state power, on the other. Therefore, a central note that runs through the matter of politics is the reconciliation of conflicts to achieve the purposive end of the good life for all.

Space, as used here, refers to spatial sites. More or less, what is intended is the milieu or context of operation wherein these pulsating beings can afford to find themselves and liberate their energies in the search of a meaning to life, or a meaningful life. Better still, we also take space to refer to the larger environment of operation in the context of which populations can afford to express themselves freely in their respective social endeavors. Space is intended here as inclusive of geographic locations as sites of operation and social relations, and as sites in which the persistent challenge for freedom of expression has been and still remains sought after.¹¹ Thus the reality of location implies that whereas some people find it most convenient and suitable to live in the urban milieu, there are as yet others whose interest lies in rural areas.

City has been a unique social category in the definition of spaces. Its homologue is the town, which is often contrasted from the village where nature still has so much to offer in terms of preserving the natural order of things with less damage to ecological features. The uniqueness of it largely stems from the nature of attractions it compels. The city has tended to assure as a platform for the miscegenation of cultures and the production of a social that at best can be described as complex or sophisticated. People often ask who owns the city, or better still who is an indigene and who is a non-indigene, and who has a claim to manage and make decisions about the city. Oftentimes, such divisive contestations emerge in the context where the focus is on the possibility of control of economic resources or power.¹² Cities are, therefore, what they are because of the diversity of interests and opportunity structures that characterize it, and that also generates its contestations.

The tendency to associate the city with organized life laced in sophistication is well established. Among the Greeks, the city was, in terms of the interplay of

politics and power, the crucial arena in the definition of the public sphere.¹¹ Hence, the discourse of *Greek city states* includes direct reference to the city as hotspots for decisions about the prevailing social order. The city is a sphere of economic opportunity structures and cultural resources, as well as a mega center for policy and governance. It matters that in terms of power, the city commands a centripetal focus in attracting attention to itself, and for dissipation and distributing power. Hence, the city is always centrist, seeking to attract power and more resources to itself.

Urbanism is a derivative from the concept of urban.¹² One helpful strand in the proper appraisal of the term urban would be to analyze its descriptive categories. In spite of the recurrence of this peculiar notion, *urban*, it makes better sense to bring on the contrasting homologue, *rural*.¹³ The notion of urban/urbanism, therefore, is off explored as a contrasting viewpoint to the rural. Albeit, when the concept is mentioned, it has largely been to highlight what one has that the other does not. More or less, there has been increasing emphasis on the rural-urban divide to show one as the contrasting homologue to the other. Thus whereas both represent points on a continuum, the peculiarity in the urban crystallizes in terms of the enormity of infrastructural and facilities and institutions that markedly depict greater growth and sophistication and also in the rapidity of attraction to and density of persons within its confines. Hence the urban has tended to be more metropolitan in attracting people from varied social spaces into a unit that claims to engender greater sophistication and a variety of interests than any other social unit of assembly.

It is equally the case that urban areas boasted about their propensity of creating miscegenation of ideas and cultures stemming from the variety of persons from diverse cultural backgrounds. Thus the urban claims to drive the need for previously more primordially inclined persons to come together to share and develop their capacities. The welter of opportunity structures for mingling with people of diverse cultural orientation allows for the coalescence of ideas and behaviors, and proves a rich arena for faster development of economic and political opportunities. Hence Ashworth, White, and Winchester's concerns for "accessibility, opportunity and constraint"¹⁴ are not peculiar to prostitutes, but are keenly associated with the lure of urban spaces. As argued by Louis Wirth, the key to understanding the urban or urbanism is not so much in the influx of population, but in the

*influences which such centers exert upon the social life of man . . . and its force as the initiating and controlling center of economic, political and cultural life that has drawn the most remote parts of the world into its orbit and woven diverse areas, peoples, and activities into a cosmos.*¹⁵

The idea of urbanism, therefore, describes how and where social influences converge to create a cosmopolitan experience that offers accessibility, resource opportunity and ensuing restraints

Human Rights is one of the key labels of this study. Ideally, to speak about human rights is to speak for one self and, indeed, respectfully, for others, as to what is adequate and proper, and what ought not to be denied or removed from one

or from others. It is a true and pridelul quality of humanness to insist on certain practices as demeaning and reductionist to the personhood of someone. As such, human rights can mean insisting that there is an irreducible minimum standard of behavior towards the human person that can enable one to find a reason to still feel dignified in the context of his/her existence. Defining human rights is, however, subject to intense controversy and a variety of meanings and interpretations.¹⁰ One thing stands clear in the imaginations and intentions of all those who use the label, however, is that there are irreducible minimums associated with a human person as it relates to their existence in society. In most cases, human rights also advocate that a person should be duly recognized in his/her personhood as being as good valued as the other and, therefore, a reason why no one should be subjected to undue discrimination, subordination, or derision. To this extent, human rights is firmly couched in the discourse of the freedoms and liberties thought to be most salient in ensuring the safety and development (social and individual capacities) of an individual.

Livelihood imposes fewer constraints in its understanding. It has tended to refer to means and patterns of survival open to pulsating human beings within society. The social context of its application appeals more in the economic sphere where it focuses attention on what one does to contend and succeed with the difficulties of survival. As a survival and sustenance notion, the concept taxes our understanding of the nature, character, and patterns of involvement to which people resort in order to meet the obligations of social existence. Hence there have been common categorizations in terms of legitimate and illegitimate living patterns. It is the case that within the context of livelihood studies, what is often considered legitimate has tended to pass for what is permissible or agreeable to society. On the other hand, what passes for the illegitimate are those arenas of survival not covered by law or societal norms, which attracts the condemnation of society as a practice people should refrain from doing because of its moral questionably or the harm it causes to self or others. The fact, however, remains that livelihood seekers oscillate between what is legitimate and what is not as they seek to eke out a living. In this study, livelihood practices are perceived as the work that people engage in to attend to the challenges of survival.

We shall underscore *Prostitution* as crucial social practice as well as work that is a transactional practice involving humans. There are more than ample reasons to characterize it is an economic venture that is both attractive, disparagingly abhorrent, and morally disquieting.¹¹ The core of this socioeconomic experience is that the human body becomes characterized as an object of commoditization. The driving force of prostitution, therefore, can be felt in the dual currencies of sex and money. Both concern the condition that men and women need money for the acquisition of their needs as well as seek sexual pleasure. This may not necessarily sound problematic; what is problematic is the repulsion that characterizes the act and, more importantly, how the issue is often perceived from a biased lens that criminalizes the female component while according leniency and less stigma to male collaborators. That this long institutionalized socioeconomic experience continues to increase in urban spaces and that it is associated with livelihood needs

and gender and legal imbalances as well as clouded by dominant perceptions of its reputability over an analysis of prostitution vis-à-vis sex work, sex workers, and the conditions and protections (or lack thereof) that characterizes this labor is what compels us to critically re-examine this practice. We would be remiss not to note that there are serious questions around prostitution and its linkage to sexual violence and predation, human trafficking, and other crimes, particularly against the female half of prostitution relations. This examination of prostitution, however, does not aim to disregard or devalue these issues. Rather it is concerned with philosophically examining the nature of the enterprise in its form as a mutually based, consenting practice and a means of work, as well as via its relation to urbanization and to questions over belonging, rights to urban spaces, and how access to secure livelihoods are constructed and made precarious in cities.

Prostitution: a framework of analysis

The notion that work is a quintessential factor that preoccupies humanity writ large cannot be overemphasized. What is not very clear is which particular social effort constitutes work, and which satisfies the interests of a particular individual. It is believed that education provides a key to this quest for choice and financial security. However, there are instances where, even with education, work needs remain unmet such as in situations where masses of university graduates remain unemployed. Thus not everyone benefits from being educated. This is all too glaring in the problem of urban unemployment among educated persons – an issue that is not exclusive to the developing world alone.

Ironically, in the face of rising unemployment, crime, in many social spaces, has been elevated to the status of 'work' as people turn to abhorrent and reprehensible behaviors in order to earn money and meet the economic requirements to sustain life in their respective environments. Lack of valid employment has forced many youths in the developing world into cybercrimes. In the Nigerian context, for instance, the concept of *yahoo boys* is now an addition that swells the sociological labels given to many youngsters who persistently engage people on the Internet in hopes of extorting the gullible through deceit. The matter is a fundamentally complex one that needs an entirely fresh paper for an enriching clarification. The state officially labels it as 419, or, *advanced fee fraud*.²⁰ Its practice is seen as work by those engaged in it, and those who find the fortune it brings (or the possibility of a onetime windfall) as a reason not to seek any other legitimate means of employment. Indeed, the bulk of those who engage in this 'business' can be found in the cities, where the sudden burst of ill-defined wealth earns blessings from unquestioning pastors and prayer warriors. Essentially, the key to a better understanding of work is to assume that social efforts rendered on the basis of generating economic value constitutes work. Thus our focus is mainly on remunerative and employable social efforts rendered on the basis of generating economic value to the person or persons in question.

Within this definition, it is possible to ask if prostitution can be included as a definitive category of work. Such a question may seem belated given the flurry

of writings and documentations in place regarding the notion of "sex work" and "sex workers".²¹ For our present concern, prostitution is one such role that carries a triple characterization in being considered as work, crime, and a social experience. In spite of the legitimization that it earns in select social spaces, its dominant and age-old locus has been that of a crime or "ill fame";²² hence, its provocative reception as a morally repulsive social act. There are ample reasons to believe that prostitution is largely driven by two key factors. On the one hand, is the monetary or gift impetus that propels the enterprise, and on the other hand are claims that a penchant for "uncontrolled sexual desires"²³ hypes the advance of prostitution.

In terms of the latter, it must also be borne in mind that that "sex is a permanent element in social life and insures constant association of the two sexes".²⁴ The reality of sexuality is also one that requires some measure of restraint in relation to sexual conduct. It is for such reason that Davis underscores the notion of "sexual conditioning".²⁵ An interpretation of this notion could be that managing sexuality entails begging it through negotiations for companionship restraining from purchasing sex. It is within the contrasting positions of transactional sex and negotiated companionship that the issue of a moral order comes into play. The more acceptable position appears to favor sex on the basis of negotiated companionship rather than transaction.

The social challenge posed by prostitution remains that it involves the transactional relations of both sexes, strictly on grounds of an economic exchange rather than reciprocity aimed at building and holding companionship. This does not necessarily imply the absence of mutual benefits as both parties can also negotiate for agreeable terms to achieve personal satisfaction. Prostitution nevertheless involves a bidding system where bodies trade on the currencies of pleasure and economy. As such, we are talking about inextricably tied bodies bound in 'contract' to provide pleasure in exchange for money, other intrinsic goods of value, or the satisfaction of sexual pleasure. Therefore, a market theory of prostitution would allow us to assert that a business relation exists wherein buyers and sellers can negotiate to have their interests met, or realized, for an agreed price. There is no doubt that prostitution, entered into by those aware of what they are asking for and what has to be given in return, and who are within legal and social parameters of being 'of age', fits the notion of an economic exchange, even though these exchanges may be conducted on steeply unfair terms. Thus it is to sex for money or gifts, and the business of prostitution as a socioeconomic enterprise subject to the mechanisms of supply and demand, that we focus on in analyzing the emerging urban market of prostitution.

The efficacy of the business also depends on how the prostitution market is regulated. As observed Joyce Outshoorn, "practices governing prostitution in their respective jurisdictions in distinct ways are broken down into three major approaches: prohibitionism, abolitionism and regulation".²⁶ These approaches tend towards pronouncing the act as crime, or allowing for its regulation as tenable within the framework of governing laws. It is, therefore, never a social experience that escapes the purview of the state, which has legal jurisdiction of all cities where prostitution thrives.

The burgeoning operational base of prostitution in many a developing economy such as in Lagos, Abuja, and Owerri, to mention a few Nigerian cities, has been in urban areas rather than rural spaces. Not that the rural areas are completely free of this experience. Instead, the rural environment is better suited to limiting the development of a viable prostitution market that can generate sustained income for workers. In rural areas, the customary underpinnings embedded in traditions and customs, the intimacy of rural settings, and the overriding quest for families to see their daughters protected tends to inhibit prostitution in rural areas. Additionally, the hope of getting married within one's primordial social order also compels candidates for prostitution to engage cautiously. Real marriages are rooted in, and derive meaning from, particular cultural orders of African communities in spite of the pronounced presence of the church and rational-legal marriage arrangements. For instance, among the Ibos of Eastern Nigeria, interrogations about character, family history, and crucial cultural matters, such as caste, often come to the fore in the event of possibility of marriage. It follows a process of interrogation through independent parties from both ends that intend to marry. The depth of this cultural probity is so profound that it exerts pressures to keep female prostitutes on the edge knowing that the business is not forever and that marriage weighs higher than prostitution. It is in light of these cautions that intending prostitutes shift towards cities to avoid the stigma of being involved in such 'business of ill fame', and to find the space (literally and symbolically) to operate.

The metropolitan nature of the city is seen as providing a cover for the identity of the prostitute. The fact that prostitution is carried on with some measure of secrecy, and tied to spaces that help conceal the identity of the prostitute, raises questions about the moral dimension of the act. If it were a socially approved phenomenon, secrecy, creating covert identities, and denying being a member of one's profession would not be necessary. For sure, in this transactional engagement, men and women are involved and none is ever seen as being at home with the label or identity of 'a whore'. Both parties aim to protect their respectability, which hinges on concealing their identity as a prostitute. A key question, in the face of the common concern not to be associated with this pronouncedly corrosive and repulsive label, is who, then, is the prostitute?

Prostitution: a discourse on gender bias

Given the growing popularity of gender studies as a disciplinary corpus, one which has seen the flourishing of knowledge claims stretched into intellectual arenas such as feminism/womanism, lesbian, and masculinity studies,²⁷ it has become increasingly apparent that social relations between the sexes on the score of power, its appropriation and uses, are intricate and difficult to judge. Within these contexts, there is an overarching perception of the female as a profoundly short-changed body, which tends to be attributed to patriarchy as being imbued with pronounced subordinating instincts. The rendition of the woman's place in the global scheme of things, therefore, seems to present her as the prime object of persistent exploitation and subordination to her male counterpart. It is in the context of such reasoning

that the notion of the subordination and perceived inferiority of women have become front burner political issues aiming at cementing the fact that women are persistent denigrated by patriarchal systems and practices.²⁸ In travelling back further in time, age-old Greek social order did not include her as a crucial political personality;²⁹ and beyond that, other instances abound where women are still considered as the property of their husbands.³⁰ While their struggles in the age-old Greek order speaks to the cultural trivialization of their personalities, which is still sustained in many climes to date, the late history of women suffrage in America also informs about the connections between women's denial of political (and public) personalities and their perceived status as inferior beings.³¹ In this wise, patriarchy and the privatization of 'women's issue' is seen as defining the laws, customs, and traditions, and is hardly expected to willingly unseat itself from its hegemonic standpoint.

The penchant for fact, as it were, guides us in situating claims as they are, not as we think they ought to be. The driving force in gender studies as social science, therefore, has been to elevate the knowledge of males and females. Gender studies and the intellectual enterprise of feminism, has done much to expose a global bias wherein male-female relations are primarily unequal. Thus inequality of power relations seems to order global interactions between both sexes and finds the male and masculine attributes more persistently in favorable position. Additionally, this bias operates by assigning protective covering to males while producing vulnerabilities associated with the female and feminine.

With regard to our present intervention, it is not so surprising to note that the hegemonic thinking about prostitutes and prostitution manifests favorable disposition towards the male rather than the female. Yet both parties are co-occupants of a tandem cycle that must move in a similar direction. This is because continuing conversations about patriarchy do not pretend to hide its intentions to further its interests through self-assertion and eulogization. To that extent, it would seem that the sins of males must be accommodated as a natural social practice shun of moral negatives compared to that of females. Such thinking pervades current renditions of prostitutes and prostitution such that a practice considered to be widely reprehensible does not shame males who both indulge and pay for sexual transaction in the same manner as it does females. This therefore raises concerns about the real identity of the prostitute.

In the cause of this research effort, most male respondents confronted with the question, *who is a prostitute*, did not mince words in directing their gaze to a particular woman. It gave the impression that the prostitute is exclusively the female who situates to solicit for sex. It also suggested an exclusive category in which the male component is missing. Asked why the male component is missing, one could sense a collective exoneration of the male who buys sex. From the American pop star, James Brown, the loud resonance of, "it is a man's world"³² was echoed in their rationale. However, for any transactional relation, a seller needs a buyer to complete the business process. A simple theory of market relations informs that both buyers and sellers must interact to effectively and efficiently situate a transaction. The situation is in no way different for the prostitution market. Thus

the extant reality of the prostitution market is that males and females must be involved in a bidding game that will eventually lead to possible purchase of sex guaranteed by a price.

Yet the circumstance of labeling the prostitute hardly recognizes this reality, or, perhaps, safely elects to protect the male component of this transactional interest as if the woman buys herself. It is all too clear that if the prostitute is solely the woman, as often presumed in the burgeoning gender bias that clouds its perception, the market condition of prostitution will wither and decrease significantly from a reduction of buyers. On the other hand, while females often conceal the nature of their prostitution, men do not have to be as hidden in their desire to pay for and find succor from the body of women. The inkling for lust is not seriously seen as a grand negative that defines the male and which allows him wider leeway to see himself from a less jaundiced perspective. In this wise, a cautious look is cast at his person, not as a prostitute, but as a client, which shields him from the corrosive label 'whore'.

The social category, client, is a notion that hides away the man in prostitution,²² and tends to provide him a secure cover from the attendant social stigma of being morally depraved. By so labeling men as clients rather than prostitutes, they assume a toga of infallibility and see their acts as innocuous. Men often view themselves, in prostitution, through the possession of purchasing power, which ironically leads to view that the women, as an economic good being purchased, are reductionist to their own humanity by fact of that commitment to a price. It can be likened to the purchase of a slave, a pulsating human, which in itself is inherently subservient and inferior. They are, however, complicit in the purchasing of sex for consumption. If the mere appearance of the woman at the stage means solicitation, what then is the movement in the direction of the man who also opens the relational or transactional interest?

To this extent, we argue that, historically, renditions of "who the prostitute is" have been fraught with faulty, lopsided interpretations that cloud the reality of the phenomenon. Long lasting as this mistake has been, it however has helped fuel the prostitution business since the male component of prostitution fails to see his involvement through the lens of morality. The actual issue involved is that the market character that justifies prostitution cannot be sustained by the presence of just one party. Perhaps only as late developments do we now have women more openly acquiring fellow women, and vice versa, for gay practices. This practice, which may further acknowledge the existence of an appetite for sex, also does not absolve that transactions for sex engages both the buyer and seller in the definition of prostitute. There, therefore, is a need to correct the imbalance and bias in the perception of who the prostitute is, which tends to descend heavily on the woman while leaving the man a crucial space of freedom from the culpability of disreputable sex acquisition and consumption. To be sure, the notion of prostitute and prostitution tends to lose its objectivity in the subjective interpretation it has been beclouded for too long. The implication of the scientific status of the term is such that a common understanding must prevail in respect of its meaning to avoid a drift to meaninglessness.

What is needed to identify a prostitute, in this market situation, is not really who is paying whom, but whether there are parties involved in the business partnership of trading sex for money or other gifts of value like drinks, food and more. The fact that both parties are willing to part with sex, for an economic transaction, renders the parties involved as prostitutes. In so saying, it speaks not to truth, but to false consciousness, to assign distinctive labels of identity to common parties inextricably tied in this transactional order. Confusion, and the obfuscation of gender and power inequalities, stems from creating distinct categories of prostitute and client, which works to mark the male as outside of prostitution. We find this distinction rather unnecessary and a cause for why the moral verve of the male component is palpably low. It is also for this reason that a policeman will find a reason to apprehend a woman and pay no attention to the man, who is a complicit business partner and without whom there would have been no business transaction. Excusing of culpability and complicities through the term 'client' masks the male's transactional identity as a prostitute. The reality of the matter of prostitution is that the male is equally a prostitute seeking a sex-for-money exchange. Understanding prostitution, and eliminating its gender bias, therefore, must begin with the appreciation of the Siamese status of this transactional interest, one in which complementarity is key to the effective functioning of the business partnership. Males are, as it were, no less or more prostitutes than women, and as parties who prostitute for transaction sex, both are 'the prostitute'.

Empirical notes on the challenge of city prostitution: a Nigerian experience

The Nigerian state is a federation of 36 and an exclusive federal capital, Abuja. As Africa's most populous nation, she is richly blessed in terms of natural resources and a breadth of cultures. It is the case that a visitor to Nigeria enters a compact arena with over 250 ethnic groups competing for a number of interests.⁴⁴ As the sixth largest oil-producing nation, Nigeria's presently heads the Organization of Gas Exporting Nations. The country's potentials include a large market made possible by its large population, an exceptionally rich vegetation of cultivable lands and a strong workforce in commerce, agriculture, industry and the professions. The potentials of the country speak to a state that merits the label, wealthy. The latter is certainly an undeniable fact if we consider the striking volume of fiscal misdemeanor that has gripped, and still grips the state, and how, in spite of this, the nation still survives.

Undoubtedly, there is also the common conviction that if economic resources were properly utilization of economic resources, the state would not be experiencing the excruciating pains of poverty that now besiege its population. One important report acknowledges Nigeria as a country where "poverty thrives in the midst of plenty"⁴⁵ such that there is an institutionalization of poverty and a persistently large underclass created by the misrule of the state. It is necessary to note that livelihood questions, particularly in urban areas and in developing societies, verge on the economic as the key to survival as kinship support structures are

less produced and social security and safety provisions by the state are fragile if it all existent. As Ibo's say, *onweghi onye ogbenye bu enyi ya* (*no one is a friend to poverty*). Prostitution, in the context of poverty, is therefore often a resort to a viable and informal means of earning money and survival.

Leaving aside the specificities of corruption, our intervention places a premium on examining urbanization and the capacity of urban space to enable people, particularly prostitutes, to secure meaningful livelihoods. In this wise, the first question that comes to mind is, what is the fate of the prostitute in the face of the complex relational order that the city and its harsh economic climate offers? Examining this question will help us ascertain the survival strategies of this social group, and the conditions that they contend with in order to secure a livelihood. In doing so, we also explore the milieu of the urban prostitution business and the ramifications of contemporary prostitution in Nigeria.

The reality of urbanization, it must be emphasized, has caught up with the Nigerian state and makes no pretension towards a recession.⁴⁶ From a regional status of three regions in the independence years to an addition of a Midwestern region in 1963-64, the country has expanded to a federation of 36 states and a federal capital in Abuja. An earlier capital existed in Lagos, which, on account of its congestion, and the need for a centrally placed location, gave rise to the shift to Abuja. In terms of urbanization, it is significant to note that during the process of state creation, a new state capital is created. In the course of colonial rule both, Lokoja and Calabar had the privilege of being city centers of power. Successive cases of state creation thus leads to the generation of cities, attracting an influx of people of varied economic interests. The regional arrangements, for example, gave rise to the development of capital cities such as Kano and Kaduna in the north; Lagos, Ibadan, and Ife in the West; and Port Harcourt, Enugu, and Onitsha in the East. The flourishing of these older cities, however, has not ceased in the face of the development of newer sites of urban cities. What this means is that there has been both a steady rise of city development and increasing density in newly created cities.

The rapid expansion of new cities owes much to an increase in population overall, and to the influx of migrants, particularly unemployed youth who move away from what are perceived as saturated cities and into emerging urban centers. It is widely believed that these new cities, brimming with the potential of development projects, could be financially lucrative. The characterization of people who migrate into these cities is however difficult to track, but it makes sense to say that not all who move into these new urban spaces do so completely armed with a saleable professional status. As the city has tended to be metropolitan, so to is the character of the individuals who define it. In so saying, professionals, technical, and white-collar classes, as well as informal laborers and the less skilled have tended to move together into the city space. It is also difficult to talk about cities that are distilled of robbers, pickpocket, touts, and others who are perceived as social miscreants.

While the state appears to have created an agency that regulates toutting, such statutory measures have not been applied to prostitution. It is in fact difficult to recount any regulations against prostitution. The police, however, have tended to operate as one of the only groups that liberally categorizes the prostitute as a tout.

We are not persuaded by this claim and do not include the prostitute as a tout, particularly when their goal is not to extort, and they do not all aggressively market their services. Additionally, the prostitute is often the one who is aggressively pursued and the recipient of touting. From an ethnographic vantage position, we witnessed prominent government officials and politicians streaming into popular nightclubs in Owerri, and collaborating with pimps who act as go betweens negotiating prostitutes for these officials. Indeed, prostitution is sought after by enough segments of society such that it is a livelihood that does not need touting to prosper. Thus the fate of the urban prostitute is tied to the value of sex as a desired good and to the means of livelihood available and accessible within the city.

Cities can be vibrant and harsh spaces for securing livelihood needs. This mix of opportunity and risk holds true for professional and low-skilled workers. The promise of city life as well as its resources (e.g., infrastructure, educational and public service institutions, jobs, recreation, entertainment) attracts an influx of migrants hoping to 'make it' within an urban environ. It is the case that many people found in cities focus on what they can to show for their presence. A concern with one's livelihood is an ever-present concern of an urban dweller, and of the urban poor. Securing a viable income and withstanding the pressures of daily survival is a palpable day-to-day challenge of urban living. This situation brings us to the question of how prostitution operates within the opportunities and constraints city's offer.

There are a number of difficulties confronting the prostitute who seeks to engage in sex work. Most salient in our examination is that the stigma of prostitution and shame associated with this label produces a need for secrecy and identity protection, unnecessarily heightens the risk of the job and creates a situation that can be exploited to intimidate the prostitute. Another is that the depiction of the prostitute, which reveals the female while obscuring the male, can create unfair trade arrangements and an imbalance of rewards and risks, and unjustly targets and criminalizes women. There is also the need to contend with regulations enacted by the state or by its policing agents. As noted earlier, prostitution regimes range from outright prohibition to regulation and legalization. The Nigerian state perches nebulously between the two states. There is no ban on the trade nor is the state moving towards legalization for a myriad of reasons ranging from the cultural and moral order, conflated experience of its operation, and patriarchal understandings about the acquisition of women as wife, which transforms her to property. The pronounced scarcity of laws specific to prohibiting prostitution, however, does not imply that there are no means of regulating it. Rather it means regulation is conducted in a grey zone of enforcement that also leaves prostitutes uncertain of their rights.

City prostitution and livelihood within contested urban spaces: gleaning issues from Owerri

Owerri city, the Imo State capital in Nigeria, is characterized by the saying that "Owerri bu ebe ana eri ego, nakwa ebe ngwori (*Owerri is where people come to spend money and catch their fun*)." While the city is a useful representative sample

of the business of city prostitution in Nigeria, it was also particularly selected for a number of reasons. As an emergent and vibrant urban space, the influx of new arrivals, socioeconomic diversity of its population, coupled with the ease of mobility, and sense of freedom characterizing the urban lifestyle makes it an attractive choice for the socioeconomic experience under investigation. There is perhaps no comparable relatively new city that is as rapidly growing and also flourishing with hotels, bars, restaurant, food vending joints, and nightclubs. With three higher education institutions, low industrial capacity, and a consumption driven economy, Owerri offers the opportunity to explore the reality of a business that currently thrives on none to little formal, legal restrictions. This *fun lovers haven*, as it is also fondly referred, boasts of a virile nightlife, one in which comedians, pedestrian artists, public officials, and ordinary citizens participate in with a unique zest that compares with Sunday marches to church. Indeed, the city invests more in its hotels, bars, guesthouses, and nightclubs than in any form of industrialization. Within this urban epicenter of entertainment, the prostitution business is flourishing as males and females prostitute and in so doing supports the economic structure of Owerri city. This burgeoning entertainment market, set within a larger context of urban poverty and inequality, fuels the attraction of prostitution as a means to secure a source of livelihood and survival.

Within the allure of the city, with its claims of opportunity and access, exists daunting challenges as to who gets what and how; or, better still, who is allowed access to what. The narrative of city prostitution underlines the need to examine how economic survival is tenuously pursued through urban informality. The Nigerian state has no statutory laws banning the operation of prostitution businesses. The prevailing cultural and moral order, extant pressures of being responsible to one's family, along with social stigma bends prostitution, however, bend prostitution towards liminal and informal business practices and towards the protective covering of urban entertainment spaces, streets, nightscapes, and more private spaces. In the weighing of self-esteem and cultural survival with that of self-survival and the trauma of poverty and material deprivations, the urban, poor, and, in this case, female prostitute operates on tenuous grounds. The growth of prostitution, its known operation in Owerri entertainment spaces, and its facilitation by people 'employed' in multiple roles (prostitutions, pimps, prostitution brokers, and bar and hotel owners, etc.) is institutionalizing prostitution within the city. In response to the visibility of its growth within a context that presumes to morally and culturally abhor such operations, demands a response by the state.

The state on one hand is tasked with producing an environment that and provides for job opportunities and improves the livelihood social conditions of its residents. On the other hand, it is the state's responsibility to establish the boundaries of legal businesses and maintain social order throughout city spaces. In wrestling with these functions, the state, in the conflicting terms of prostitution, has chosen to operate in a grey area. Rather than regulating prostitution or addressing the challenges that lead many to pursue it, and in embracing the entertainment fueled economic boom of Owerri, the state has chosen to create outward appearances of regulation. First, they rely on the knowledge that prostitutes are mainly perceived as female, and

as disreputable females, and are thus already limited in number, or should be held as a familial responsibility to control. Second, the prostitute, as a devalued social category with contested rights of their belonging in urban spaces, self-restrict their movement within cities. As such, the state can address prostitution as a controllable issue that is relegated to certain areas. Second, the state has framed prostitutes as touts and in so doing allows them to be criminalized (when necessary) as a nuisance, but does not elevate them to a status that demands immediate enforcement and eradication. By abdicating on a firm, formal stance on prostitution, the state has abdicated adjudication to the police. It is this police institution of the state and their latitude in interpreting the loose regulations that are feared by prostitutes.

State police responses to the presence of prostitutes in Owerri and, indeed, in other parts of Nigeria, is replete with bias. This bias tends to criminalize the prostitute, rather than determine if their touting is an aggressive violation or even viewing female prostitutes as sex workers operating a business that is not unlawful. In the course of this study, there were several instances where apprehended prostitutes became sources of improving the remunerations of corrupt police who intimidate and extort them of monies, and even abuse them sexually as a condition for setting them free. Not all such corrupt and abusive actions are reported, as intimidated prostitutes are less positioned to fight back and as they desire to avoid the open stigma of being identified as a prostitute in a legal court process. With taxpayer money, the police apprehend and harass prostitutes, carry them away (*or, better put, cart them away*) to police stations, and make charges of wandering and *intent to crime*. The prejudging of a prostitute as a criminal remains unlawful if there are no stated laws against it. Additionally, the long-honored convention is to assume that no one is guilty unless it is proven otherwise in a formal court of law, which the police station is no substitute. Yet the police have taken matters into their own hands and have defined the prostitute as a criminal who is guilty at the point of arrest. Worse still, in the climate of an abrogated law on wandering, and the absence of curfew, it would seem rather questionable to assume that someone well dressed, conscious of where s/he is going and unarmed, can properly be deemed criminal for being out late. Who, then, are the police criminalizing (and not) as prostitutes?

The usual charge is that one was found at an odd hour to warrant police attention. In marking the day through 24 hours, and in promoting a 24-hour entertainment city, then which hours are 'odd', and for whom, when seen, is the hour odd? Meanwhile, the police claim that the oddity of the hour is what demands surveillance and the need to keep vigil over the lives and properties of citizens. But does this surveillance not include the protection of the prostitute-citizen who as a lawful member of society should be a recipient of protection and not be subjected to abuse? The question, then, is does the citizen status of the prostitute disappear because she is confronted by the police at a specific time of the morning or night?

Beyond doubt, the prostitute, as both prostitute and citizen, warrants the assigning of rights. In fact, when encountered in urban spaces by police, s/he should first be presumed as a citizen with rights accorded to that identity. Additionally, beyond citizenship, human rights are accruable rights that protect against discrimination on the basis of identity. The prostitute as a human citizen, lawful business operator,

equal member of urban space, and legitimate bearer of a multitude of rights, should be recognized with inherent dignity, and not made to bear the burden of police contempt, or be confronted with an atmosphere of state sanctioned disregard. The state and its agents are under the obligation to respect the rights of every human, and particularly those already agreed on and clearly enunciated in its constitution. The prostitute is also entitled to be objectively informed about his/her rights. The truth of the matter is that the prostitute is entitled to more than a modicum of respect and is in dire need to see his/her rights protected. In fact, s/he ought to have his/her rights secured in order both to strive for survival and derive feelings of self-fulfillment. There is no presumption of innocence for the prostitute, who is incorrectly faulted and persistently prejudged as a criminal by police. This denial of rights by state institution and its agencies strips away the ground of respectability for prostitutes.

The common practice, then, has been instances where the police bring about a discriminatory attitude towards the prostitute and arrest groups of prostitutes, separating the men from the women. In most cases, as observed in Owerri city, the police arrest prostitutes until they have a group of about six or seven females. The prostitutes embarrassingly hurled into police vans, sometimes at the risk of dirty slaps and beatings in the face of resistance.

If a proper (non-gender-biased) rendition of the prostitute was done by the police, then the male components should be arrested alongside the females and charged similarly as equally culpable. Yet repeatedly males are left alone while the females are taken to police stations where fictitious charges are raised to elicit fear and force these captives to plead for soft lines of exit. This soft line of exit is, indeed, a key, if not the very, reason for their arrests as it galvanizes informal channels of illicit funding for the police team. In other words, the arrests are orchestrated because police count on the female prostitute's fear of the police process and their keenness to be set free (with their identities protected) to prey on their funds, which ironically is the reason for their (false) charge. To steal from the prostitute is to seriously impair their economic power and further devalue their labor. Meanwhile, the money received aids the business of corrupt policing and the practice of enriching personal pockets rather than human right of every citizen.

The implication of the forgoing is twofold. First, the engagement of the police in the undue harassment of prostitutes remains an unwarranted matter in the light of no enabling laws against prostitution. Secondly, given that there are no laws of wandering in place, it is not in the place of the police to abridge time and set an agenda on how the prostitute ought to operate and at what particular periods. Such framing of time and space, infringes on the prostitute's right to seek their livelihood, and of their rightful belonging in urban spaces. Furthermore, the extortion that follows the arrest only prevents the prostitute from improving in his/her finances. It does not solve a problem of criminality, as that does not legally exist, or a problem of economic survival as it weakens their financial stability. The implication is that the police and the state, by their action and inaction, respectively, continue to structurally perpetuate the female prostitutes' poverty and renders her as one perpetually cut for a precarious living.

The growth of urban prostitution: a clue on the reasons and rationale

Prostitution is globalizing in terms of the growth of new vistas, facilitation of connections between places, and an international cover, which fuels the covertness that the business currently relies on. This global expansion is not entirely unexpected as the platitudes of globalism and globalization informs us about unlimited possibilities in access and opportunities to learn and improve ourselves. The Nigerian social space has not been spared of the massive effect of globalization even in terms of matters concerning prostitution and sex. Long before the expansive growth of the Internet, journals, and magazines of pornographic persuasions have graced bookshops, newspaper vendor stands, and brothels. These pornographic sources of communicating sex and sex-related matters were largely confined to the towns where these bookshops, brothels, and newsstands had a more forceful presence. The implication is that the early features of the sex industry can be viewed as phenomena associated with urban spaces. In this wise, cities have hosted and disseminated crucial information on matters of prostitution and sex. Although prostitution is not solely associated with urban spaces, in the globalizing era, cities have also seen a growth in the economy and networked trade of prostitution.

For the urban prostitute, operating within the milieu of a metropolitan setting that is often read as 'a no man's land', can offer them greater latitude of space in a more heterogeneous, and often more tolerant, environment. Additionally, the sense of metropolitanism offers the female prostitute security via her ability to assume an alternate identity and become a nondescript member of urban space. If for any reason one of her kin visits a hotel or guesthouse where she is working and finds her, it is a lot easier to conclude that the one is also a fraternal fellow in the business. The case of the men is not always seen as a problem given their role as client rather than prostitute. In most cases, they hardly think about their identity as also a prostitute. Nor do they bother about their primordial identity because, as men, they do not face the same level of scrutiny or criminalization for being seen at sites affiliated with prostitution, even at odd hours.

Examining the operators of the prostitution business can help us understand the flourishing and dynamic nature of the business in an urbanizing space such as Owerri city. Note that one's identity as a prostitute does not preclude one from also being a brother, sister, student, and so forth. In spite of the demeaning nature of the sex trade, it is one that also includes both the so-called eminent and the underclass into a common social category, at least momentarily. As a category of social experience that thrives on the basis of multiple personality, the professional prostitute, which ought to include the pimp, consisted of teachers, lawyers, members of the armed forces, police, lecturers, the so acclaimed reverend gentlemen, medical doctors, engineers and business gurus. All of these people with varied social identities engage in the practice and promotion of a trade considered abhorrent, but which steadily attracts their attention.

An interesting feature that is fueling city prostitution in Owerri, and which is hardly being addressed, is the swelling number of students in institutions of

higher learning who are becoming prostitutes. The drive can be linked to a difficult economic environment in which survival has become a critical matter for all in light of the state induced economic crunch. Thus the student hostels, albeit largely owned by private individuals, have become 'gateless' in the sense that they are not attempting to curb the growing number of those shifting from student-learner to student-prostitute. The student-prostitute, therefore, redirects their pursuit of a livelihood towards the guesthouses, hotels, and nightclubs and towards the uniform of loose blouses, micro-mini skirts, transparent nightgowns, and bump shorts which characterize one as employable. Male student-prostitutes are equally on the prowl for women, and liquor, that they can get at a cheap cost. Female student prostitutes, when asked about the shift towards prostitution, cite the soaring costs of living and lack of viable employment as key reasons. They also blame lecturers, who they claim extort them for passing grades, as a rationale for this shift in attitude and the promotion of a prostitution-inclined climate. The institutional warnings given to erring lecturers further support students' allegations that they are sexually pressured by their teachers. That, however, is not all; certainly, it does not explain why students would leave their academic responsibilities in Owerri to prostitute in a target city such as Abuja.

The other factor is the growing role of politicians who actively recruit female students. These female students, allegedly considerably paid through pimps, are solicited to become mistresses to politicians, or to become party and meeting ushers and be put up in the guesthouses and hotels of politicians. The emerging fortunes of students who return back to their hostels also increases the interests of other students seeking to earn a livelihood. This 'rising business' does not show signs of receding as the propensity to show-off and surround themselves with 'comfort women' unfortunately, appears to be the popular norm among local politicians and business gurus. Being surrounded by comfort ladies, among the political and business elite, is thus becoming a marker of status and wealth, and is driving the aggressive recruitment of women and female students in particular. To meet this demand and growing acceptance, student-prostitutes are no longer just being recruited through universities. The rapidity with which under-aged girls and students in the high schools are being recruited into the prostitution trade in Owerri city is quite alarming.

To combat this situation, a policy statement aimed at controlling prostitution was recently issued by the state in the form of a pronouncement on indecent dressing. This pronouncement has to do with the growing near nudity that characterizes the dressing of prostitutes, which the state has deemed under the public purview to judge and condemn. This response mechanism, however, is again an abdication of the state to address prostitution directly (perhaps as it supports the growth of the city) or to confront its need to oversee the economic well-being of its citizens, particularly the poor and unemployed. In this grey area of regulation and the informality of the prostitution business, the police have once again exploited the policy and virtually define anything as indecent dressing. As a result, the immediate victim of this charge, in most cases female, becomes harassed to such a frenzied point that they prefer to pay money and be extorted in order to be let go. The 'policy',

therefore, results in profiteering by the police and extends the gender bias against women. It is instructive that while male politicians and businessmen, amongst others, are driving the demand for prostitution, the pronouncement was issued against women. Furthermore, the pronouncement only works to provide extra remuneration to the police. There are as yet no court records on people arraigned on charges of indecent dressing, but there are numerous, poignant stories about how police extort monies from their victims. Indeed, it is a policy response that continues to exculpate males, who engage in the business as prostitutes, recruit women and do so within university and high schools, and can be out in the streets and elsewhere without harassment.

Conclusion

The focus of the chapter has been on the problematic of eking out a safe and unperturbed livelihood for the social category of, prostitutes, who are no less human than any other person who is compelled to pursue and secure means for self-survival. Noted in recorded history as the oldest profession, prostitution, however, yet to earn acceptability throughout the world as to permit it a fair atmosphere of operation and one that humanizes and protects its laborers. It instead is an unrecognized and demeaned professional role, a status that is given largely because it is perceived a morally abhorrent and socially repulsive. The mounting restraints to prostitution as a means of livelihood owes much to hostile and biased social norms; the inability to recognize the professionalism of sex workers, the devalued identity of the (female) prostitute; the enforcement agencies that criminalize workers rather than regulate and monitor their working conditions and condemn the practices, institutions, and persons that create abusive and exploitative relations within the business.

On the other hand, the very biased rendition of the prostitute as the woman has engendered a climate of discrimination that disadvantages women. By seeing the female as the prostitute and a criminal and the male as merely a client, two distinct standards of evaluation are put in place for parties who are inextricably bound and complicit in the business of prostitution. Both collaborators are inevitable for the business to function, and should equitably share in both the gains and the pains of the business. The gender bias, produced within patriarchy, anchors this faulty rendering of the prostitute, which assigns a protective cover to males and produces females as culpable. In this case, the woman becomes the reason prostitution exists, the criminal party of the crime, and the ones that need to be punished, reeducated, resocialized, and, when victimized, are to blame.

The 'clients' are then left free to resume their ambitions and recruitment without perturbation. In so doing, the state and its agencies, ally themselves with males and their freedom to seek bodily pleasures and in some cases social status, but insist that the woman who prostitutes for fiscal survival should be effectively constrained and is outside the boundaries of protection. The women and their presence within urban space become 'policed' and morally opposed, while city prostitution continues to grow and benefit the urban economy. The unregulated business proves attractive to politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, and others, and the alarming

recruiting of under-aged girls and female students proceeds. This context, along with lack of legal regulations and no formal ban on the practice within cities, has given rise to enforcement agencies, who use the social and moral outrage against the female prostitute to regulate the business as they see fit. This often leads to enforcement as extortion and as an abuse that can be more easily perpetrated against the female prostitute who also fears the public scrutiny of legal proceedings. As a result, the stripping of funds from the female prostitute and the message that her social identity is not protected or welcomed within the city, further shrinks her capacity for survival in a space that already offers her little to the assuage the problem of existence.

Notes

- 1 Confronted with pressures from a plethora of forces, the managers of state power in Imo state focused on the underclass – Okada (motorcycle riders), street traders, marketers, motor mechanics, among others, as sources of city squalor that needed to be controlled.
- 2 Toyin Falola, "Manufacturing Trouble: Currency Forgery in Colonial Southwestern Nigeria," *African Economic History* 25 (1997): 121–147.
- 3 Olawale Ismail, "The Dialectic of 'Junctions' and 'Bases': Youth, 'Securo-Commerce' and the Crises of Order in Downtown Lagos," *Security Dialogue* 40, no. 4–5 (2009): 463–487.
- 4 See Oluşunkanmi Akoni, Monsur Olowoogbo, and Anozie Egoie, "Deportation of Igbo, Fashola Tenders Unreserved Apology," *Vanguard*, Nigeria, September 26, 2013.
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