

Relaxing with J.P Clark's "The Wives Revolt"

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It is usual that family and friends pass comments on my not relaxing enough. I am always put on the defensive. So, when Data Phido sent a short note asking if I was in Lagos last Thursday, and I responded in the affirmative, she offered me four seats at the Command Performance of J.P. Clark's *The Wives' Revolt* which held at the MUSON Centre, Lagos on March 29, 2018. Two repeat performances are scheduled for Sunday, March 31, 2019 and I highly recommend attendance.

Data, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of African Radio Drama Association (ARDA) and I come a long way. Our paths crossed at UCLA as I was about to return to Nigeria in 1982. But this was not before I went to the Small Claims Court in Los Angeles to recover from an Iranian guy who had tried to dupe me over the shipping of my goods. Data had accompanied me to the Small Claims Court as I made my case against the guy's Lawyer. That experience, after I had just received my PhD in Political Science, made me decide to become a lawyer - a fit, I achieved 8 years later in 1990. I hope to tell this long story under a different situation but just to note that I knew Data Phido, nee Fiberesima long before Facebook. She set up ARDA some 25 years ago making a difference in communication for development.

I invited 3 friends and my wife since the inviting email asked me to invite 4 and Data agreed to my having added myself as a fifth invitee. Importantly, it was a relaxing evening of handling the serious issue of gender inequalities in our society through a play. J.P. Clark was immensely creative in handling serious injustice in a small community in the oil producing and polluting area of Nigeria.

The Wives' Revolt presented the simple fact about political change. Power is never given it is taken after a struggle. In some cases, like in Apartheid South Africa and Portuguese decolonization, power changed hands only after violent struggles.

In the small community, the men devised different ways to control the women and took the lions' share of all that was for the community. In the play, compensation for pollution by an oil company was divided into 3. One-third for elders (all male), a third for men and the last third for women. The same decree that announced the sharing formula also banned the presence of goats in the village, knowing fully well that women rear goats to support their families. And it came to pass that the men started rounding up goats and were secretly eating them up.

The women softly sought respect but met subtle resistance. So, the women met and decided to leave the village abandoning the men who in a short-while became miserable. Soft power, including denying men folk copulation or going naked have been used to realize change. Others like the Aba women's riot of 1929, saw a move against the British using Warrant Chiefs to make obnoxious laws and collecting heavy taxation much of which the British collected. They succeeded in removing 16 Warrant Chiefs. Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, the mother of Fela Anikulapo Kuti and a foremost women's rights activist also led women in Abeokuta against British unfair taxation which money they collected using the Alake, a Paramount King among the Egbas of Yorubaland. Her organization against injustice led to the abdication of the Alake, Oba Ademola II, in 1949, that's 20 years after the Aba women. Margaret Ekpo and Hajia Laila Dongoyaro also organized women for change. So did Kudirat Abiola in the struggle against the dictatorship of General Abacha and paid the supreme price. Many unsung women brought about change. But they are too few in Nigeria, nay Africa.

The women in *The Wives' Revolt* won some concessions after denying men many things including the main, the main. The men succumbed and issued a replacement decree.

