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When Enough is Enough: Breaking Free from Intimate Partner Violence in Yejide Kilanko's *Chasing Butterflies*

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Abstract

Gender-based violence has become a common feature in gender relations globally, with women as the main victims. However, despite the fact that violence against women has been recognized as a violation of their human rights, the African society, in particular, is still plagued by gendered violence particularly in families. Adopting postmodern feminism as a theoretical framework, this article examines Kilanko's portrayal of the devastating impact of gender-based violence, particularly intimate partner violence, on the female protagonist in *Chasing Butterflies*. In so doing, it establishes that dominant gendered norms and unequal power relations between men and women in the African society are the root causes of violence against women in intimate partner relationships such as marriage. The article, therefore, explores avenues of awareness-raising in the novel, as well as options and resources through which women can be effectively empowered to confront and surmount their status as victims leading to the realization of their rights and freedom.

Introduction

Gender-based violence is a global problem which impacts the lives of millions of women every day. This harrowing phenomenon is prevalent in Africa where the hierarchical structure of society grants men power and privileges that, invariably, influence gender relations and roles by encouraging women's subordination and marginalization. While placing premium on male superiority, women are socio-culturally conditioned to accept their subservient status which mostly renders them passive and silent. Inevitably, the emphasis on masculinity influences men's perceptions and attitudes and pushes them to seek control of themselves, of women, and of their world.

According to Marilyn French, men's sense of entitlement in their quest for power, as well as competitiveness in their bid to fulfil their ambitions often result in a high level of stress which they release through violence; this places women and girls at risk of gender-based violence

(qtd. in Macionis 255). Subsequently, women are disproportionately victimized by gender-based violence in the course of their social interactions with men, especially in intimate partner relationships, a situation confirmed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) which perceives violence against women as “one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world ... which an estimated one in three women [worldwide] will experience ... in her lifetime” (“Gender-Based Violence”).

Meghan Ott defines gender-based violence thus:

[It is] violence that is directed at an individual based on his or her biological sex or gender identity. It includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse, threats, coercion, and economic or educational deprivation, whether occurring in public or private life. (“What Does That Mean?”)

Virginia Sapiro further explains gender-based violence as a form of coercion that is “...understood, explained, or justified in terms of gender roles, gender difference, or gender inequality ... framed by a gender ... and usually also sexual ideology that define men’s and women’s competencies, personalities, rights, and duties as very different” (388-389).

One of the most insidious forms of gender-based violence is intimate partner violence which occurs between intimate partners married or unmarried, or formerly married. Although this form of violence and its grave repercussions are the subject of current debate in the contemporary African society, literary or scholarly attention devoted to it has been, at best, very marginal, especially by African women writers who should be much more aware of and concerned by the dynamics of intimate partner violence against women and, therefore, strive to expose it and its dangers through their writings.

In *Chasing Butterflies*, however, Kilanko makes a concerted effort to break the culture of silence surrounding intimate partner violence by highlighting this problem within the context of marriage between two Africans, Nigerians, who are immigrants in the United States. In so doing, she captures very vividly the cultural currents and complexities associated with an African marriage in which the man, regarded as the head of the union by virtue of his supposed superiority and position as husband, often resorts to violence in a bid to exert his authority over his wife. Significantly, the setting of the novel, the United States, where the couple are resident, enables the author to showcase the fact that intimate partner violence is also prevalent in developed climes, and cuts across cultures at an alarming rate. By bringing this extreme and sensitive subject to the fore in *Chasing Butterflies*, Kilanko seizes the opportunity to use her writing as a platform for awareness and consciousness raising on this crisis.

Theoretical Framework

This article employs feminism, postmodern feminism in particular, as the lens through which to examine intimate partner violence in *Chasing Butterflies*. Although there are different strands of feminism, they all have one thing in common as Marian Lowe and Margaret Lowe Benston rightly observe:

The major underpinning common to all is the conception of human characteristics as having been divided along gender lines. Feminists, albeit in different ways, have as a major goal, the healing of this split and a redefinition of the meaning of ‘human’ in a way that does not depend on gender (48-49).

Feminists, therefore, fight for gender equality and women's empowerment through changes in individual consciousness and perceptions of women as well as in the social institutions responsible for a gendered society. According to Michael Wooldridge, postmodern feminists believe that one must have a postmodern understanding of gender to sufficiently tackle gendered inequalities as it will enhance one's understanding of "how gendered inequalities are normalized and legitimized in our constructed reality, and thus look to redress the structural relations of power that institutionalise [them]" ("The Developing World ..."). With this in mind, postmodern feminists have devised useful strategies to examine gendered relations especially among families and the contexts within which they function and, subsequently, problems that plague families such as intimate partner violence with a view to redressing them (Wooldridge "The Developing World ...") by making changes that will positively impact interactions between men and women. One of the key strategies is the use of the narrative method advocated by C. K. Reissman which involves the retelling of the victim's story to enable her define and interpret her abuse as oppression, transform her consciousness and equip her to transition from victim to survivor (qtd. in Weber 205).

Furthermore, they advocate the need for women to have open access to educational opportunities, economic resources, political power, as well as the elimination of all forms of violence against women, especially, intimate partner violence and sexual harassment which disempower and limit them. They also demand that women have access to legal services on issues such as welfare, health, and social justice.

For postmodern feminists, just as for all other feminists, the promotion of freedom and equality for women reflects "a profound shift in basic assumptions about the nature of women and their proper place in the world: a shift from inequality to equality of the sexes, along with re-examination of what equality itself requires [and also] re-examination of the understanding of sex, gender, and gender roles" (Stanford Center "Feminist Philosophy of Law").

Review of Literature

Although relatively new on the African literary scene, Kilanko's globally acclaimed debut novel, *Daughters Who Walk this Path* (2012) projected her as a feminist writer who is committed to fighting the cause of women through her writing. It is for this reason that Melissa Mordi describes her as "... the voice of a generation [who has] ... set an unexpected precedent for all Nigerian writers to come ... [and] shattered the shackles of silence surrounding Nigerian women and their roles in society, breaking boundaries and winning prizes" ("Shattering the Shackles ...").

In *Chasing Butterflies*, a novella, Kilanko, in her tradition of laying bare subjects that are usually suppressed in the African society, focuses on intimate partner violence in marriage. Surprisingly, despite her portrayal of the devastating effects of this form of violence on women and societies, scholars and critics are yet to give *Chasing Butterflies* (first published in 2018), the attention it deserves. However, the novella has received very enthusiastic reviews some of which are presented below.

Temilade Adebisi describes the novella as a thought-provoking work which ventures into the "dynamics of a toxic and abusive marriage ... [shedding] ... light on a cultural system that encourages the abuse of women in marriage while protecting ... the abuser[s] or worse, bending over backwards to justify their actions" ("Book Review"). Clearly, the hard truths unveiled in the novella about intimate partner violence are likely to make it a difficult read. Sofiyat Oyesanya concurs with this observation by revealing, that not only is the abuse

endured by the protagonist hard to take, the author is also able to expertly evoke reactions from the reader through the simplicity of her language and directness of the plot (“Review”).

Another reviewer, Rayo Adebola, in her analysis of the story identifies not only domestic violence as the central theme, but also what she observes as one its causes: “the lasting effects of childhood traumas ...” (“When Love Hurts”). This observation is valid considering the fact that the actions and reactions of the major characters, Titilope (the protagonist and abused), and her husband, Tomilade (the perpetrator), are largely influenced by the abuse they are exposed to during their childhoods in Nigeria. Adebola further notes that Kilanko’s presentation of the perspectives of both major characters enables one to be “... as keenly aware of Tomide’s motivation as one is of Titilope’s traumas” (“When Love Hurts”). This is a significant feature of the novella which offers an insight into the minds of both the perpetrator and the victim regarding their ideological orientation, perceptions, actions and responses to gender-based violence. An insight into both perspectives, therefore, lends more clarity to the issues raised in the novella.

Clearly, the dearth of critical works on Kilanko’s novella, the gravity of its subject matter and the dire need for awareness-raising gives relevance to this paper. Furthermore, Kilanko’s professional experience as a therapist in children’s mental health has led to personal encounters with women victims of intimate partner violence as she reveals in an interview:

As part of my work with children and their families, I’ve had conversations with women experiencing domestic violence. One of the questions people often ask is, why does a woman choose to stay in the relationship? [In *Chasing Butterflies*] I’d wanted to explore some of the complications associated with this decision-making process. (Kilanko “Interview”)

Evidently, Kilanko’s exploration of the complexities of gender-based violence in her profession has given her a wealth of insight into intimate partner violence, which she shares in the novella, to equip individuals and activists with the knowledge and power to challenge and fight for its elimination in nuclear families which are the bedrock of society.

Methodology

Using the qualitative approach, this article explores Kilanko’s portrayal of intimate partner violence in the focal text with a view to giving insight into the underlying causal factors, manifestations and effects on the protagonist, as well as the implications for her individual and family life. It also explores the options of response and interventions that empower her, as a victim, to successfully navigate her way to freedom and safety.

The Dynamics of Intimate Partner Violence in *Chasing Butterflies*

The social construction of the African society creates an unequal power balance which “... [supports] male superiority in all its ramifications [and conceives women as] ... vehicles through which a man satisfies his needs and fulfils his ambition” (Chukukere 186). As a result, gender relations are subject to laws, customs, and rules which, on the one hand, empower men thus enabling them to sustain their control of the social order and, on the other hand, place severe restrictions on women which impede their freedom and growth.

R. Emerson Dobash and Russel Dobash attribute the inequality in gender relations to the influence of patriarchy, the intrinsic fabric of the African society which, they explain, consists of two key elements: “the structural, that is social structures which delineate women’s subordinate role in society, and the ideological, ... the socialisation process that ensures [its] acceptance ...” (qtd. in Lockton and Ward 30). The socialization process in the African

society is, therefore, very detrimental to women because it conditions them to accept and abide by these restrictive laws and customs and any effort on their part to do otherwise results in the questioning of their character and virtue, a situation largely reflected in the novella.

It is evident that Kilanko recognizes the challenges created by the imbalance in the power dynamics of the African society and its impact on gender relations, especially in marriage. First, the bride-price system commodifies the African woman as the man perceives her as an item purchased during the traditional marriage rites to do with as he pleases. This creates many challenges for the African woman in marriage prompting the following observation by Helen Chukwuma:

The true test of the woman continues to be the marriage institution. In this closed-in arena every married woman is to fight out her survival as an individual. The marriage paradox lies in the fact that it is both sublimating and subsuming. Through it a woman attains a status acclaimed by society and fulfils her biological need of procreation and companionship. Through it too, the woman's place of second rate is emphasized ... (5)

In *Chasing Butterflies*, Kilanko reveals an awareness of some of the unique limitations experienced by contemporary African women in marriage (one of which is intimate partner violence) which serve as barriers to their full actualization, and how they respond to them. She also exposes their adverse effects on women, families and society with the expectation that readers will "... gain some understanding, develop some empathy, and step up to provide support where and when they can" (Kilanko "Interview").

Born in Nigeria, the protagonist, Titilope, and her husband, Tomide, are raised by their families to accept the gendered definitions of the identity, place and role of men and women in the African and Nigerian society. These values become a part of their psyche and shape their definition and perception of themselves, their needs and desires, as well as their choices and actions. This African heritage, inevitably, influences their perceptions and attitudes even as immigrants in Washington DC, United States, where they meet, get married, and reside. It also informs their expectations and the roles they play as husband and wife.

Tomide's perception of his role as a husband is reflected in Carl G. Buzawa and Eve S. Buzawa's assertion that the concept of patriarchy and gender inequality uphold the notion that women require the strong leadership of men and "... an authoritarian family patriarch [who] ... traditionally has the right to enforce male standards of accepted "feminine" behaviour through whatever means necessary, including force" (qtd. in Lockton and Ward 31). At the beginning of the novella, we are acquainted with the fact that all is not well with the marriage of the Ojos when Titilope's response to her husband's romantic serenade on Valentine's Day is "Tomide, love is more than grand gestures" (2). It also becomes obvious that Tomide's sexist values and perceptions are largely responsible for this state of affairs, for his expectations of his wife are evidenced in the following excerpt: "When things became serious between them, he'd been upfront about what he wanted from a wife ... bottom line, he wanted a woman who knew how to take care of a man the proper way. The way his mother had taken care of his father" (1).

Nothing is more obvious than the fact that for Tomide, the "proper way" is the traditional way which ascribes him power and control over Titilope while expecting her subservience and total acceptance of his authority, decisions and laid down rules for their relationship. For him, anything short of this is "a breach of contract" (1). It is for this reason that he becomes enraged when Titilope questions his decisions or even talks back at him; he regards this as a

slight to his manhood and authority. This situation is reflected in the scenario that ensues after Titilope's refusal to make her stepson, Jordan, some scrambled eggs for breakfast which provokes Tomide's ire and assault:

“He told me you refused to make them?”

“That's right.”

Tomide's right hand moved so fast she didn't see it coming.

The slap landed on the side of her face and temporarily blinded her left eye...
(22-23)

On another occasion, Tomide becomes enraged when she ignores his demand that she prepares a meal for his friends whom he invites over without her knowledge. The decision on her part to not allow him play generous host any longer at her expense irks him, for he sees it not only as Titilope reneging on her duty as his wife, but also challenging his authority and masculinity before his friends who would see this as weakness on his part. He, thus, queries her in anger: “Titilope, what's your problem? What kind of woman embarrasses her husband by refusing to cook for his guests? I am not sure if the problem is that your parents didn't train you or you were unable to learn” (55).

Tomide's sense of entitlement and expectations concerning Titilope's wifely roles prevent him from seeing things from her perspective. As observed by Dobash and Dobash, ‘... men's sense of the right to punish ‘their’ women for perceived wrongdoings, and the importance of men maintaining or exercising their position of authority’” (qtd. in Lockton and Ward 31) is a major source of conflict leading to violence. One would have expected Tomide to be more considerate of his wife who has to multi-task every day: she takes care of the domestic work; nurtures their son and, on occasion, her stepson while working and also studying to pass her CPA certification exam. After a long and tiring week, a Friday evening of relaxation is not too much for her to ask and, as Titilope reasons, “one night of snacks would not make her a bad hostess” (53). Although his more understanding friends decide to go to the club as an alternative, he regards her refusal to provide them with a proper meal as a denial of his right to her subservience. To make matters worse, she refuses to back down in silence when he returns from the club, inebriated and confrontational. Her reaction infuriates him the more resulting in his loss of control and violent attack:

Before she could catch her next breath, Tomide swung his hand back and hit her across the face. The chair flew back, and her head slammed into the refrigerator ...

Even after Tomide grabbed her by her braids and jerked her around the room like a rag doll, she couldn't stop laughing.

“Shut up! I said shut up!” As he said each word, Tomide slammed her head into the wall ... (56)

It takes the intervention of their four-year-old son, T.J., who calls 911, to save the situation. The anger on the child's face as he shouts at Tomide to leave his mother alone jolts him out of his rage and saves Titilope from further violence.

Lockton and Ward identify alcohol as one of the most common factors preceding violence among intimate partners (31). This observation is validated in Tomide's case as Titilope reveals she has learned to recognize her husband's likely reactions after alcohol consumption: “Alcohol had two effects on her husband. He was either going to come back from the club

extremely agitated or super relaxed ... From the wild look in his eyes, she could tell it was an agitated kind of night” (54). She is, therefore, not surprised by the physical assault to which she is subjected.

Another underlying reason for Tomide’s violence is his family history which is revealed by Eustace during a birthday get-together. As Eustace, who had been brought up in the same neighbourhood as Tomide, recalls, his father’s legendary violence had earned him the nickname “Mighty Igor”. Tomide’s reaction to this reminder is very revealing: “Hearing his father’s nickname had brought unwanted memories. On the days when his father locked the doors to deal with his mother’s sharp tongue, the whole neighbourhood had front row seats to their shameful show” (31). Lockton and Ward’s observation that violence is a response learned in childhood [when] boys learn to be violent and girls to be passive victims (29) is validated in the case of the Ojos. While Tomide is socialized to believe that his father’s violence is justified based on the traditional view that it is understandable due to his mother’s perceived insubordination, Titilope is conditioned to regard such violence as a “family affair” in which outsiders should not interfere. According to her mother, “We don’t interfere between a man and his wife. Such fights are a family affair. With time, they will settle their problems ...” (43).

Tomide, Titilope and Holly (Tomide’s American ex-wife) are well aware of the implications for their children as indirect victims who are, in turn, being socialized to regard violence as normal and acceptable. As such, Titilope tries to ensure that T.J. is protected from witnessing any verbal or physical violence between them. However, she is not unaware of his fear of his father which makes him retreat at the mere sight of him. She also discovers through Holly, that he is very much aware of the happenings around him and has already tagged his father “a bad Dad” in a drawing of his family.

Holly also makes an effort to explain to Tomide why she sometimes stops their son from spending time with him: “He sees how you treat [Titilope] ... Jordan’s exposure to your abusive behavior concerns me. ... Tommy, you need help. Your sons are watching” (25). This prompts him to make an effort to teach his sons that “a man owns his mistakes” (28). Unfortunately, he fails because he keeps repeating his mistakes and then, places the blame on Titilope for not needing or respecting him the way he thinks he deserves: “Everything is her fault. She had a way of getting under his skin ... even when he was forced to hit her, she would just stand there and take it as if he was nothing” (24). Tomide’s inability to take responsibility for his actions also prevents him from seeking help through marriage counselling or therapy; he is not interested in unburdening his soul to anyone, for he believes “Some things need to stay buried” (25).

Tomide’s perception, as noted above, is influenced by the culture of silence surrounding intimate partner violence in the African society which reinforces and sanctions violence as an assertion of men’s authority as husbands. Tomide, therefore, expects Titilope to abide by this toxic rule by keeping secret the goings-on in their home. For this reason, on the mere suspicion that she must have opened up to her best friend, Bunmi, about her predicament, he lies that he is the actual victim of abuse in his marriage to preserve his self-respect among his friends. He also reminds Titilope that the first rule in their family is “... no talking to outsiders about what happens in their home” (38). Furthermore, he punishes her with more abuse, followed by his “romantic days after charade” during which he tries to assuage his guilt by suddenly becoming kind and loving, buying her expensive jewellery and insisting on taking her out for expensive meals (48). At this point, Titilope believes that keeping quiet

about her abuse, lying about the injuries on her body, and convincing herself that she does not need to be saved protect her from further harm.

In addition, the stigma of divorce and the fear of being labelled as a bad parent prevent her from taking any action to remedy her situation. Lockton and Ward note that women stay long in abusive relationships even after repeated violence because of their sense of commitment to the relationship, their responsibility to their children, sense of failure and, particularly, because of the perceived notion that to be a successful wife and mother, the woman must nurture and keep the family together (24). This manifests in Titilope's case, for despite the fact that the abuse she suffers is so frequent that she misses twenty-eight workdays in six months, she stays because "a good mother does not run from her child's home. She always stays and fights" (14). Unwilling to give her husband, who has accused her of being a mediocre wife any reason to accuse her of being a bad mother too, she endures the violence—physical and emotional—which strips her of her self-worth, pride and dignity.

Interventions and Choices

Titilope finally takes the bold step to break free from the bondage of abuse for two major reasons. The first is the realization that staying in the abusive relationship would inevitably result in her death due to Tomide's total lack of control over his anger and also his refusal to get the help he needs. Second is the need to create a safe and healthy environment for her son's positive growth and development. T.J.'s quick thinking during his father's violent attack leads to the intervention of the police as well as other forms of intervention. One is the Child Protection Service whose agent, Amy, assesses the situation, notes that as an immigrant family they have a limited support system and that Titilope is "assuming responsibility and making excuses for [Tomide's] ... action" (60). Aware that she could easily lose T.J. to a foster home, Titilope is greatly relieved when Amy asks that she suggests someone to take care of him while she is hospitalized. She finally asks for Bunmi's help and Amy ensures that T.J. is properly handed over to her husband James who comes over to take him home.

In all, Titilope spends a total of eight days in hospital in excruciating pain from a "... a concussion, a lacerated liver, five fractured ribs, and a broken jaw" (69). Ironically, Tomide only spends one night in cell after which he regains his freedom by making bail. Titilope, however, receives the legal help required to protect T.J. and herself from Tomide. She becomes a beneficiary of the policies enforced by the legal system to protect the human rights of abused women. With the guidance of Becky, a staff of Victims Services, she successfully files a protective order application for temporary custody of her son which can only be modified or dismissed through a request in writing and a ruling by the judge. Three months later, gets full custody and child support after the trial. Tomide, however, is limited to supervised visits with T.J. and ordered to attend anger management classes for 52 weeks.

Once again, Tomide blames his predicament on foolishness on his part for marrying a woman "prone to marital strife ..." (68). What he fails to accept is the fact that individuals have the power to determine their identity and personality through the choices they make. As Stan C. Weber rightly observes, "men who abuse or control must be seen as responsible for their violent, coercive, and abusive behavior and must be held accountable for it" (203). James, his best friend, emphasizes this point in his response when Tomide eventually admits that he has lied all along about Titilope being the abuser, and then places the blame on his father: "First you said I can't hurt a woman because of what my father did to my mother. Now, you say my father's genes are responsible. Man, own your stupidity" (83). Titilope also reiterates this point by absolving her mother-in-law of all blame when she asserts: "... parents raise us but we also raise ourselves" (90). Evidently, rather than blame his father's genes for his fiery

temperament and his victims for his violent acts, Tomide should have admitted he has a problem and sought for help.

Titilope is also acquainted with other services and resources for which she is eligible such as counselling, criminal injuries compensation for loss of income during the period of her hospitalization and recuperation and referrals to social service agencies all of which offer her much needed support at such a critical time. These legal facilities are geared towards making it easier for women victims of intimate partner violence to work towards becoming totally independent from their abusive partners and make conscious decisions and choices that will change their lives for the better. However, many women are unaware of the existence of these facilities, hence the need for the awareness raising advocated by feminists.

Through Mrs Tamuno, a local store owner, Titilope is introduced to the Academy Way Women's Centre and to Sunbeam, a counsellor, who helps her to make meaning of her victimization, come to terms with the trauma she has suffered in her marriage and figure out options available to her going forward. According to Susan J. Brison, trauma affects the self which is "... both autonomous and socially dependent, vulnerable enough to be undone by violence and yet resilient enough to be reconstructed with the help of empathic others" (137). Sunbeam's counselling becomes the avenue through which Titilope unburdens her experience through self-narration and Sunbeam, also a survivor of abuse, is that empathic other who understands the complexities of her situation, and guides her through the process by providing useful insight and advice, and guiding her to make independent choices that empower her to transition from the status of a victim of abuse to survivor.

As such, Titilope opts to break free from her abusive marriage through divorce despite Tomide's apologies and explanations for his actions: "When I did these things to you, it made me feel powerful. I also knew you wouldn't walk out of the marriage because of our background. Especially because of T.J." (121). This apology comes too late, for Titilope now realizes that her life and that of her son are as valuable as his and this strengthens her resolve to leave. Her independent spirit, resilience and pride as a mother, and the desire to create a better life for herself and her son propel her to break free in order to rebuild her self-respect and dignity. She is able to counter her mother's advice that "... a woman's accomplishments mean nothing if she couldn't keep her home" (122) with the knowledge that becoming a divorcee will not make her a failure as a woman or a parent; it will only give her the opportunity to live and rediscover herself. Like the butterflies she and T.J. encounter on the beach in Ocean City, it is time to find a safer environment and climate.

Conclusion

For Susan M. Shaw and Janet Lee, violence against women is so deeply entrenched in cultures all over the world that millions of women now consider it as an aspect of their lives (440). For feminists, this form of violence which is "one of the most direct expressions of the power imbalance between men and women" (German Federal Ministry "Ending Violence ..." 9), is totally unacceptable and, for this reason, they have geared their efforts towards identifying the root cause of gendered violence—gender inequality—and working towards its eradication. It is therefore significant that feminists and human rights activists have come to the following realization:

The complexity of the causes of gender-specific violence has shown the necessity of developing multidisciplinary and systemic strategies for action. Until it becomes legally unacceptable, violence against women will remain one of the most pervasive human rights violations worldwide. Until it is

perceived as a public and a political issue and a priority for policy makers, gender-based violence will remain a public health emergency. And until it becomes culturally and socially unacceptable, violence will pervade women's lives. ("Eradicating Violence..." 2)

Violence against women has, therefore, become the subject of current discourse and debate in the public sphere, reinforcing debates within the feminist movement how structural inequalities in the family aid the victimization of women through violence.

Women writers must highlight manifestations of intimate partner violence in their works to draw attention to the injustices being perpetrated against women. The organization of consciousness and awareness raising programmes by activists to educate women and men on the causalities and dynamics of intimate partner violence will also generate dialogues on the subject through which women will be empowered with the confidence required to make informed choices that will enable them to survive such violence, as Titilope does by filing for divorce after overcoming her fear of being stigmatized as a failure should she divorce her abusive husband.

For feminists, two significant avenues through which women can battle inequality in their relationship and, subsequently, intimate partner violence are education and economic independence which will equip them not only with opportunities and resources, but also an awareness of their inner strength and self-worth. Thus armed, they can make informed and educated choices in critical situations. Titilope's commitment and hard work earn her the educational qualifications required to become an economically independent accountant. This position equips her with the knowledge, self-confidence, assertiveness and the economic resources required to make a new life for her son and herself.

As a result of feminist activism, nations, governments and people now recognize women's rights as human rights through the formulation of policies, legislation and the establishment of institutions that seek to protect women's rights to a violence free life. Unfortunately, more work has to be done because most societies, the African society specifically, still consider intimate partner violence as a family matter which should be accorded privacy. The culture of silence around this form of violence must, therefore, be broken and people, especially fellow women, should desist from 'closing their windows' to such violence by intervening and lending their help and support to victims when necessary.

In *Chasing Butterflies*, Kilanko highlights intimate partner violence from the perspective of both husband and wife, the factors responsible for it, its manifestations, as well as the options that can empower women to break free from such abusive relationships. In so doing, she reveals how important it is for women to know when to quit such toxic relationships. In an interview, she opines: "People ascribe power to different things. For me, it's the word 'enough'. The word evokes sufficiency, self-control, and boundary setting ..." (Kilanko "Interview").

The opinion above aligns postmodern feminists' position that women must examine the gender struggles they face every day which directly affect their choices, work, home, bodies, family, identity and speech and "... think about them differently in new paradigms that break with tradition" (Mui and Murphy 3). Titilope is able to overcome the fears that keep her in her abusive marriage by re-conceptualizing her reality when she becomes acquainted with her rights and the laws that back them. This enables her to set new boundaries, and make new choices. Her new found confidence, self-worth and ability to say "enough" pave the way to her freedom. Clearly, for women, knowing when to say enough could make the difference

between life and death. It is also pertinent to note that the cost of intimate partner violence is not only high, but also borne by all—women, men, children and society.

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