

International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies
(LALIGENS), Bahir Dar- Ethiopia

Vol. 8 (1), Serial No 17, February, 2019: 50-64
ISSN: 2225-8604(Print) ISSN 2227-5460 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/laligens.v8i1.5>

**A Critical Reading of Wife Battering in Fred Amata and Bond
Emeruwa's *Freedom in Chains***

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Abstract

This paper exposed the rising violence on women in relation to violence shown in the Nollywood films and therefore, it aims to explore and examine violence meted against women with the intent of discovering why violence is perpetrated against them. The paper adopted literary research, focusing on content analysis of a selected Nollywood film entitled *Freedom in Chains*. Data collated was analysed with the intent of understanding the concept of violence as applied in the film, highlighting its patterns, trends, causes, effects, strategies and interventions. The study was anchored on the feminist film theories and aimed to contribute to feminist film theory. The suggested that no woman is immune to abuse, and recommended that there should be a re-examination of the underlying attitudes that maintain and encourage violence against women.

Key-Words: Wife battery, Violence, Nollywood, Feminist, Film Theory

Introduction

Violence against women is a technical term used to collectively refer to violent acts that are primarily or exclusively committed against women. It covers a wide range of problems that must be put into context in order to better grasp their structure. Violence therefore entails various forms and dimensions. Out of all these various forms of violence, this study is particularly interested in domestic violence against the Nigerian educated married women with particular reference to wife battering. This is the most common violence experienced by women globally and particularly in Nigeria and has become a source of major concern to the world. Uzuegbunam (2009) defined domestic violence as:

a form of aggressive behaviour by which the victims are physically or emotionally disturbed or harmed. Thus, any threat or indecent assault, personal or economic intimidation that reduces a person's dignity, any physical assaults, blows, beating, strangulations that are complete or incomplete, jabs with sharp or blunt objects, slaps, kicks, sexual abuse of any kind, inordinate sexual demand and or refusal etc constitute manifestations of violence within the home, household or family, clan etc (p. 66).

This definition is all encompassing and is indicative of great roughness and force often causing severe physical injury or damage. Uzuegbunam carefully details and pinpointed indices that make up domestic violence; the physical manifestations to look out for which include: slaps, kicks, blows, beating etc. and the place where such violence takes place. What categorizes violence as domestic violence is where it occurs, the place, which is the home. Domestic violence thus, refers to violence within the home, carried out mostly against women and children. It is an abuse in the family or home perpetrated by a family member or an intimate partner who physically, sexually or psychologically dominates the woman or inflicts violence on the women.

Wife battering is described as a form of physical abuse that includes the following “threats, punching, kicking, rape or coercive sex, throwing a woman down the stairs, hitting, shoving, kicking, bruising, stabbing, shooting, beating, belittling and slapping” (Oyedokun 2008, p.309.).

Considering the devastating effects of violence against women in the society, the issue deserves serious attention. It is on this note that this work analyzes the *Freedom in Chains* to tease out the representation of wife battering as evident in the society.

Synopsis of *Freedom in Chains*

Freedom in Chains is a collaborative effort of United Nations Funds for Population Activities (UNFPA) and Nollywood concept promotions (NCP). UNFPA puts the focus on violence against women and lends its voice to the global fight against domestic violence with the launch of the film, *Freedom in chains*. This film is a heartrending movie that spotlights the plight of educated married women in Nigeria, who bear pains of wife battering, a crime far too

recognizable but rarely spoken about. It symbolically captures the thematic preoccupation of battering, degradation, humiliation amongst three women, trapped in a patriarchal society. The narrative centers on the life story of three women (Dr. Hassana, Eliza and Barr. Tricia) brought together by a common factor which is the fact that each of them has gone through mental and physical torture including discrimination at different times of their lives, giving account of their ordeal and how they eventually help each other to arrive at breaking the shackles of domestic violence, emotional torture, discrimination, sexual abuse, and battering meted on them by their husbands.

Eliza is caged in a traumatizing bondage in the name of marriage. Zebulon, her husband batters her on a daily basis. On one of such accounts, she makes an attempt to escape for self-preservation. Eliza runs into a store filled with building materials while Zebulon gives a hot chase. In the process, he mistakenly slips, he is stabbed by an iron rod and he eventually dies. Resultantly, Eliza is then charged to court for murdering him.

On another hand, Barrister Tricia, a successful lawyer and Counsel to Eliza is torn between choosing her career and family companionship. Her husband, Manny, a loving husband turns into a bitter, angry and abusive husband who blames her for the plight of their eight-year-old daughter, Edith. Edith was sexually abused by Manny's nephew who ordinarily is supposed to be a guardian. As a result, Edith is inflicted with HIV. Thus, Manny makes life unbearable for Tricia blaming Edith's predicament on her negligence and her dedication to her work. Thirdly, is the case of Dr. Hassana who suffers constant bullying and psychological abuse from Alhaji, her husband due to their childlessness. Alhaji blames Hassana for their predicament whereas the medical test conducted, found her fit and without any reproductive dysfunction. However, Alhaji continues to vent his frustration on her and batters her at any slightest provocation. Left with no other option, Hassana divorces Alhaji. *Freedom in Chains* gives vivid accounts of these women's ordeals, their triumphs over abuse and how they eventually help each other to arrive at a new horizon in their individual lives.

A Critical Analysis of *Freedom in Chains*

The title of this film has a strong connotation, where the title *Freedom in chains* sounds impossible. Chains bind, enslave and imprison. However, the screen writer uses the title as an oxymoron to call attention to an apparent contradiction. Oxymoron is a figure of speech that juxtaposes elements that appear to be contradictory usually for satirical intent. We tend to think of freedom as not having chains, but this title goes beyond the literal. There is a subtext which connotes that there is strength in a chain. When we bind ourselves with other people, we become interlocked, dedicated to a common goal and a unified cause. It assumes that when we come together and hold fast to a single pursuit, we can do the impossible. *Freedom in chains* shows that true freedom is often in chains. Tricia, Hassana and Eliza found true freedom through accepting the obstacles of domestic violence suffered in the hands of their husbands which had bound them. They set aside their sense of individual entitlement and opened up a much greater freedom for all women collectively.

According to Eng (1997), women in contemporary films have been portrayed “as debased and abused” (p.13). She claims that women tend to be presented as fallen and usually punished in some way for supposed transgression. A clear example is the characters of Eliza, Hassana, and Tricia in *Freedom in chains*. The film opens with Elizabeth Okiro (Bimbo Akintola) being handcuffed and escorted from her cell into the court room where her case is being judged. Zebulon (Keppy Ekpeyong Bassey) had severally battered Eliza at the slightest provocation. On one instance, he had lost his temper, gone wild and was battering her. Then in the course of the battering, Eliza escapes into a store room filled with unused building material, but Zebulon will not give up the beating and chases her into the store room. In the process of his hot pursuit, he slips and unfortunately falls and is stabbed by an iron rod on the chest region, he eventually dies. It is on this note that Eliza is charged to court for murdering Zebulon.

In the scene that follows, the house of Alhaji is established. The camera captures Alhaji (Abubakar Yahaya) in the sitting room, watching television. Dr. Hassana (Alex Lopez), his wife walks in after a long day at the hospital. She greets Alhaji who does not answer. Instead, he questions her about her late home coming. Hassana apologizes and tells him there was an emergency at the hospital. She explained to him that a little girl had been involved in a ghastly car accident and this was what kept her back. She apologizes again and makes move to bring food for her husband. Through a long shot, the body frame of Hassana is captured as she walks up the stairs to drop her bag and then attend to the needs of her husband. However, Hassana is caught mid-way in her ascension of the stairs by her husband’s verbal and derogatory statement

Alhaji: Barren woman! A physician, medical doctor that cannot help herself!

This statement breaks and moves Hassana to tears, perturbed and disturbed emotionally about his mockery and blames on her for their childless state. Resultantly, a heated argument ensues between both couples. Alhaji insinuates that it is Hassana’s fault that they are childless. Hassana objects to the accusation reminding him that medical tests had been carried out on her and the results reveal that she does not have any reproductive dysfunction. Hence, she has been proven not to be at fault for their predicament.

Alhaji: Then whose fault is it?

This question from Alhaji serves as bait and a basis ON which he would find Hassana guilty so that he can carry out his violence on her. This is in line with Mulvey’s (1992) assertion that pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt (asserting control) and subjecting the person through punishment” (p.753). Hassana knowing her husband fully well does not accuse him of being at fault. Instead, she presents the issue diplomatically. As the argument continues, Alhaji uses more abusive words on his wife. Hassana out of vexation suggests that Alhaji takes in another wife since he needs children badly and has accused her of being the problem. This suggestion spurs Alhaji into action. Hassana in a sober mood apologizes for her statement. She retraces her steps and staggers backward as Alhaji approaches to beat her. She continues to plead but her pleas fall on deaf ears. Her words had spoken volumes and in essence, he deduced that she is accusing him of their predicament. Thus, this bruises his ego. Alhaji feels castrated from her

statement which suggests that he is at fault for their childlessness. Her talk back also infuriates him. Her suggestion to him about taking in another wife aggravates the whole matter and evokes a sense of castration in Alhaji who feels degraded, demeaned and insignificant. He sees Hassana as trying to usurp his manly powers. This is what gives her the guts to take decisions about his taking of another wife. Hence, this spurs Alhaji to stand up as a man to prove his masculinity. He then batters her several times leaving her with lots of bruises.



This action best explains the reason why educated married women suffer battering. According to Marayan (2000), “batterers are seen to suffer from poor ego development, insecurity or lack of control, whilst battered women are said to exhibit masochistic tendencies or pathologically provoking behaviour” (p.59). *Freedom in chains* indicates that the behaviours of both husband and wife participate inter-dependently influencing one another’s behaviour which escalates into marital violence. There is the theme of cause and effect argued in this film. Wife battering can be conceptualized as embedded in the recurring patterns of interaction. In reality, we are each responsible for our behaviours. The implication is that a cause (action) leads to an effect (reaction). However, in their effort to avoid responsibility for their actions, batterers can be quite adept at deflecting blame onto their victims, telling her and others how things she did or failed to do “made him do it” (Marayan, 2000, p.59). It also highlights the fact that infertility is a major cause of battering the educated married woman.

In a succeeding scene, the life story of Barrister Tricia (Rekiyah Atta), a successful female lawyer is unraveled. Tricia serves as Eliza’s lawyer. However, Tricia also faces her own challenges both at the home front and at the office. The camera captures Tricia in the sitting room late at night awaiting the arrival of her husband. The camera pans right and captures her husband, Manny (Sani Muazu) as he comes home late. This to a large extent bothers Tricia as displayed in a close up shot of her worried facial expression. She tries to enquire about this new habit and in the process an argument ensues. Through their argument, it is established that their eight-year-old daughter, Edith had been raped by Manny’s nephew who lives at their boy’s

quarters and through this means, Edith got infected with HIV. Manny blames Tricia for this incident.

Manny: if you had been around and been observant like a responsible mother should be, you would have seen this earlier. But no! You are busy jumping from one court to another, chasing one case or the other.



Manny blames Tricia for their daughter's misfortune concluding that her dedication and commitment to work has largely affected her traditional motherly role. His statement implies that the destiny of a woman is in house-work and mothering rather than professional and career roles. This statement establishes the castration anxiety in Manny over Tricia's job as a threat and in turn he uses this medium to allay such threat by turning around to blame her for the actions of his nephew. He blames her for negligence, stating that if she had been at home as a responsible mother should be, the ugly incident of child sexual abuse would have been averted. This goes a long way to explain the plight of the educated married woman who is seen as a threat, rival to the man figure due to her level of educational attainment, financial capability and employment. Tricia in a perplexed state over her husband's utterances registers her surprise as she responds to Mannys' allegation

Tricia: I can't believe this. Your nephew leaves in our boy's quarters. He repeatedly abuses our eight-year-old daughter. A little girl, who ordinarily looks up to him as her uncle and you turn around to blame me for the consequences of his action.

It is quite surprising that Manny could blame his wife for the actions of his nephew. In the Nigerian context, every family whether nuclear or extended, has a close tie within the family system. Members within this family system are related in such a way that the younger ones look up to the older ones as role models. With this in mind, it becomes surprising that Manny would accuse Tricia for the ungodly act of his nephew who naturally is supposed to be a guardian to Edith. But this is what is obtainable in our Nigerian society where the woman is blamed for

every misfortune or wrong in the family. When the child becomes wayward or goes astray, the blame is apportioned to the woman but when there is an achievement, the man takes the glory. Hence, it becomes natural for Manny to turn around and blame his wife for his nephew's weird actions whom ordinarily should serve as a father figure to the eight-year-old. Tricia then admonishes her husband that the attitude of apportioning blame instead of standing by their daughter would not be helpful, but would instead destroy their family. Manny then hisses and walks out angrily.

At the office, Tricia is also faced with challenges too. Her Principal Officer, Barr. Pepple (Nobert Young), whom she had worked for over the last fifteen years, walks into her office in respect to the popularity she is gaining in the headlines as a result of Eliza Okiro's case. With a medium long shot, capturing their frames, Pepple tells her to drop Eliza's case, claiming that it is injurious to their firm based on the cheap publicity it is generating for the firm.

Pepple: In my esteemed opinion, it is generating cheap publicity. It is a feminist-slanted domestic case. Therefore, it is an embarrassment to our male stakeholders who are a majority in this place.

Tricia: (*shocked*) I can't believe you are saying this. An innocent woman's life is at stake here. And all you can think about is your group of chauvinistic male clients?

Pepple's statement carries an undertone. There is more to it than meets the eye. It is obvious from his statement that he is intimidated by Tricia's success. There is this evocation of castration anxiety that she might one day overshadow him with her rising profile which he terms "cheap publicity" and this propels him to ask her to drop the case of Eliza, claiming it is injurious to the firm. Secondly, from his statement, he perceives and deduces that the case is feminist-slanted and a domestic case which is a slap to himself and his cohorts' "personality". He therefore trivializes the issue of domestic violence and believes it is not worth paying special attention to. To this regard, a heated argument ensues and Barr. Pepple stands his ground claiming that he is the Principal Officer and as such he determines what is good for the firm. He therefore leaves her with two options, either to drop the case or forfeit working in the firm. *Freedom in Chains* brings to fore, the concept of sadism which depends on "Making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat" (Mulvey, 1992, p. 753). Pepple therefore, uses the threat of sack as a medium in order to force Tricia to cower and submit. Nevertheless, Tricia refuses to be cowed or intimidated.

Tricia: (*Doggedly*) In that case, I believe that I also have the right to choose which case to take up or not.

Pepple: Who are you to tell me about rights? You only have right in your husband's bed on your back, savouring the delights of his Masculine benevolence.

Tricia: That is sexual harassment sir.



Amata in this film, portrays the common problem which female employees face in their work place. Sexual harassment seems to be the norm. McDonnell (2003), in quoting the *World Book Dictionary*, defined sexual harassment as “the harassment of a person because of his or her sex, as by making unwelcome sexual advances or otherwise engaging in sexist practices that cause the victim’s loss of income, mental anguish and the like” (p. 42). This situation is what Tricia experiences at her work place. Pepple in the process of causing her mental anguish stresses the “Masculine benevolence” in his statement to establish that the male gender delights or needs the women for his sexual gratification and satisfaction. In essence, the female character is coded as an erotic object useful for the purpose of male sexual pleasure. This sarcastic statement is made by Pepple as a means of gaining pleasure from inflicting humiliation and psychological pain on Tricia in accordance to the stipulations of sadism. “Sadism involves gaining pleasure from seeing others undergo discomfort or pain. It includes the use of emotional cruelty, purposefully manipulating others through the use of fear and a preoccupation with violence” (Reidy, Zeichner & Selbert, 2011, p. 85). Hence, Pepple uses this sadistic statement as a means to allay the threat of castration anxiety which Tricia’s success represents. Tricia stands her ground refusing to be classified in such a manner. She accuses him of such derogatory expressions as a result of her refusal to give in to his advances to spread her legs for him. This she also claims is the reason why he had refused to promote her to the level of principal partner even after serving the organization for fifteen years.

Finally, Eliza is called up to the witness box where she testifies about the whole incident. Eliza begins her testimony from her aunt’s house where she served as maid.



Eliza under cross examination by Barr. Tricia as she narrates her ordeals with Zebulon

A flash back through the perspective of Eliza transports the audience to when it all began. She had been raped on a daily basis by her aunt's husband and son, consequently, when she got pregnant, she was driven out and sent back to the village. In the village, she was caricatured by villagers and ill-treated by her father. Ten years later, on her way back from the farm with her daughter, she met Melford who had lost his way. He enquires from her about Madam Ottondo, the Othopaedic. As she helps him find his way, he introduces himself to her. Due to her kind gesture, Melford (Emmanuel Edo Kpayi) who is over sixty years marries her. In another series of flashback, his family settles all the necessary marriage rites and pays her bride price. A good use of flashback is employed in this Court room to help in the logical progression of the story and also to help the viewers understand past events. Eliza therefore goes to live with Melford, in company of her daughter, Blessing. She narrates how Melford gave her a sense of worth, made her feel like a woman, encouraged her to go back to school and how he eventually sent her back to school. The seven years, she spent with him produced two children and according to her testimony, were the best years of her life. However, tragedy struck and Melford dies of cardiac arrest. This was when her present travail started.

In a subsequent scene, Eliza is captured with her children in their mourning clothes. Melford's family members consisting of Solomon, Favour and Zebulon walk in to meet them. Zebulon sends the children out in an aggressive manner. The camera then pans to picture Favour who cautions him stating that aggression is not the way to earn respect. After much verbal exchange, they all settle down for the business at hand. Solomon who serves as the mouthpiece informs Eliza about the family's decision to share their brother's property but that after due consideration based on their tradition, Zebulon was mandated to inherit her to ease off her responsibilities.

Solomon: Our tradition demands that we share our brother's property. Our tradition also demands that one of his brothers inherit you. This is because we want to keep his children in the family.

Eliza: So, I am now a property that would be inherited?

Zebulon: Do not question our tradition.

Eliza: I will not be inherited.

Zebulon: Shut up! You should be overjoyed that I have agreed to marry you.

Zebulon from his dialogue is portrayed as aggressive and inhumane. Having no consideration whatsoever for a woman who just lost her husband or any other woman for that matter. Through the dialogue of Favour, it is discovered that Zebulon had spent twenty years in America but was deported for gross misconduct and battering of his white wife out of annoyance, Eliza walks out on them. It is pathetic that a woman is seen as a property in the Nigerian setting and it is on this basis that women are portrayed as properties for the male in Nollywood films. Subsequently, Zebulon inherits and marries Eliza after much resistance and objections. Months later, Eliza's bedroom is established. She is captured as fast asleep, and then the camera pans right to the door, as Zebulon walks in with a scopophilic gaze lingering on her body. Zebulon then makes moves to sleep with her; she objects stating that she was still mourning her late husband. Zebulon proclaims that he is the man in charge now and dictates what happens then onwards. Here the masculinity construction/ patriarchy issue is established. Zebulon sees himself as the man who has the final say as assumed by traditional norms. Eliza objects and tries to run away but is caught by Zebulon. Eliza continues to struggle. However, she is no match to his strength. Zebulon pins her down on the bed and slaps her several times which is what the male uses as a force to get his way. This is in line with Jones' (2003) assertion that "a man of any age threatens, intimidates, abuses and batters a woman to make her do what he wants. It works. He gets his way, as bonus he gets a heady rush of experiencing his own power" (p.451).



Zebulon battering Eliza as a result of her rejection of his sexual advances

Freedom in chains provides its viewers with an insight into the fact that most educated married women are battered as a result of sexual denial to the demands of their spouses. This film brings to fore, the truth that the rejection of a partner's sexual advances is one of the reasons why the educated woman experiences battering. In reality, the male uses violence as a strong mode of subjecting the woman to give in to his sexual demands. This becomes the normal routine as Zebulon continues to batter Eliza at every instance. Eliza's heart is torn into pieces day after day. The camera in another scene captures Blessing, Eliza's daughter with bruises and her clothes torn. She is frightened and fidgeting as a result of Zebulon's attempt to rape her. Eliza, due to her own past experience, is torn apart and this action raises further dust in the house. Through a close up shot, the agony written all over Eliza's face is captured. She makes up her mind to leave the house with her children. Angrily, she confronts Zebulon to pour out her heart and insults him.

Eliza: I will not take this anymore from you. We are leaving.

Zebulon: No, you won't. You know why? This is because you are my property and the kids, my brother's kids.

The sad reality being portrayed here is that a woman in the Nigerian context, is viewed as a man's property which men possess and control. This is basically because a bride price was paid on her head. In effect, marriage gives up a woman's right to herself. In practices where bride price is paid, it is common for the husband to believe that by paying the bride price, he owns his wife. The act of marriage is seen to give the husband full ownership of the woman. Zebulon continues to emphasize that Eliza is his property fit for his sexual desires as a means of sarcasm to inflict psychological and emotional harm on her which is the aim of sadism. He uses this word in order to devalue, suppress and intimidate her so as to create a level of inferiority in her. In retaliation, Eliza calls him a monster and insists that she will not leave with a monster. This abusive connotation hurts Zebulon's ego and in quick response to allay being insignificant, he gives her another round of beating and also leaves her with a threat to be killed if she defies him and moves out of the house.

In a quick succession, the camera returns to the court room with Eliza in the witness box weeping uncontrollably. From there, she continues to narrate her ordeal. According to her testimony, she reported Zebulon to his kinsmen in tune with the adage which says "do not wash your dirty linens in public." So instead of reporting him to Police authorities, she reports his atrocities to uncle Solomon and other kinsmen in order to resolve the matter within the family. But nothing reasonable was done, rather the couple was urged to reconcile and work things out. Eliza, who is not satisfied with this resolve, relocates to Ibadan with her children without her husband's knowledge.

Subsequently, the flash back transports the viewers to the day and scene when Zebulon died. Eliza returns home only to meet the presence of Solomon, Zebulon and Favour in her house. Upon citing her, Zebulon in his aggressive manner informs Eliza that she would pay for defying his orders, hence, he makes move to beat her. Solomon stops him and pleads with Eliza;

informing her that they had come to settle the matter amicably. Eliza blatantly refuses to settle with them.

Eliza: I have left my husband's property. What else do you want? Do you want to collect his children?

Zebulon: Yes, we want the children and you too.

Eliza: Zebulon, what do you want from me?

Zebulon: You are my wife.

Eliza: God forbid!

Zebulon charges towards Eliza in order to beat her up for talking back, as well as challenging his authority but he is held back by his brothers. Eliza continues to rant out of vexation. She then faces Solomon over his inability to bring his brother to book when she reported Zebulon to him on account of his various atrocities which include his trying to rape her daughter, Blessing and also the constant battering she suffered in his hands.

Eliza: I will not leave with Zebulon for any reason. He is an animal, monster that is heartless.

Zebulon: Uncle, I will not have this woman talk to me like that.

Eliza: You are a beast! A beast that wants to kill me.

Zebulon: Beast? You call me a beast.

Eliza's insult and abusive words spurs Zebulon to action. He gets up suddenly and begins to assault her in front of his kinsmen and the children. God's presence (2013) affirmed that more often than not women are subjugated in films:

Women are subjugated and marginalized in films and are seen as self-sacrificers, objects of ridicule, victims and culprits. Sometimes they are treated as outsiders when they try to question norms that are partial and inimical to their status. They are punished for being independent, vocal, assertive and desperate when they refuse to be silent and allow only the men to speak (p. 102).

Freedom in chains also foregrounds the fact that most men batter their wives as a result of continued provocation, nagging and the use of abusive words from them. Men expect total submission from their wives and when this is not met, beating follows. It is on this note that Zebulon acts impulsively, he throws a glass cup at Eliza but misses his target, Eliza dodges and it crashes on the wall. It is obvious that Zebulon suffers from personality disorder. Persons with antisocial personality disorder act in a way that disregards the feelings and rights of other people. These sets of persons often use or exploit other people for their gain. They act impulsively and get into physical fights. They mistreat their spouses, neglect or abuse their children and may even kill. Zebulon is a clear example of this class of people. Hence, he derives pleasure in inflicting pain and degrading Eliza as he loses his temper and goes wild, beats Eliza

almost to the point of killing her. With a long shot, the camera captures Zebulon punching, pounding Eliza. Solomon and Favour try to intervene and they also get manhandled. The whole action happened in quick succession as he pushes Solomon, hits Favour, and kicks Blessing on the mouth for trying to hold him back. In a bid to avoid further beatings, Eliza within this little break, gathers momentum and runs into one of the stores packed with building materials. Zebulon out of anger follows suit in a hot chase with the intention to deal with her mercilessly. Unfortunately, Zebulon in the process of running towards Eliza, steps on a newspaper, he slips and falls on an iron rod which pierces into his left chest region. He stands up, retreats, staggers and then in a swoop collapses.

The camera returns to the law court on the day of the final hearing. The Judge (Tee Jay Morgan) is captured as he makes his decisions known. After careful consideration of all the submissions of the learned counsels, the Judge makes his pronouncement. From his decipherment, it is established that the deceased initiated several violent acts of assault on the accused, Eliza and that she acted on self-preservation by escaping into the inner room to avoid further assault. Consequently, Eliza is found not guilty because according to the judge, what happened in the inner room cannot be accounted for by anyone. Furthermore, since the prosecution cannot prove its case beyond reasonable doubt, the Judge discharged and acquitted Eliza. At this news, the courtroom is filled with sounds of ovation and happiness as Hassana, Tricia and Eliza come together and hug. Credit is to be given to the director of *Freedom in chains*, because the movie moved away from the patriarchal narratives and took an artistic stand on the side of justice. Thus, Eliza is not made to suffer unjustly.

In a quick succession, Hassana is captured descending the stair case of their mansion with her luggage, her husband calls her several times but she is resolved to divorce him. She tells him she had had enough of his attitude of battering and maltreating her because of their childless state. Finally, Hassana leaves, closes the door behind her. The closing of the door behind her symbolically suggests the end of the relationship with Alhaji. *Freedom in Chains* employed the radical feminist perspective that marriage constitutes slavery for women and that divorce is presented as the easy way out for the frustrated and disappointed women.

Conclusion

Wife battering is an age long issue of domestic violence which has eaten deep into the fabric of society. Despite the attention this phenomenon has received, instances of wife battering continue to occur. This work focused on wife battering and analysed *Freedom in Chains* as a case study to buttress this point. It laid emphasis on the various dimensions through which the educated married woman is discriminated, oppressed and humiliated by her own husband, stating the major causes that greatly contributed to wife battering, in Nigeria and the world at large. These factors include incompatibility, status imbalance, infertility, and patriarchal/masculinity construction.

In conclusion, this research posits that wife battering demeans and destroys our families and to the larger extent the society; wife battering produces abusers who use many tactics to exert

power over their spouses. Therefore, there is a call for action, to say no to domestic violence with reference to wife battering as it is unacceptable and can no longer be swept under the proverbial rug of silence.

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FILMOGRAPHY

Title of film: *Freedom in chains*
Screen play: Emmanuel Anyalogu
Producer: Ekpeyong Bassey Inyang
Director: Fred Amata and Bond Emeruwa
Year of release: 2008
Language: English/Hausa
Duration: 125 minutes
D. O. P: John Osemeke
Company: Nollywood Promotion Concepts
Starring: Bimbo Akintola, Keppy Ekpeyong, Nobert Young
Alex Lopez, Rekiya Attah, Fred Amata, Emmanuel Anyalogu, Sani Muazu, Tony Effah, Emmanuel Edokpayi, Abubakar Yahaya and Teejay Morgan