



KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE 5TH WOMEN FOR AFRICA HOSTED BY DSITRICT 913 IN IBDAN, OYO STATE

Given By

BD UCHE AGBIM
Board Director

Good day, my wonderful, NR. Ezinma Nwabuife, Cordinator, IIWPBD 'Ranti Adetuberu and cherished ladies of our Inner Wheel, on this momentous occasion. May I stand on the existing protocols, to have this interaction, with us, this time.

In the choice of our theme, 'Strengthening The African Cultural Identity, Values And Ethics' for this conference, I perceive it as a call to action, on us all, to find ways and manners, to engage constructively, in all and every efforts, to mainstream our African Cultural Identity, Values and Ethics, as we seek to uplift and improve on the lives of our womenfolk, in whichever environment, that we find the need to. And the need for us to intervene positively, in the affairs of our womenfolk, are so massive and present, in the multifaceted, multifarious and multilayered of ways, that the problems daily confronting them are daily presented, all around us. In addressing the issues, we should be operating under the orbit of our International Inner Wheel President's Theme "Work Wonders". Some of cases that readily spring to mind, are as highlighted below:

1. In today's Nigeria, with the level of insecurity in our land, we are inundated, on a daily basis, with the horrendous atrocities being meted out to Nigerians, especially, the womenfolk, in the hands of the brigands that have held our land hostage. A lot of our womenfolk have lost their lives in the most heinous of ways, in the hands of these brigands. Some have so callously been violated, through rapes. Some have been sacked from their ancestral homes and farm lands, with no visible means of livelihood in taking care of themselves and their children, and are huddled into IDP camps, without adequate upkeep and care. So many of them have fallen into the hands of mindless kidnappers, who keep them as sex slaves. From a lot of them, the kidnapers had exacted ransoms, before being released. The case of the Chibok school girls, and the recent Kaduna Train kidnap victims, are points in view. Some even loose their lives, in such cases.
2. There are several unreported cases of widows' maltreatments, in our rural areas, at the deaths of their husbands, that a lot of us know about. Such cases range from misdeeds that border on the inhuman, in the name of traditions, that they are subjected to, during the burial ceremonies of their dead spouses, to loosing of the estates of their husbands, that are forcibly wrestled from them.
3. We always see on the streets, girls of school going ages, hawking in the hot sun. These are girls, who should be in schools, but often, due to poverty, are given out as house maids by their poor parents. These girls are treated as slaves in the households of their foster parents
4. We hear of female employees and students being taken undue advantage of, by their male bosses in the work places and male lecturers, in the higher institutions of learning. We have cases of under aged girls, being forced into marriages.



5. Many teenage girls, are saddled with unwanted pregnancies, that force them out of schools, both at Secondary and Post Secondary levels, in our environment. Often, even where and when they are contending with the psychological trauma and stigmatization, that come with such unfortunate incidents, their families chastise and send them, out of their families, without any form of parental love and care.
6. Rather sadly, even with the public enlightenment available, many girls still suffer from HIV Aids, not knowing how to access necessary care and treatment, available in the HIV Aids designated treatment centres, in some hospitals
7. The list is endless. My dear and cherished Inner wheel chummies, each time any of the above happens, to the womenfolk, within our immediate environment, it dehumanizes us. Each time, they occur, around us, part of our humanity dies. In such cases, it is a call to duty for each one of us, individually and collectively. It is in our determined efforts, to ameliorate the negative effects of such occurrences, on the affected women, wherever they may be and located, that we demonstrate our kinship with them, strengthening our African Cultural Identity, Values and Ethics, and work wonders. It is in our desire and committed efforts to seek them out, to begin to offer succor, mitigating help and assistance, to them, that we work wonders. It is in such labour of love, kindness and compassion, through offering them psychological healing/emotional stability, and letting it shine out, that we care and do love them; and that they are not alone and forgotten, in their various levels of crises, that we can firmly demonstrate, that we work wonders.

It is through the mentorships and counseling, that we provide to them, that we amply demonstrate, that we work wonders. In the African cultural environment, we demonstrate very close affinity, with one another, in our respective families, kindreds, villages and towns. We should not allow our cosmopolitan outlook now, rob us of that intrinsic, positive human values and ethics. We must bring those time honoured values, fully to bear, through our responses, to our womenfolk, who are bearing the full brunt of the dastard activities of the wicked ones amongst us. It is in evident demonstration of such positive cultural values and ethics, as we embrace the unfortunate ones, amongst our womenfolk, adversely affected, as outlined above, that we work wonders.

May I most sincerely appeal, and challenge us all, that it is our duty, to discharge the onus, of demonstrating, through deeply committed, affirmative actions and activities, of bringing solace, to these womenfolk, in dire need of help and assistance, in the guise of providing for them, badly needed psychological mending and emotional stability, that we work wonders, putting amply on display, our African Cultural Identity, Values and Ethics, of one for the other, thus strengthening same; and in the process, becoming pace setters, for the world to notice, and emulate.

8. In recent days, our airwaves and social media, are awash, with the news of the havoc, that flooding, resulting from intensive rainfalls, had wreaked on some of our communities, in Yola, Lokoja and Anam areas of Adamawa, Kogi and Anambra States, respectively. There is no gainsaying, that a lot of widows were adversely affected in those unfortunate events. Such cases demand from us, the showcasing of our intrinsic African Cultural Identity, Values and Ethics, in the ways and means that we engage with those segment of our target audience, so adversely affected, to work wonders.



9. How many of us, have taken notice, of the recent global occurrences, within the global Inner Wheel families, particularly in the European, Mediterranean and South Asiatic regions?

Did it escape our notice that in both climes, different Inner Wheel Countries groupings came together, in regional gatherings, in unity of purpose, to chart their regional courses? In Europe, Inner Wheel of Great Britain and Ireland, convoked together, with the Inner Wheel Mediterranean, consisting of Egypt, Jordan, Algeria and Morocco, meeting in Berlin. Inner Wheel, South Asia, comprising of India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Malaysia, Nepal and Bangladesh, equally convoked weeks ago.

What should be agitating our minds, now, in this era of globalization, is the question, why is it that in Africa, we tend to be so divided and hardly forge a united front? Why can't we take a cue, from what has taken place between the Inner Wheel members of Europe and the Mediterranean, as well as in South Asia? Has the time not come, for us in Nigeria to show and demonstrate clear leadership, in that drive? I humbly recommend, that this conference, sets up a Contact/Outreach committee, that will be charged with the responsibility, of beginning the preliminary work of bringing the Inner Wheel clubs together, first, in the countries of West African (ECOWAS) sub-region, as a first step towards the convocation of the African Continental conclave, in the very near future. Its eventual achievement, will in no small measure, strengthen, a workable, harmonious African Cultural Identity, Values and Ethics, amongst us in the respective African countries, whose outcomes will include a greater African presence and voice, in the global affairs, of the Inner Wheel. It's time, has arrived. Let's think about it. Let's deliberate on it.

I thank you, for listening.

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