

MARCH, 2025 // ISSUE 01

a literary
magazine

FEATURED PIECE:
TWO EXCERPTS FROM DECIMAL
POINT WONDERS OF THE WORLD:
ESSAY AS COLLAGE
BY BEN MILLER

IN CONVERSATION WITH:
SHIKHA S. LAMBA

Thorn & Bloom



Feminist is the New F Word Says The Hardcore, Placard-carrying Feminist in 6 Stanzas and Two Equations by Kasimma

I don't know what my best colour is, but I know it is not white. White is a gossip, no, not a gossip—at least a gossip gossips while telling themselves that they are not gossiping—a busybody. Clerics wear white clothes to show their cleanliness, piousness, next-to-Godliness.

1.

Abuja downtown has electricity and water supply, smooth and wide roads, edifices with luxury roofs, malls, diri gabazie. As one proceeds to its uptowns, the scene dwindles to heating ordinariness. The estate where I lived is on the rumpled side of the downtown coin. Rows of bushes flank columns of red earth between. When the sea's roof cries, cars get trapped in mud. Since the outset of the estate, and I have no idea when that was, men have been chairpersons: Estate Officials, they are called. During the campaign of the outgoing chairman, he and two of his friends knocked on doors bright and early in the a.m. one Saturday. People cheered and supported him. Enter 2020. A woman declared interest in the chairmanship position and da-blooooood-of-Jesus! Our once-mute WhatsApp group flooded with mouths beefy with smelly prejudice for her. Nobody else declared interest in this position or any position for that matter. She typed up a manifesto, made a flyer, campaigned! She even invoked her Ph.D. and her husband's testimony of support for her agenda. All this aplomb for an unpaid, unwanted, unopposed position! Yet,

a character called Izik goes back to the history of our WhatsApp group and screenshot chats where she promises to download God's vomit on those people who choose to discuss loudly by her window at midnight and those who come to her house to destroy her lemongrass. Izik's low move brushed my tongue in coats of acrid blue. So, I responded:

There is nothing this woman has said or done that is evil, absolutely nothing. She will not be the first chairperson in this estate. But we have not had these many chats because of elections. Izik and others who screenshot and posted her chats are not angels. We are all flawed. Every single one of us is flawed. And nobody has a single story. She is flawed too. She has her bad and good sides like the rest of us. I wonder why you people are focusing on a negative single story. If God should look at our sins, who will survive? As far as I am concerned, the only crime she committed is being a woman. **This is the reason you all want to crucify her and tear down her person.**

Well, the busybody, Izik, groaned a pathetic, supposedly admonitory, kumbaya of how irritating my comment is, how the problem with feminists is that they go about looking for trouble and scattering people's homes, how blah-blah-black-sheep-have-you-any-wool. Well, no, sir, no, sir, none for you!

2.

I have a dear cousin whom I shall call Y. Her bold eyes and her upper incisor, which is missing an arc of a tooth, enlighten her smile. Y would lift a baked stone with her bare palms if that'd save another woman from trouble. Y has little patience for men's tantrums. Y agrees with the sentiments of feminism. She upholds and defends them furiously. Yet, when I called her a feminist, she crumpled like ruffled chiffon. "Aw-shucks, I am not a feminist!" It appeared Y was saying, "Be polite; don't use the F-word! Don't stain my white!"

"Fuck" is one of the juiciest fruits on the tree of words. One likes it; one should not eat it. "Fuck" is an all-encompassing word. "Fuck you" does not mean "have sex you" it can mean "go-to-hell you" or "leave-me-alone you" or "I-don't-care you." Fuck makes its recipients push back.

- a. *Rudeness + Politeness = Nkapi*
if Rudeness = Fuck you
and Politeness = F you
then \approx Fuck you \neq F you
 \therefore *Fuck you + F you = Nkapi*

Qed.

Nkapi, the Shrew Rat, finds human feet attractive. It bites and puffs its victim's foot simultaneously so that they don't feel the discomfort of its bites. I see Nkapi when someone, in reaching for clean language, says "F you" instead of "fuck you". If you think it and proceed to open your mouth to utter it, be, at the very least, bold



"Colonization was
endured until the people
said no. Things just don't
happen; people make them
happen."

~ Kasimma



enough to say what you want to say. “F you” doesn’t make the taste less unpleasant.

b. *Feminist you* \geq *Fuck you*

$$\frac{\textit{feminist}(\textit{you})}{\textit{you}} \geq \frac{\textit{Fuck}(\textit{you})}{\textit{you}}$$

$$\approx \textit{Feminist} \geq \textit{Fuck}$$

Qed.

Feminist is greater than or equal to Fuck you, not simply equal to, because it now seems as though being called a feminist carries more baggage than “fuck you.” If someone says, “Fuck you” to the Ys—it doesn’t matter if their act at that time deserves an overwhelmingly decorated fuck-you—they might say, “Fuck you too,” or anything other than shrinking and saying, “I am not a fuck-you.” But call them feminists and da-blooooood-of-Jesus! How dare you tinge their white!!!

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I am pleased to inform you that the new F-word is “Feminist”. (Go on, don’t be shy to applaud!)

3.

Do you smell it, the idiocy boiling in misogyny? Women have sunk to their graves on the weight of blames that rightfully belongs to men. Women are blamed for “getting” raped, blamed for “getting” beat up by their husbands, blamed for their husbands’ infidelity, blamed when their children turn out bad. Blamed! You smell it now, don’t you, the nzuzu boiling in misogyny? Women are made to feel as though they are the only ones subsumed in the orchestra of marriage, as though marriage is a mere inconvenience to the man. Igbo people say that marriage is a woman’s crown. What type of crown, pray tell? When women complain

that the crown of thorns is making them bleed, they are shushed: *Be happy you even have a crown! Did Jesus complain about his own crown? Why involve Jesus in this issue, I wonder? Did Jesus’ crucifixion certificate say, “Hereabove crucified is Jesus, the Married Woman”? Men who think misogyny profits them are sunk in cocoons of illusion. Women and men suffer from misogyny.*

Do you smell it yet, the idiocy boiling in misogyny? Perceive this: how about we tell men to excuse their bodies of their instruments of rape and infidelity, penises and fingers, instead of telling girls to avoid “getting” raped. Oh, shall we amputate Mr. Man’s hands or better still relieve his skull of his unused brain so that it doesn’t even occur to him to beat his woman? Inanity, right? Good. But those people who push for love-thy-neighbour-as-thou-loveth-thyself are now called troublemakers, bad people, who want to scatter families. You smell it now, don’t you, the iberibe boiling in misogyny? My comment sent Izik’s intention, to showcase that woman as a vicious person, gathering itself into an apt countenance of thank-you-and-bye-bye. His comeback, having negotiated the lump of maggoty misogyny he mistakes for an Adam’s apple, oozing of pong asininity, was an effort to salvage whatever was left of his pauci-dignity. His groan of helpless disheartenment was in service of shielding his white.

4.

Newton’s first law states that: *the velocity of an object will not change unless the object is acted on by an outside force*. The foremost step in battle is to buy a lead by hoodwinking the other through lauding lies until it becomes a recurring song in their heads and, in effect, their truth. Change happens when people shrink the velocity of those lies to a stop, when people strip those lies of their



tie to gravity so that they can float to oblivion. There was a time when slavery was legal until some slaves said no. It took decades of force and blood, but now slavery is synonymous with hellfire. Apartheid was suffered by South Africans until the people pushed back. Colonization was endured until the people said no. Things just don't happen; people make them happen. Let it not be said that I am advocating for violence, no. I abhor violence.

I have survived the devilry of domestic violence of the physical, psychological, economic, financial, verbal, (name-it!) variant. I have literally shed blood and tears. Violence is not even funny. People with whom I share love have scalded me in deep ways for being a feminist. I don't hate them. Hatred cannot extinguish hatred. Instead, I pity them because they are products of a society that teaches them to demean women. Regardless of the scars, I am still an unshakable, hardcore, placard-carrying feminist. What doesn't set you back propels you forward. Now, when I peep into my chalice of blood to shed, of tears to cry, of hurts to feel, of fucks to give, I find it shingly empty.

When African Americans boycotted buses and trekked miles to work, they did so, not for themselves, but for their children and unborn children. When Ruby Bridges became the first person-of-colour to attend an all person-of-no-colour public William Frantz Elementary School, she and her parents did it for the African race. When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus, she was thinking of Emmett Till, not herself. So, who am I to say that because I am persecuted for my belief, I'd hang them on the gust of forgetfulness? Ha! I ga-askiwa! A killed person cannot be killed. I will only get louder in this struggle, for equality, for world peace, for my children.

5.

Since Feminism is the new F-word, it is difficult now to be called a feminist. That is why Y pushed back on the word, never mind that she and feminism are like apple and apple skin. I did not sink into bedazzling disbelief when Izik threw the new F-word at me. Fighting him will solve nothing; offing misogyny will. Contrary to what Izik expects of me, to hide my white cloak from stains, me who does not even wear white, I am reiterating to him and the world that I, Kasimma, am a hardcore, placard-carrying feminist. I matter. I belong to, and am beneath, no one. *Peereiod!* I salute Frances Ogamba, Mubanga Kalimamukwento, Chika Unigwe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ukamaka Olsakwe, feminists whose pens scoop the sunlight and spread it on pages of enlightenment, vanquishing the whispering of machismo history and turning it to melodic herstory. I had, with the deepest appreciation, applied Ms. Adichie's words in my response to Izik's sorry shenanigans.

When a drum of water has dirt settled underneath, and someone scoops a cup carefully so as not to unsettle the dirt, that person is, willy-nilly, still drinking dirty water. Is it not better to pour the

dirty water away, wash the drum, and refill it with clean water? Dirt cannot wipe itself. Someone must do the cleaning. An unhappy family is already a scattered family. Feelings are intrusive. If we have forced colonization, slavery, into the grave, we must also banish sexism into the same grave and make strong efforts to cover that grave! The pelting rains of misogyny must surrender to the tranquil reigns of feminism. Women must strip themselves of the white cloak of cleanliness, piousness, next-to-Godliness. Women are not angels. Women are not clerics. Women are simply women.

My hope is that the world will be free from the suffocating cage of misogyny.

6.

Ọgwụ go kwa ka ọ ra m n'ọnụ, at least for now. Feminist is the new f-word. So go ahead; don't be polite; use the new F-word. Don't be ashamed of being called a feminist.

Need I say more?
