**Women writers using John 8 to argue that Jesus treated women as human and contemporary cultures should do the same**

Manus, C.U. and J.C. Ukaga. “The Narrative of the Woman Caught in Adultery (Jn 7:53-8:1-11) Re-read in the Nigerian Context.” *Acta Theologica*. 37(1): 56-85. 2017.

Article Cultural Context:

* Nigerian patriarchal society: In many parts of Nigeria, women do not have equal rights to inherit land or purchase it. (Most women could not afford to purchase land, and some landowners will not sell land to women.)
* Boko Haram (defined in the article as “disapproval and hatred of western education as evil by Islamist militants in north-eastern Nigeria.” At the time the article was written in 2017, the militants had released 82 of the girls they held captive since 2014 in exchange for some of their militants. Some girls are still captive.)
* Issues regarding child marriage in Nigeria (Example: the 13-year-old Egyptian girl chosen for marriage by a Nigerian Muslim Senator, Yerima, age 50)

**Article Purpose:** “To involve us [Nigerians] in the critical quest for women’s rights as persons of faith. For us, there are abiding lessons from the text, which suppose that, in spite of the maleness of Jesus, his ministry is women-friendly.” Using the “feminist hermeneutical approach, [our] purpose is to galvanize our audience (usually men) to critically begin to reflect theologically on women’s rights in the context of the call for gender justice and equity in the wake of terrorist kidnaps and abductions in Nigeria. If this optimism is convincing and many other theologians share and supplement the views being expressed, this article would have made an appreciable impact on the community of theologians” in Nigeria. The authors used the Johannian passage “to sketch Jesus’ pro-life stance and its relevance for contemporary women” and “to expose how Jesus, the Lord of the Church, has acknowledged the sacrosanctity of the humanity of the woman in the story and how he affects her liberation from the clutches of the representatives of death…Jesus would not approve of the use of the barbaric act of violence on the woman.”

In the “Pastoral Implications” section of the article, the writers assert, “The story of the nameless adulteress represents a case of Jesus’ benevolent and honorable attitude toward women’s rights…While Jesus did not condone the action of the anonymous woman, he showed her compassion and liberation. Jesus realized that stoning her to death would have meant doing violence to her right to life and the desecration of the image of God she bore in her. His directive: ‘Go, sin no more’ is a command to the woman (as well as to men) and many others like her in our nations to embrace re-integration and empowerment. By her empowerment, she and her likes are challenged to realize their full potential to ‘humanize politics and work by virtue of their feminine qualities’ in the human community (Fiorenza). As ‘responsible subjects of their own lives’ (Fiorenza), they have the ability to save their nations and people from destructions as long as they are allowed to contribute to the promotion of life in their communities…From a pastoral perspective, it is not the will of God that the life of any person, created in his own image and likeness, should be ‘wasted,’ because she is a woman…Therefore, the morals derived from *re-reading* this story call on us all and the Church to begin to socially de-construct decadent taboos placed on the women folk as *Haram* (evil) by militant Islamists. Heeding this call shall pave the way to re-enact gender equality that bespeaks our inclusive oneness in the family of God, the Church…Jesus’ attitude encourages us to appreciate the need for the erection and formation of inclusive familial communities, where all forms of unjust and inhumane repression to persons based on gender must be eliminated (Uchem). Jesus’ action in liberating the woman has overridden the decadent dictates of religion, fanaticism and the obnoxious cultures in favor of the zero tolerance to gender disparity.”

The concluding thoughts affirm, “In this story, Jesus prominently stands out and affirms that any unjust patriarchal structures and mistreatment of the struggles of the womenfolk in rural nooks and crannies of Nigeria as *Haram*—evil—are ‘to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God’s intent.’ This is our view on the Nigerian women: our mothers, daughters, sisters and wives who continue to experience male-instigated terrorism, domination and oppression.”

**2018 Information on Boko Haram from *CNN***

**February 19, 2018 -** [A faction of Boko Haram raids the Government Girls Science and Technical College](https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/20/africa/hundreds-schoolgirls-flee-boko-haram-attackers/index.html) in the northeast Nigerian town of Dapchi, kidnapping 110 students of the college.

**March 21, 2018 -**[Minister of Information and Culture Alhaji Lai Mohammed says 104 of the girls abducted from their boarding school on February 19 have been released and returned to their hometown of Dapchi.](https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/21/africa/nigeria-kidnapped-girls-boko-haram-intl/index.html)Six of the Dapchi schoolgirls are still missing. [Mohammed also later clarifies that two others who were kidnapped](https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/26/africa/nigeria-dapchi-school-boko-haram-intl/index.html), "who are not students of the college -- a primary school boy who came to the school to sell pure water and another primary school girl," were released as well.

**April 13, 2018 -**[UNICEF](https://www.unicef.org/wca/press-releases/more-1000-children-northeastern-nigeria-abducted-boko-haram-2013) says Boko Haram has kidnapped [more than 1,000 children in northeastern Nigeria since 2013.](https://edition.cnn.com/2018/04/13/africa/boko-haram-children-abduction-intl/index.html)

**May 7, 2018 -**[The Nigerian army says it has rescued more than 1,000 Boko Haram captives](https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/07/africa/boko-haram-captives-freed-intl/index.html) -- mainly women and children, as well as some young men who had been forced to become Boko Haram fighters -- in Borno state. The operation, which was conducted in conjunction with Cameroonian and Nigerian troops of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), rescued the hostages from Malamkari, Amchaka, Walasa and Gora villages of the Bama Local Government Area.

**Isshiki, Yoshiko. “The Woman Who Was About to Be Stoned.” *Japan Christian Review.* Used by permission from the author from her book *Putting Down the Water Jar*. Trans. Deborah Schmidt.**

Isshiki discusses the way women were misused in Japanese history as “comfort women,” which she defines as “woman forced into sexual slavery by the World War II Japanese military. She is also disturbed by current sexual practices in the tourist industry. As chairperson of the National Christian Council in Japan Women’s Committee, she read a letter from a Korean church woman’s organization alerting her committee to the sexual abuse of Korean women by Japanese tour groups. [This incident occurred over 20 years ago.]

Isshiki uses the Johannian passage to highlight Jesus’ character: “Jesus must have been very sad to see this side of human nature that is so quick to discriminate and judge others, that smugly and self-righteously admits to no mistakes and refuses to understand the fallibilities of other human beings…When we read this story we may get the uneasy feeling that, in the minds of many people, women are equated with sinfulness. This is an important point that we cannot ignore. In paternalistic societies, matters related to sex become taboo. Contact with women is discouraged and the masculine worldview becomes the norm. Women are seen to exist only in order to serve men. When we, as women also, comply with this worldview, there is a sense in which we endorse it by our actions. We must be alert to it and raise the consciousness of those around us to recognize the men and women together are blessed by God and are equal in importance.”

Isshiki writes, “Though I am a strong supporter of the new, cooperative Catholic-Protestant translation of the Bible and highly recommend it, I was disturbed by the title given to this account in the UBS third edition, which was simply “The Woman of Adultery.” Why is this label used only for the woman, with no mention of the man who also certainly committed adultery? (I am happy to report that upon my recommendation to the Japan Bible Society, the title was changed to ‘Neither do I condemn you.’)”

**Examples of Contemporary Stonings**

**May 9, 2018**

A Somali woman, accused of having several husbands (up to eleven), was stoned to death by al Shabab.

**2017**

An unmarried couple were stoned to death in public in Northeast Mali by “Islamists.” A local official said, “The Islamists dug two holes where they put the man and the woman who lived martially without being married. They were stoned to death.” A source said that the public was invited to take part, but only four people stoned them until they died (*The Telegraph* from the UK).

**2015**

A 19-year-old woman, identified as Rokhshana, was forced to marry against her will and fled with another man. The couple was caught after two days, and the “Taliban leader of the village ordered that Rokhshana be stoned to death for adultery” (*CNN*).