Between the Law and Literature: Insecurity as the Consequence of the Breaches of Fundamental Human Rights in Nigerian Literature

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Introduction

In this section, an attempt is made to shed light on the concepts deployed for elucidation in this paper. This will help to provide a background that will aid understanding of the attempt that is being made here to connect manifestations of insecurity in the texts studied to the pervasive instances of human right violations. I seek to argue that there is a salient nexus between the law and literature and that human rights violations are precursors to insecurity.

What are Human Rights?

United Nations International Children's Educational Fund defines human rights as "standards that recognize and protect the dignity of all human beings. Human rights govern how individual human beings live in society and with each other, as well as their relationship with the state and the obligations that the state has towards them". And no individual, group or government has the right to violate any person's or group's human rights. The properties of human rights include their universal inalienability, indivisibility, inter-dependence and inter-relatedness, equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, accountability and the rule of law.

The United Nations also defines human rights as "rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status". Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, et cetera.

It should be noted that one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations is the creation of comprehensive international human rights laws embedded in its charter on the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* which was adopted by member states in December 1948. This body of laws created political, civil, cultural, economic and social rights which governments all over the world are enjoined to protect, and individuals are entitled to seek reliefs from the courts against their violations.

The Beginning of Protection of Human Rights by Creative Writers

This conference with its apt theme of "Language, Literary and Communication Studies for Peace and (In)security and Development in Nigeria" is important in today's Nigeria, where insecurity has been the norm and the everyday experience of Nigerians living in Nigeria. I have equally decided that my lead paper would be titled "Between the Law and Literature: Insecurity as the consequence of the Breaches of Fundamental Human Rights in Nigeria". I chose this title for two reasons: One, the state of insecurity in Nigeria which those in the Arts and Humanities should spearhead in the discourse by pointing out the problems and finding lasting solutions to the monstrous experiences of the everyday life of Nigerians. Two, human rights debates raised in different forums are left to lawyers, human rights activists, political scientists, sociologists, the NGOs to debate on, while the voice of literary scholars are either muffled or completely

absent. For example, an NGO gives its three years' report (July 2020- July 2023), where its investigative searchlight on the horrible human rights violations and insecurity situation showed that "estimated N2.8 trillion or 3.5 billion dollars belonging to hard working, self-reliant and lawful citizens of Eastern Nigeria was lost at gunpoint in three years" (Intersociety Special Report, July 30, 2023). The same organisation also drew the attention of the world to human rights abuses and the consequential insecurity thus:

> That our research statistics further indicated that 90% of those killed or massacred or abducted and disappeared without traces or held for long months in security detention without trial are victims of jungle justice, including unsubstantiated allegations/accusations, false labelling, criminal stigmatization, ethnic profiling, labelling for death based on hearsay, leading to extrajudicial executions or killings and disappearances since Jan 2021(20th July, 2022).

These chilling and graphic reports of human rights abuses and insecurity in Nigeria by the NGO are further collaborated by the executive summary of the U. S. Department of State 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria. It states that credible reports indicted the Nigerian government over unlawful and arbitrary killings, torture, cruel and inhuman degrading cases, forced disappearances and abductions, physical abuses, etc.

Today, I wish to draw your attention to the fact that discussions on human rights started with the Classical Greek poets and philosophical thinkers. Therefore, literary scholars must not be upstaged by the novices that joined the trade yesterday. For instance, every literary text – whether in the genres of fiction, drama or poetry – is an encounter for the exposure of the breaches of the fundamental rights of the characters and suggestions are made for the remedy of such breaches. Indeed, it is the literary scholars who make the laws because creative writers embody the laws in their literary discourses. It is a truism when the English Romantic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, in his essay said that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (*A Defence of Poetry* 1821). There is the need to examine this power of the poets to make laws as legislators, particularly the laws that embody the natural rights that are precursors of today's human rights such as seen in the popular Greek Classical play, *Antigone*, which is an Athenian tragedy written by Sophocles in 441 BC. In the play, Antigone, the heroine and main character of the tragic play, disobeyed the draconian decree of King Creon, who decreed that his dead brother, Polyneices, would not be buried but his corpse would be left to rot on the earth and be eaten by vultures and worms. This inhuman decree states that anyone who disobeys the order would be put to death.

Antigone was torn between obedience to the divine law and customs of the Athenians for the burial of one's dead, her duty to her late brother and obedience to Creon's tyrannical decree. She succumbs to the natural law or right by burying her brother to save his dignity, according to the divine and law of the Greeks. When Creon found out that Antigone disobeyed him, he ordered that she should be buried alive, thereby breaching Antigone's right to life. When Creon's son, Haemon, found out that his fiancée, Antigone, had been buried alive, he committed suicide, and Eurydice, his mother and Creon's wife, also killed herself upon the

discovery of her son's corpse beside Antigone. Creon lived a miserable life till he died. One can see that Antigone died out of disobedience to civil or man-made or positive law by her obedience to the Greek divine law that a corpse should be given dignity. Having seen the principles and moral rights – the right to dignity of the human person, the right to life, and freedom from cruel treatment and torture –espoused by the playwright in *Antigone*, we ought also to examine the origin and sources of today's human rights laws for a proper understanding of the importance of human rights which are breached daily in Nigeria resulting in insecurity, as presented in Nigerian literature by creative writers.

The Origin and Sources of Human Rights Today

Human rights are ethical and moral yardsticks used in assessing cultures, individuals, groups and governments. The precursor to human rights is the concept of natural law and natural rights. Natural law, derivable from the nature of man, is different from man-made law or the rules of society, and natural rights do not depend on the customs or laws of any society, but are fundamental, inalienable and universal rights. For instance, the stipulation that the death penalty should be imposed as the punishment for intentional homicide is derived from natural law. Furthermore, arguments on how society should be run started with the ancient Greek philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Cicero, Thomas Aquinas and Alexander the Great, etc. It was the Greek lawyer, orator and statesman, Marcus, Tullius Cicero, who opposed the tyranny of Caesar and Mark Anthony, who in his opposition to one-man rule stated that 'the ultimate goal of any society was justice'. He also claimed that a state exists to uphold laws which are in harmony with nature, and that any state whose laws are devoid of natural laws and elements of justice, and such states that passed harmful and pernicious measures are comparable to measures which come no closer to the name of laws than if a gang of criminals agreed to make such rules" (cited in Meaning, 2018). Antiphon the Sophist also believed in the equality of men, whether they are barbarians or Greeks; for nature made all men equal but the inequality between men comes from culture or is man-made. Lycophon, another Greek tragic poet and a sophist, further pushed the boundary of natural law and natural right when he posited that everyone was born equal by nature and the so-called noble birth is an empty name (cited in Bo Zhenfeng, 2019). Socrates, a Greek philosopher, whose philosophical thoughts had tremendous influence on Western thought and civilization was of the opinion that natural law is similar to natural moral laws. Thomas Aquinas, the Sicilian-born Catholic philosophical theologian, identified four kinds of law – eternal law, divine law, natural law and human laws. To him, the ethical principle of human actions would be to do and pursue good and to avoid evil (*Summa theologise,* 1485). His philosophy wields influence on Catholic doctrine till date.

Others who also influenced the origin and development of human rights are John Locke, whose work *Leviathan,* disavows the divine origin of natural law and natural rights because the natural right in man is "to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature, that is, the preservation of his own life, as man lives in a state of nature (1651). The Kantian political doctrine of Immanuel Kant believes that there is the necessity to obey the law of a society but such laws should have a universal application and must have respect for equality, freedom, and autonomy of citizens because, "The rights of man must be held sacred,

however great a ruling power must be". And man enters into social contract for the preservation of his rights, and where those rights are not preserved, man also has the right to push for self-determination. Besides, Jean Jacques Rousseau believes that human rights are a product of social contract or social covenants in which human beings submit their power to the state in order to protect their rights which they could not protect if they live in isolation. However, in the famous opening statement of *The Social Contract,* which is also incorporated in Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* he states that "Man is born free, and he is everywhere in chains" (1895).

Philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment who contributed to human rights debate include Thomas Paine who is regarded as one of the most famous political propagandists in history. His *Common Sense* and *The American Crisis* which were pamphlets he wrote to support the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 are regarded as the best pamphlets in American history. He contributed immensely to the French Revolution in 1789 in his *Rights of Man* (1791) where he posited that any government which is based on the principle of justice must support the natural rights of life, liberty, freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. He clearly stated that any government that does not uphold these natural rights should be revolted against. It should be noted that Paine's *Rights of Man* is a reply to Edward Burke's opposition to the French Revolution in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France.* Burke sees the revolution as the acts of a mad man who has escaped from his restraint and also a highway man and a murderer who has broken prison. In persuading his Irish people from copying the French example, he claims that there is nothing like natural rights; it is not to be compelled to have recourse as a last resort to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, and that human rights should be protected by the rule of law" (Ibid).

The human rights declaration states that there should be the proclamation or codification of this *UNDHR* as a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations", but there is also the need for sensitization, for:

> … every individual and every organ of society, keeping this declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance ("Preamble").

In its Article 2, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* provides the universal and inalienable rights which every individual in the world should enjoy, "without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status". The same provision is reinforced in Article 2 (2) of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* 1966, and Article 2 (1) of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,* 1966. The declaration and the two covenants make up the *International Bill of Rights* which is the *grand norm* from which other laws, international and municipal laws, derive their validity. The two covenants also support the propagation and sensitization of the human rights provision throughout the world. A combined reading of their preambles state that "… individuals, having duties to other

individuals and to the community to which they belong, are under a responsibility to strive for the promotion and observance of the rights recognized in the present covenant".

At the regional level, the provisions of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* are also contained in the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,* 1981 which has been ratified by member-states of the African Union. Post-ratification, the various constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria from independence till date have made provisions on Fundamental Human Rights. For instance, chapter IV of the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999,* as amended lists out fourteen enforceable fundamental human rights and freedoms in sections 33-46. They include right to life; right to the dignity of the human person; right to personal dignity; right to fair hearing; right to private and family life; right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; right to freedom of expression and the press; right to peaceful assembly and association; right to freedom of movement; right to acquire and own immovable property; right to compulsory acquisition of property; restriction and derogation from fundamental rights and the special jurisdiction of the court and provision of the legal aid to indigent citizens whose rights have been violated. But then, what exactly are human rights and what are they meant for?

The Theoretical Foundation of Human Rights

According to Cranston, "A human right by definition is a universal moral right, something which all men everywhere, at all times ought to have, something of which no one maybe deprived of without a grave affront to justice, something which is owing to every human being because he is a human" (1962). By this definition, it is clear that human rights are necessities to human beings just like air, water, food and clothes, for they are essential to their survival. Some political theorists claim that the existence of human rights is to protect human dignity for, "we have human rights not to the requisites of health but to those things 'needed' for a life of dignity, for a life worthy of a human being, a life that cannot be enjoyed without these rights" (Dworkin 153). Closely related to this is the opinion held by Allan Gewirth and his group that the basis of human rights is the basic right to subsistence, as they are not a product of morality. And to O' Manique, the basis of human rights is for human evolution and development, that is, they are there for the survival of the human race. And to the final group of theorists, the basis of human rights is for the provision of human needs for human development.

But then who are the possessors or holders of the human rights? There is no agreed opinion on who holds or possesses human rights. Some theorists believe that human rights are for every human being since they are essential property attached to every human; it is inalienable and it is universal. To this group of theorists, human rights are those properties which differentiate human beings from other animals, and these include intellectual, moral and spiritual properties. The opponents of this view believe that, if these yardsticks are used, then not all human beings are entitled to the rights. For instance, Douglas Husak is critical of this yardstick for the holder of human rights, because there are human beings like the foetus, lunatics and those in comatose state who are not capable and lack the capacity for intellectual, moral and spiritual properties. However, this research takes the position that human rights are inalienable rights of every human being, no matter the person's incapacitation. It is for this reason that some states prohibit abortion of foetuses and even euthanasia.

Why are these Rights Protected and Codified?

Human rights, being as important as the essential necessities of life, are protected and codified for the following reasons:

One, they serve as a shield to protect citizens from the brutalities and oppression of tyrannical governments and individuals that run states.

Two, they protect the minority population from the majority population by setting the standards by which individuals, governments and groups are judged.

Three, they set the ethical, moral and universal standard with which to judge the actions of individuals, groups, cultures and governments.

Four, they enable us to criticize those who are abusing the rights of others, and to take action when our fundamental human rights are violated by individuals or the State.

Five, because most of the rights are justiciable, this minimizes incidents of self-help or violent reprisals, whenever our rights are violated as the individual can obtain reliefs from the court of law.

Six, these enshrined rights in constitutions, statuses, treaties, declarations and other legal instruments provide the ground upon which the State can be held accountable for its welfare of the citizens.

In spite of the existence and codification of human rights for thousands of years, and despite the fact that human rights abuses are the seeds that germinated and stoked many revolutions in the past, it is interesting that a 2018 human rights surveys reported that four in 10 admit that they know little or nothing about human rights, and, "globally, only four in 10 people say everyone in their country enjoys the same basic human rights". In the IPSOS survey, no country in sub-Saharan Africa was included. In Amnesty International's 2021 report, in which Nigeria is included in one of the African countries from which data was collected and analysed, it was stated that some war-torn countries experienced "serious violations of international humanitarian and human right laws. In certain cases, such violations amounted to crimes against humanity". These atrocious crimes – the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crimes of aggression –have been codified in Articles 5, 6, 7 and 8 of *The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*. African leaders are known to still exercise the "Divine Right of Kings", a Roman practice which was outlawed in Europe during the Age of Enlightenment about three hundred years ago (Rommem and Hanley, 1998) in states where they exercise dictatorial rule and crush the rights of their citizens. In war-torn countries, particularly Somalia, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Nigeria, which has been under terrorist attacks for the past fourteen years, there are violent breaches of human rights such that even defenders of human rights are killed, imprisoned, and some silenced together with the citizens. These serious crimes exist despite the codification of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in a "number of national constitutions enacted since 1948, in municipal legislation, and in decisions of national international court! (Olakanmi, et al, 2010:12). Attention should be drawn to the fact that in

Nigeria, insurgency or war is not a good excuse to violate the rights of citizens. For instance, Article 30 of *UNDHR* states that:

> Nothing in this Declaration maybe interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth therein.

With this guaranteed safeguard, even in times of armed hostilities, International Humanitarian Law and customs also protect human rights. For instance, in the case of *ICTR Prosecutor V. Jean-Paul Akayesu,* the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda held that rape is a crime of genocide because it causes bodily and mental harm to its victims. It emphasized that rape, "when committed with the intent to destroy wholly or in part a national, ethnic, racial or religious group" constitutes genocide which has been codified in Article 6(b) (c) and (d) of *The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,* 2002.

Having taken a survey of the origin, sources, definitions, holders, reasons, court decisions and opinions of political scientists, philosophers and jurists on human rights, and African countries experiencing serious breaches of human rights, it is clear that the time has come for literary writers and critics to boldly join in the discourse on human rights violations in Nigeria, which has been a major source of insecurity currently bedevilling Nigeria. Before we go into unveiling these breaches of human rights and their consequential effects, this research would first explain in detail the meaning and types of security which are results of human rights violations.

The Meaning and Types of Security Science

There is no universally accepted definition of security. Jore, in his study of the conceptual and scientific distinctions between "security" and "safety," states that security has the status of an independent science (2019). He insists that even though the two fields share the same characteristics and methodology, the actual distinction between the two lies in the "malicious intention of the perpetrators" (173) in security science which is definitely lacking in the science of safety. He defines security as:

> … the perceived or actual ability to prepare for, adapt to, withstand, and recover from dangers and crises caused by people's deliberate, intentional and malicious acts such as terrorism, sabotage, organized crime, or hacking (2019:172).

To Jarvis and Holland (2014), security is the absence of threats and the measures taken by the individual, group, state, international community in order to be free from harm.

Security today is no longer about the police and the army because several sectors in a country are involved in security. Security is pivotal to the survival of human society. Security, as a science, has become an academic discipline and programmes studied in the university, but it is also part of research topics, and there is a plethora of research literature on the discipline.

This interest in the concept of security became broadened after the Cold War. It includes, but is not limited to societal security, national security and human security, etc. (Baldwin, 1997).

Though the ambit of this research is not about international security also called global security whose protection rests chiefly with Security Council of the United Nations, the focus of this research is on national security in Nigeria.

National Security and its Importance

Robert Longley writes that national security is the ability of a country's government to provide security to its citizens, ensure the protection of its economy and institutions. Apart from the protection of the country's territorial sovereignty and integrity from military aggression, national security has expanded to include several peaceful or non-military missions in the 21st century (2021). It is important to note that the 20th century concept of national security also includes human security, political security, economic security, energy security, cybersecurity, homeland security and environmental security. The importance of national security cannot be over-stressed, because of the following devastating consequences of breach in national security:

One, national security is the framework upon which governments rely to protect the lives and ensure the safety of their citizens.
Two, the government protects property - movable, immovable and assets of the citizens and non-citizens in the state.
Three, the State sovereignty is protected from national aggression such as terrorism and cyber war.
Four, the values and institutions of the State are protected.
Five, economic growth and development of the State is ensured through stable national security.

Definitions and Types of Human Security

Human security is the most important aspect of national security such that even international security has its major focus on the protection of humans globally. Dorn Walter is of the opinion that human security is an important people-centred approach to security which has gained attention in recent years because it is "founded on the fundamental principle of centrality of the individual" (2022). The General Assembly Resolution 66/290 also states that human security is an approach which assists the member states of the United Nations Organization in "identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenge to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people" (2012).

The *United Nations Development Programme*'s Human Development Report of 1994 radically changes the concept of human security from territories and in arms to a new paradigm shift on 'people and development'. The chilling opening statement of the report is, "The world can never be at peace unless people have security in their daily lives". *UNDP's* 2022 Special Report on Human security shows that in the face of new threats like climate change, covid-19 pandemic and conflicts, people's sense of security and safety is at the lowest level even within the richest countries in the world. And in a 2023 report of the SDGs implementation in the EU countries during the period of Covid-19 pandemic, it is claimed that, "Lack of care for the environment may harm the health of the society and, at the same time, facilitate the spread of

the pandemic" (Kuc-Czarnecka, et al). On his part, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, in the report he submitted to the General Assembly on 21st March, 2005, for the five-year report on the Implementation of Millennium Declaration listed three components of human security as freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity. Therefore, human security is essential because its absence would lead to the extinction of the human race and the collapse of states and the global community.

The General Assembly Resolution 66/290 of 1994 listed seven types of human security thus:

Economic security
Food security
Health security
Environmental security
Personal security
Community security

This resolution makes it clear that these seven elements are not mutually exclusive. They are interlinked because "one element of human security is likely to travel like an angry typhoon to all forms of human security" (1994). For instance, Barnett has warned that in his "Environmental Security" that environmental change can put national security at risk, because of the violent conflicts it can generate (2001). And this claim is re-echoed by Zurlini and Muller, when they state that "environmental security has been historically linked to environmentally induced conflicts caused by environmental degradation…."

In this study, which focuses on the synergy between law and literature, attention is paid to the breaches of the rights of fictive characters and their consequential effects on insecurity in the worlds of the novels, as four novels would be used to prove that Nigerian literary writers have been in the vanguard of the sensitization on human rights violations and also pivotal to the discourse of the science of security study. What is left undone is for the literary critics to key into these human rights and security science discourses in the novels in order not to be left out in debates that occupy the front burner globally in indifferent fields of knowledge today. In doing this, literary scholarship would be in compliance with the United Nations' *Bill of Rights* which enjoins everyone to be part of the sensitization and protection of these rights. For it is the same United Nations which states in its *Resolution 66/290* that development, human rights and security which are the three pillars for its existence are all interlinked and mutually reinforcing (1994). Bearing this in mind, the subsequent pages would unfold representations of instances of human rights violations and the resultant insecurity that these yielded in four Nigerian novels.

Breaches of Human Rights and the Consequential Insecurity in *Things Fall Apart*

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* which heralds the presence of Modern African Literature in World Literatures is set in a preliterate and agrarian society. The novel captures instances of breaches of the fundamental rights of the characters at the pre-colonial and colonial times. For instance, Umuofia where most of the events in the novel take place is a society that adores

masculinity and actions that reflect male characters' maleness. It is a society where even crops are considered masculine or feminine. There are "women's crops, like coco-yams, beans and cassava. Yam, the king of crops, was a man's crop". And any man who can feed his family on yam throughout the year is a successful man. A man's wealth is also assessed by the number of yams he has. Therefore, Okonkwo, the main character in the novel, is considered a wealthy and successful man, apart from the other yardsticks, for judging his wealth, because, "He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams" (7). Okonkwo in his desire to take himself and his family out of the place of nothingness where he is born and where he grows up has to reach out to Nwakibie, a successful farmer in his village, to borrow yams in a share-cropping arrangement which "was a very slow way of building up a barn of his own" (18). Okonkwo, knowing the importance of yams, desires to make his son, Nwoye, a successful farmer and a wealthy man because, "Yam stood for manliness". (26).

Again, the Umuofia society has masculine and feminine stories for, "Okonkwo encouraged the boys to sit with him in his *obi,* and he told them stories of the land – masculine stories of violence and bloodshed" (42). The feminine stories are told by the women to their female and very young male children in their huts, and these were "stories of the tortoise and his wily ways" (43). Nwoye whom his father wants to be a man and have all the attributes of masculinity dismissively thinks that feminine stories "were for foolish women and children" (43). In the world of this novel, there are also masculine and feminine tasks in public and private spaces. While women procreate, fetch water and firewood with their young sons and female daughters as well as cook for the families, the young men do the "masculine tasks in the home, like splitting firewood, or pounding food" (42), like Nwoye does for his mother and step-mothers at home, while feigning "annoyance and grumbling aloud about women and their troubles" (42).

Besides, the world of fictional Umuofia is a world where there is preference for male children over females. It is a great achievement when a woman delivers sons for her husband, and that's the reason Ekwefi, Okonkwo's second wife, whose children die in infancy is not in a celebratory mood when, "Her husband's first wife had already had three sons, all strong and healthy. When she had borne her third son in succession, Okonkwo had slaughtered a goat for her, as was the custom" (63). And because Umuofia adores male children, Okonkwo who prefers Ekwefi's only surviving child, Ezinma, who is the only one that understands him among all his children, always regrets that she is a female child, and thinks, " I wish she were a boy" (139). There are also male deities like Agbala, a male, and Ani, a female, deities, as well as male priests and female priestesses who serve the gods. The story about the "quarrel between Earth and Sky long ago; how the sky withheld rain for seven years until crops withered and the dead could not be buried" until an emissary is sent to the Sky so that he relents and sends rain is another testament that even within the cosmology, the Sky has a male essence and is superior to Earth, which has a female essence.

Therefore, in the world of the novel which shows a clear demarcation and distinction between gods, people, cosmos, crops, folklore and animals into male and female, and where the society prefers the male essence, there are bound to be violations of the rights of the characters as a result of their gender and social status. For instance, Okonkwo's father, Unoka, is the boot of Umuofia society's joke because he is a man who is incapable of providing for his

family. In fact, he suffers discrimination as a result of his social status as the narrator says, "Unoka, the grown up, was a failure". He neither has a title, nor any barns of yams his son, Okonkwo, can inherit from him. He is a perennial debtor, who "never paid back his debts" (4-5). He also fails one of the yardsticks for the assessment of masculinity: performance in intra-tribal and inter-tribal wars. Unoka feels uncomfortable when any discussion come to wars for, "He was in fact a coward who could not bear the sight of blood" (5). The only thing this man loves is music, and "He was very good at his flute" (4), and the happiest moment of his life is always during celebrations. Even when he is being carried to the Evil Forest where he would be left to die and rot on the ground, "he took with him his flute" (14).

Okonkwo's father's life affects him emotionally and psychological and propels all his actions in life. From a young age when a "playmate had told him that his father was *agbala.* That was how Okonkwo first came to know that *agbala* was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title" (11). Thus, he despises everything about his father, both his contemptible life and ignoble death. He is haunted by the fear of failure and weakness like his father more than "the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic" (11). This psychological fear of weakness and failure propels all his actions and utterances and relationships with others as, "Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand" (11), and his wife and children are in perpetual fear of him. He is contemptuous of Nwoye, whom he sees as a "son who cannot hold up his head in the gathering of the clan" (26). He lives in disavowal when he tells Obierika that, "I have done my best to make Nwoye grow into a man, but there is too much of his mother in him" (52). Not only are his efforts to make Nwoye grow into a man and display acts of manliness, according to his own standard and that of his masculine society, wasted effort, but Nwoye abandons his father, his family, his ancestors and his clan to join the new religion and the new order in Umuofia. It then dawns on Okonkwo that Nwoye's effeminate nature is not because he resembles his mother but as a result of his genetic inheritance from his grandfather, Unoka. He regrets that he, a 'Roaring Flame, 'a flaming fire", could "have begotten a woman as a son" but also acknowledges that, "Nwoye resembled his grandfather, Unoka, who was Okonkwo's father, but he has "risen so suddenly from great poverty and misfortune to be one of the lords of the clan" (21). When Osugo contradicts him at a meeting, Okonkwo insults him with, "This meeting is for men because Osugo had no titles. That was how he called him a woman" (21). It is interesting to note that Okonkwo who is emotionally and psychologically traumatized because of the disdainful life and death of his father who, "people laughed at because he was a loafer" (4) has the crisis of personal security for he was "possessed by the fear of his father's contemptible life and shameful death" (15). All his life, he struggles to overcome Kofi Annan's three components of human security: freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity. Despite the fact that he was at the peak of his career and had overcome these three components and seven types of human security, according to United Nations' Development Programme, *Human Development Report, 1994*; he has risen to be one of the wealthiest men in Umuofia and Mbata, one of the lords of the land, a member of the nine adjudicatory body of the masquerades, a wealthy farmer with a large household, a famous warrior, a successful farmer, a diplomat for his Umuofia clan; yet, the new political order which colonized his clan introduces political insecurity, political

repression, dictatorial governance, ill-treatment and torture of non-conformists, which force Okonkwo to commit suicide.

Another visible group in the fictive world of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* whose fundamental rights are violated is the female characters. They live in servitude and slavery, and live the life of indignity, and they are discriminated against as a result of their sexuality and gender. These violations occur in both the pre-colonial and colonial worlds of the novel, where the woman is considered a chattel or wealth of a man and her social status is below that of the male children in the family and society. To showcase his vast wealth, a man must catalogue the number of wives he has together with the numbers of yam barns, titles or human heads he has to his credit. To measure Okonkwo's wealth, the narrator says that, "He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife" (7). Another wealthy man in Okonkwo's village from whom he earns his first seed yams, Nwakibie, has also taken the highest, but one title, and his social and economic status in Umuofia is that he "had three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children" (15). Okoye, whom Unoka is indebted to, is also considered a wealthy man, a fellow musician like Unoka but, "He had a large barn full of yams and he had three wives" (5-6). And no matter how close a woman is to her husband, which is a rare occurrence in a society where the status of women is diminutive, the man's possession and status is measured by the number of wives he has. A story is told in Umuofia that one of their former warriors who leads the clan to wars, Ogbuefi Ndulue, has "younger wives" despite the fact that it was always said that Ndulue and Ozoemena "had one mind" (54). This man would not do anything without telling his wife and their love is so intimate that "there was a song about them" (54). When Ndulue dies and Ozoemena is told about his death, she goes to where he is laid, calls him, "Ogbuefi Ndulue" three times and returns to her hut. Acccording to Ofoedu's narration to Obierika and Okonkwo, "when the youngest wife went to call her again to be present at the washing of the body, she found her lying on her mat, dead' (54). Such love story between a man and his wife sounds strange in a masculine and patriarchal society, and to Okonkwo, it is quite unbelievable that a warrior would be so weak to be deeply in love with his wife, so that he (Okonkwo) shakes his head and asks, 'I thought he was a strong man in his youth' (54). To Okonkwo, being in love with a woman is interpreted as a weakness. The woman to him is to procreate, cook food for the husband and children, get beaten when she misbehaves, and is a valuable cargo to measure a man's wealth and achievement. For instance, it has been Okonkwo's dream and, in fact, "His life had been ruled by a great passion to become one of the lords of the clan" (104). However, the homicide and his subsequent exile destroy the dream he has always nursed as a life-spring that spurs his life and actions, but he has almost achieved it before the manslaughter that sends him into exile. The narrator describes his shattering and tormenting exilic experience with the simile of excruciating pains thus, "He had been cast out of his clan like a fish on to a dry, sandy beach, panting" (104). Despite his uncle's persuasions not to be frustrated by his exilic experience and his cousins' contributions of yams with which he starts life afresh in Mbanta, he sees those seven years as years of infertility, unproductiveness and barrenness such that when, two years later, a "boy was born he called him Nwofia - 'Begotten in the Wilderness" (130). The metaphor and imagery in the name, "Nwofia," foreground his traumatic physical, emotional and psychological state while in exile. However, he works very hard with his family and despite the loss of his son, Nwoye, who joins the white

man's religion, he returns to Umuofia as a prosperous man. The catalogue of his new wealth includes women as part of his possession for he is coming back with two beautiful daughters – Ezinma and Obiageli - to initiate his sons into the *ozo* title, take the highest title in the land but, most importantly, "He would build a bigger barn that he had before and he would build huts for two new wives" (137). In this type of society where women are part of the movable property and possession of a man and where they are discriminated against because of their sexuality and gender, a man who has only one wife, like Unoka, is considered a poor man.

The discrimination against women in the world of *Things Fall Apart* is pervasive – it is present in private and public spaces. In Okonkwo's household, his first wife is nameless, voiceless and without any identity of her own, except Nwoye's mother. She does not command any respect from her husband, co-wives or children. When Okonkwo brings Ikemefuna home and hands him over to her to look after, any question about housing the boy would get her an insulting reprimand; hence, her stammered question of the time the boy would live with them brings her the humiliating answer, 'When did you become one of the *ndichie* of Umuoafia?' (12) In the prosperous family of Nwakibie, the womenfolk, including Anasi, his first wife, is not a titled woman though she has authority and bearing of the "ruler of the women folk in a large and prosperous family. She wore the anklet of her husband's titles, which the first wife alone could wear" (16). She and her co-wives cannot sit with their husband and his fellow men in his *obi*, they are simply invited by their husband, Nwakibie, to drink palm wine, and they drink "in their proper order, and went away" (16). It is obvious, therefore, that despite Anasi being the ruler of the womenfolk, her authority does not extend to the male folks, not even to the young sons, and she is also excluded from sitting with the men and having any conversations with them, except to greet them, drink the wine offered to her by her husband, and move away.

In public, women are considered to be second class citizens. They are not part of the decision making in the clan. When Ogbuefi Udo's wife is murdered at Mbaino, in spite of the fact that the deceased is a woman, women are excluded from the public meeting to discuss the course of action to be taken. In all the nine villages of Umuofia, the town-crier "asked every man to be present tomorrow morning" (8) and at the meeting at the market square, there must have been about ten thousand men there, all talking in low voices" (9). Again, at public events or celebrations, women are excluded. A day after the Feast of the New Yam which is the "second day of the new year was the day of great wrestling match between Okonkwo's village and their neighbours. One interesting thing about this wrestling match is the day future warriors and future leaders of the clan are marked out. It is during this wrestling match, many years ago, that Okonkwo' fame is known throughout the nine villages of Umuofia, when he beats "Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the greatest wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino" (3). It is in the same wrestling match that Maduka, the son of Obierika, throws down his adolescent opponent, and his "team ran forward, carried him shoulder-high and danced through the cheering crowd" (38). Okonkwo, the greatest wrestler in Umuofia, who rarely complements anyone, tells him, 'Come and shake hands with me… your wrestling the other day gave me much happiness' (52). In this public event, women are not permitted to take part in the sporting activities. The young girls are neither part of the contest which "begun with boys of fifteen or sixteen" (37) nor are the adult women part of the "twelve men on each side and the challenge went from one side to the other" (39). The women, including the priestess of

Agbala, Chielo, are excluded from the privileged sitting positions to watch the wrestling match at *ilo,* neither are they part of the three drummers who beat the drums for the wrestlers and spectators, who were "possessed by the spirits of the drums" (37). They were not also part of the people who keep order in the wrestling arena because, "two young men carrying palm fronds ran round the circle" (37) to keep the crowd back. Women are not part of the two judges walking "around the wrestlers and when they thought they were equally matched, stopped them" (39). Girls and women in Umuofia are excluded from these events, which constitute a denial of their fundamental human rights. They are thoroughly discriminated against in the social life of the community. They have no role in the wrestling match, except to stand around as spectators, their legs and feet beaten with palm fronds by the young men who keep order. The only role given to them is that when any of the male contenders in the wrestling match wins his opponent, "they sing his praise and the young women clapped their hands" (40).

Apart from the exclusion of women at the level of public administration in Umuofia and public entertainment, they do not have any place in the adjudicatory system of the clan. In the trial of the divorce petition between Uzowulu and Mgbafo, the women are excluded from the judicial process in its entirety. The omniscient narrator tells the reader about this adjudicatory process of Umuofia, "It was clear from the way the crowd stood or sat that the ceremony was for men" (70). It is indeed for men, because the defendant in the divorce petition brought by her husband to the highest judicial body in the land, the *egwugwu,* was "Mgbafo and the three men with her were her brothers" (70). The judicial body is the "nine of the greatest masked spirits in the clan" (71), and no woman is among them for, Evil Forest represented the village of Umueru, or the children of Eru, who was the eldest of the nine sons" (71). At the trial of the divorce petition, the defendant, and the victim of the assault and battery from her husband, could not present her case herself but through her brother, Odukwe, whose 'words may also be good' (73). Odukwe "stepped forward, saluted the spirits and began his story" (73). Mgbafo who suffers the violence and has the lived experience is inferior, like the other women, to present her case before the masked spirits, what she does with the other women and children "was a backward stampede" (70) at the presence of the nine terrifying masquerades. In fact, even Mgbafo took to her heels and had to be restrained by her brothers" (71). In this adjudicatory process in Umuofia, "There were many women, but they looked on from the fringe like outsiders" (70). The only role the clan allocated to them is to subject them to servitude and slave labour, where they only scrub the outside hut of the egwugwu, but never ask question about the personalities behind the masks, but "They kept their imagination to themselves. No woman ever asks questions about the most powerful and the most secret cult in the clan" (71). Even Okonkwo's wife and other women who suspect that the springy walk of one of the nine masquerades and okonkwo's absence among the elders and titled men among the spectators at the *ilo* to watch the adjudication, they keep them to themselves because, "the *egwugwu* with the springy walk was one of the dead fathers of the clan" (72). Therefore, when Enoch, an extremist convert, unmasks one of the masked spirits, "The other *egwugwu* immediately surrounded their desecrated companion, to shield him from the profane gaze of women and children, and led him away" (149). The clan, which has accommodated the extreme behaviour of the new religion and the converts, is forced to "moved like a furious whirlwind to Enoch's compound and with machete and fire reduced it to a desolate heap" (150). The masquerades

also led by the Evil Forest with the medicine men went to the church, and before they "went away the red earth church which Mr. Brown had built was a pile of earth and ashes" (152).

Interestingly, the violation of the freedom of women from discrimination on grounds of sexuality and gender is also glaring in their marriages. During Akueke's marriage, she and her mother are not part of the marriage negotiations. The role of her mother and her female friends is to cook the food and serve the men, including Akueke's suitor, his father and other relatives and neighbours, who are present at her daughter's marriage ceremony. The bride, Akueke, "was about sixteen and just ripe for marriage" (56), though in today's world, she is a minor and not of marriageable age. Like a chattel to be bought by the suitor, with the help of her relatives, she is invited to come to greet them and, "Her suitor and his relatives surveyed her young body with expert eyes as if to assure themselves that she was beautiful and ripe" (56). And when they are reassured that she is what they want to buy, the men folk from the two families haggle over what the suitor and his family would pay as her bride price to her family. They drag the price to and fro that the narrator says, "In this way Akueke's bride price was finally settled at twenty bags of cowries. It was already dusk when the two parties came to this agreement" (58). As if they are haggling over a piece of property in a market square, they had started with thirty bags of cowries and later went down to twenty. And the men commend themselves for their custom because, in Abame and Aninta, "They haggle and bargain as if they were buying a goat or a cow in the market (58). And in "Umunso they do not bargain at all, not even with broomsticks. The suitor just goes on bringing bags of cowries until his in-laws tell him to stop". In that case, the woman becomes an endless money-yielding source to her father's family, like an investment in the stock exchange or the interest rate on a fixed deposit in the bank.

The consequences of the breaches of women's fundamental rights and freedoms from discrimination on the ground of their sex and gender as provided in Article 2 of *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and section 42 (1) (9) of *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999* are enormous, because their other fundamental rights and those of their children are further breached in the fictive world of the novel. In fact, the women are so weak that they cannot protect the rights of their children. Umuofia would have gone to war with Mbaino when, "those sons of wild animals have dared to murder a daughter of Umuofia" (9). The narrator does not give any reason in the novel for the violation of Ogbuefi Udo's wife's right to life as provided in Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and section 33 of the Nigerian constitution. It is clear that the society of the novel has reduced the women to the position of disposable articles of trade and their lives inconsequential, even by the way Okonkwo shot to kill his second wife, Ekwefi, for murmuring over his shooting skill, after he had beaten her, for cutting some banana leaves from the banana tree in the compound. Ekwefi would have lost her life when Okonkwo attempted to shoot her simply because she "murmured something about guns that never shoot"(31). Apart from the violation of their right to life, the children's fundamental right to life is also violated when their mothers are too weak to protect themselves and their children. When Okonkwo arrives at Mbaino to give them the ultimatum of choosing war or giving them a lad and a virgin as payment for the murder of Ogbuefi Udo's wife, they choose the latter option. Ikemefuna did not commit the murder, but his mother saw the men when they arrived at their house and conversed with her husband in low tones, at the end of which Ikemefuna was taken like a fowl and handed over to a stranger, Okonkwo. His

mother "had wept bitterly but he had been too surprised to weep "(12). After Ikemefuna has lived in Okonkwo's custody for three years and grown into an adolescent and likable young man, "Umuofia has decided to kill him "(46) because the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves has pronounced it so. Without informing Nwoye's mother to whom he entrusted the responsibility to care for the boy in the three-year duration, Okonkwo and other men take him to the outskirts of Umuofia to sacrifice him as a scapegoat to avoid the devastation of locusts' visitation in Umuofia. Ironically, Ikemefuna calls Okonkwo "father" and has lived with him for three years and this informs the warning from Ezendu to Okonkwo not to take part in his killing. When Ikemefuna runs to him for protection when he escapes the machete cut from one of the men, "Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machete and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak" (49). So neither Ikemefuna's mother nor Nwoye's mother could protect his right to life. Ikemefuna's mother only weeps bitterly when her son is taken away from her, and Nwoye's mother could do nothing except that she "folded her arms across her breast and sighed, "Poor child"(46) .

Moreover, because the society sees women as the man's property, their fundamental human rights and the rights of their children provided in Article 4 of *UDHR* and section 34 (1) (a-b) are frequently violated because their weakness makes it impossible for them to protect themselves and their children. Hence, most of the women in the world of the novel live the lives of indignity, servitude, slavery, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment. Okonkwo violates the Week of Peace, when he beats his third wife, Ojiugo, for going to plait her hair and not serving him food at the right time. He "beats her very heavily", and "not even the fear of a goddess" (24) and the pleading of his wives and neighbours could stop him. The priest of earth goddess, Ezeani, sanctions him to bring sacrificial objects to cleans the land because, 'The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan' (24). There is no exception to Okonkwo's wife-beating. For cutting a few leaves from the banana plant in their compound, "without further argument Okonkwo gave her a sound beating and left her and her only daughter weeping" (30). Both Nwoye's mother and Ojiugo cannot intervene to save Ekwefi beyond an occasional and tentative, 'it is enough, Okonkwo, they pleaded from a reasonable distance' (31). The women cannot also protect their children as they are subjected to degrading treatment and torture. Nwoye, who has "been attracted to the new faith from the very first day" (120) because of the "poetry of the new religion" and its consoling solace about "the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed" (118) by his father and the other men of Umuofia, goes to stay with the Christians, because his mother cannot save him from the brutal attacks of his father. So when Amikwu reports him to his father, on his return to his compound, "He seized a heavy stick that lay on the dwarf wall and hit him two or three severe blows" (122). With this torture and inhuman and degrading punishment, Nwoye leaves his father's house, joins the missionaries, denies his father to Obierika, and the church sends him to school. It, therefore, becomes obvious that the violations of the women's rights have replicating effects on their children. The results of the violations are the breaches of their personal security and that of their children and also they are not given the freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity because these are grossly violated.

Besides, the outcasts, other ordinary citizens of Umuofia and the other clans in the world of the novel are not also free from discrimination. The outcasts or *osu* are people "dedicated to

a god – a thing set apart – a taboo forever, and his children after him" (125). They are discriminated against because of the circumstances of their birth and social status, despite the provision of section 42 (2) of the Nigerian Constitution. Thus, their status as outcasts causes the breaches of their other fundamental rights to live in dignity, not to live in servitude, and slavery and their freedom of association are violated. The narrator says that the outcast is a non-person devoid of fundamental human rights:

> He could neither marry, not be married by the free born. He was in fact an outcast, living in a special area of the village, close to the Great Shrine. Whenever he went he carried with him the mark of his forbidden caste - long, tangled and dirty hair. A razor was a taboo to him. An *osu* could not attend an assembly of the free-born. He could not take any of the four titles of the clan, and when he died he was buried by his kind in the Evil Forest (126).

Free born citizens, as well as other weaker clans are not free from discrimination in Umuofia, the fictive world of the novel, because of the circumstances of their birth and social standing. It is not every man born into a family of grinding poverty who works his way to wealth like Okonkwo. Some, like Enoch, who are disempowered by the pre-colonial social order in Umuofia, join the new colonial order. When the evangelist came to Umuofia and its environs, "None of his converts was a man whose word was heeded in the assembly of the people. None of them was a man of title" (115). To the people, the strange religion would soon fizzle out and only *efulefu,* worthless, empty men and women, followed the new religion. The priestess of Agbala, Chielo, disdainfully "called the converts the excrement of the clan, and the new faith was a mad dog that had come to eat it up" (115). With time, the other freeborn citizens of the clans joined the new order. Even in Mbanta, the missionaries are making progress and have their first woman convert, like "Nneka, the wife of Amadi, who was a prosperous farmer. She was very heavy with child" (121). Nneka is forced to join the missionary to save her unborn children, because she "had four previous pregnancies and child birth. But each time she had borne twins, and they had been immediately thrown away" (121). Each of the converts has one problem or the order. They also pick up the twins who are thrown into the forest; therefore, the outcasts, seeing that the new religion welcomed the twins and "such abominations, thought that it was possible they would also be received" (125). When the outcasts join the new religion, some converts object to their freedom of association and freedom of religion and conscience. One of the freeborn converts queries Mr. Kiaga, when an outcast comes into the church, 'How could such a man be a follower of Christ?' (127) He leaves the church and goes back to the Traditional African Religion when the outcasts are converted, for he tells the missionary, 'What would the heathen say of us when they hear that we receive *osu* into our midst? They will laugh' (125).

It is the people who have suffered so much indignity, discrimination, slavery and degrading treatment who bring insecurity to the clan, as a result of their religious fundamentalism. They cause conflicts between Umuofia and Mbanta and the white man and his colonial administration. In Mbanta, it is a converted outcast, who in his zeal brought the church into serious conflict with the clan a year later by killing the sacred python, the emanation

of the god of water" (126). Mbanta has to sanction the Christians by ostracizing them and banning them from fetching water from the stream and getting white chalk from the quarry. The conflict is resolved when Okoli suddenly dies and the church lets go because, "His death showed that the gods were still able to fight their own battles. The clan saw no reason then for molesting the Christians"(129). In Umuofia, Enoch, another extremist convert, brings the church into conflict with the clan. He is the son of the priest of Idemili who is rumoured to have "killed and eaten the sacred python, and that his father had cursed him" (142). This particular convert with an extremist view of the new religion "touched off the great conflict between church and clan in Umuofia which had been gathering since Mr. Brown left" (148), by the unmasking of an *egwugwu* which is one of the greatest abominations any man could commit. In his mind, the conflict would spark off a holy war and "there were a few other Christians who thought like him" (150). Even though there is no holy war, his action caused personal insecurity and the breaches of the fundamental human rights of the six leaders of the clan who are detained by the white man after the clan burns down Enoch's house and the church. There is also the consequential effect of Okonkwo's death by suicide, because he could not stomach the degradation, torture and indignity they suffered through the white man's messengers. Another consequence of the clan's act of arson is the political insecurity which the white administrator unleashes on the clan, as seen in the imagery of profound danger that surrounds the clan in this simile, "Umuofia was like a startled animal with ears erect, sniffing the silent, ominous air and not knowing which way to run" (156). At the incarceration of the six leaders of Umuofia, together with the political repression and dictatorship of the white man, there is communal insecurity and the violations of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the clan and its people; the two components of human security are breached – freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity.

Again, while Okonkwo is in exile, the world of the novel experiences a new world order, the white men go to Abame in a genocidal manner that also has consequential political insecurity in Abame and other surrounding clans. For killing a lone white man in Abame, which is the denial of his right to life, as he has not done anything to deserve death, old Uchendu advises his listeners, "Never to kill a man who says nothing"(112). The reprisal attack on the clan for the killing of a lone white man results in genocide, as "Everybody was killed, except the old and sick who were at home…" (111). Obierika tells Okonkwo, Uchendu and the other visitors with him that "Abame has been wiped out"(110), and to reemphasize the atrocious killing in Abame, he restates the holocaust, "Their clan is now completely empty"(112). The consequences of the attack destabilize and create regional insecurity in the world of the novel, as the people of Abame are refugees, and the few survivors of the genocidal attack fled into Umuofia and on an 'Eke market-day a little band of fugitives came into our town' (110). Also their environmental security is violated when the mass murder and the military armament used on the people cause environmental pollution on the ecosystem, thereby, affecting the aquatic lives, which Obierika explains to his listeners thus, 'Even the sacred fish in their mysterious lake have fled and lake has turned the colour of blood. A great evil has come upon the land as the Oracle had warned (112).

This great evil that has come upon the land does not stop at Abame, as it spreads to other surrounding clans including, Umuofia. The evil come in the forms of colonization and a

new religion which uproots the old order and introduces a new colonial administration to replace the clans' republicanism. Christianity replaces the Traditional African Religion; the adjudicatory and arbitrative system of the pre-colonial world of the novel is also affected, as it is replaced with the British adversarial legal system. The British Colonial Education also replaces the African Informal Indigenous Educational system. Colonization in the fictive setting of the novel violates Kofi Annan's three components of human security – freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity. It shatters the old order and introduces human insecurity which brings political repression and dictatorial administration because, "…apart from church, the white men had also brought government"(139). Though the white men have provided economic security for Umuofia because, "he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm oil and kernel become things of great price, and much money flowed into Umuofia" (142); yet, he built a prison, "which was full of men who had offended against the white man's law" (139). Therefore, with colonization came the loss of the natives' right to liberty which is protected by Article 2 of *UDHR* and section 35 of the Nigerian Constitution. The prisons of the white man's repressive and dictatorial governance are filled with prisoners, "Some of them were men of title who should be above such mean Occupation" (40). Not only have they lost their personal liberty and security but their fundamental human rights to dignity and freedom from slavery are also violated. The prisoners "work every morning clearing the government compound and fetching wood for the white commissioner and the court messengers" (140). Even the six leaders of Umuofia who are summoned by the white district Commissioner after the conflict between the church and the clan are not given their right to fair hearing as the white administrator heard only the side of the white missionary, and based on that denied them their fundamental right to personal liberty by detaining them while his workers subjected them to indignity, torture, and degrading treatments. Not only that a fine is imposed on the clan, which they must pay before the release of the six detained leaders, but the men's hair was shaved off and they are starved as, "the messengers came in to taunt them and to knock their shaven heads together" (155). A messenger "hit each man a few blows on the head and back"(156), but as the men are released after the payment of the fine, inflated up by the court messengers, it is obvious that each man has been assaulted and violently abused because, "… they noticed the long stripes on Okonkwo's back where the warder's whip had cut into his flesh" (158).

Apart from the political upheaval, degrading and cruel treatments given to the people of Umuofia and the surrounding clans, the new religion and their over-zealous converts violate the clans' freedom to worship in order of their African Traditional Religion. In Mbanta, the white missionary tells the people that "they worshipped false gods, gods of wood and stone" (116) and that "All the gods you have named are not gods at all" (117). This flagrant disregard for the people's right to their religion encourages the converts to boast "openly that all the gods were dead and impotent and that they were prepared to defy them by burning all the Shrines" (124). As if this threat to burn the places of worship of the clan's people is not enough, Okoli, one of the converted outcasts, precipitated crisis between the church and the clan by the killing of the royal python, which is a ritual totem of the traditional religion. Also in Umuofia, the same violation of the people's guaranteed right of worship freely is seen in Enoch's killing and eating of the royal python and the unmasking of the *egwugwu* masquerade. This is an

abomination never seen in Umuofia before, so that the "Mother of the Spirits walked the length and breadth of the clan, weeping for her murdered son" (149). The consequential human insecurity in all its dimensions is brought home to the reader by the strange and fearful sound of their mother and, "It seemed as if the very soul of the tribe wept for a great evil that was coming. Its own death" (149).

Of course, the death of the clan follows with detention of its leaders, and the stripping of the clan their freedom of association enshrined in Article 20 of *UDHR*, "Everyone has a right to freedom of association". This provision is also guaranteed in section 40 of the Nigerian Constitution. After the release of Umuofia's leaders, the clan schedules a meeting at the market-place to discuss the next line of action, but the white administrator's repressive and totalitarian colonial government sends court messengers to convey his message to the men of Umuofia that, "The white man whose power you know too well has ordered this meeting to stop"(162). At this point, Okonkwo who bears a personal grudge for the white man and his messengers due to the personal insecurity, which he suffers by the conversion of his son, Nwoye, to the new religion, and the degrading treatments he receives in detention from them beheads the head messenger, erroneously believing that Umuofia would go to war. Unfortunately, the clan which has been subjected to various violations of their fundamental rights and freedoms and has experienced varying degrees of insecurity since the coming of the white man into their clan, and chooses to avoid a repeat of the genocide and ecocide the white man has earlier unleashed on the people of Abame on their clan. The clan decides to abide with the wisdom of Obierika, who has earlier told Okonkwo the reason Umuofia cannot challenge the white man, "Have you not heard how the white man wiped out Abame?" (140) He further tells him that the white man has divided the clan, for he has "put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (141). Having been pulled apart and divided, the clan in its wisdom sacrifices Okonkwo's personal security in order to save itself from the white man's wrath. The clan chooses to live under the colonial system; however, it is a life that is not free from the freedom to live in want, the freedom to live in fear and the freedom to live in dignity. Okonkwo chooses to commit suicide, having lost his personal security, but dying a free man. He chooses to die in dignity than have his fundamental human rights violated by the new colonial order.

Human Rights Violations and the Consequential Insecurity in Pita Nwana's *Omeuko*

Though this work was published in London in 1933, it is the first classic in Igbo literature and stands at the prestigious pedestal of similar earlier literary texts from Africa in the early 20th century canonical novels such as Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1931) and D.O *Fagunwa's Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irumole* or *The Forest of a Thousand Demons: A Hunters Saga* (1938). Despite the fact that *Omenuko* won the all-African literary context in indigenous African Languages, yet, the novel was little known until its translation into the English language in 2014 by Ernest Emenyonu from which it gained a wider readership.

The novel, *Omenuko*, deals with the critical issues of citizenship/nationality, breaches of fundamental human rights of characters in its future world and the consequential insecurity which goes with such breaches. The first chapter of the novel titled, "The Early Life of Omenuko as a Trader" opens with Omenuko's breaches of the rights of his apprentices and goods carriers, young men from his town in Aru Elugwu, whom he sells into slavery and

servitude as a result of the loss of all his goods due to a natural disaster where, "… all the goods carried by Omenuko's men were totally lost in a twinkling of an eye, including all his life's savings in cash which he was carrying to buy goods with" (4). The sale of the men violates their guaranteed rights as provided in Article 4 of *UNDHR* where it states that "No one shall be held in slavery and servitude; slavery and slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms." This provision is replicated in section 34 of the Nigerian constitution. Though slavery and slave trade have officially ended, and one of the reasons their buyers agree to liberate them when they are asked to ransom them, Ezuma advises Mazi Oji that "If care is not taken, we might be in trouble then and they could go home as they wish, without our having to be paid any money" (38-39).

The young slaves lose their freedom as provided in Article 2 of *UNDHR* and section 35 of the Nigerian constitution. "The parents of the young men wept bitterly but tears could not bring back their sons" (13) after they sent some men to Aru Ulo and they found out that Omenuko sold the young men into slavery. At that point of sale, he referred to the young men as cargos, as he tells "his friends who are slave dealers and told them that he had brought some "goods" which must be disposed of that very night" (5-6). After their sale, the young men become movable property, their owners' articles of trade to deal with as they desire. For instance, Obioha is "the head of all his {Mazi Oji} slaves and he was a man of gentle disposition and trustworthy"; yet, the slave-master, Mazi Oji, never treated him as an adult as he never finds him man enough to marry a wife for him until he is ransomed, and Omenuko marries a wife for him after several years of slavery and servitude. Another slave, Arisa, who lives with Ezuma is also not given a wife by his master because he is considered his property which he disposes of as he deems fit. Okpara does not ask Arisa whether he wants to be ransomed by Omenuko or not, because he feels that Arisa's consent is not needed before disposing of him. Though Arisa protests the ignoble treatment Okpara gives to him; Mazi Oji explains to Ezuma that Arisa is not brought with his {Okpara's} own money because "Arisa was like any other thing he inherits from his late father" (44). Though Omenuko is able to ransom three slaves – Obioha, Arisa, Elebeke – and restores their liberty and freedom from slavery, servitude and loss of dignity, he is unable to save Oti who "had died the previous year."(39). He could not also ransom all the young men he sells into slavery. He requests ransomed slaves and their families not to celebrate too profusely so that it would not "make the families of the two boys I couldn't find very sad and ill-disposed towards me" (49). For the freemen to be truly free and full-fledged citizens, they have to go back home, find women they want to marry, Omenuko pays their bride-prices, and as they leave for home, "Omenuko gave each of them seven pounds in cash and other gifts"(48), as a kind of restitution.

However, the violation of their freedom from slavery, servitude and loss of liberty, and personal insecurity, would not have been possible if not for the occurrence of the three components of human security – loss of freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity – which occurred in Omenuko's life after the loss of his property to flood. The narrator makes it clear from the very first page of the novel that Omenuko is from a family of six children and, "his parents were poor in every respect. They had neither money nor a yam barn to sustain the family. They had no assurance of future livelihood for their children" (3). Because of the grinding poverty in his family, little Omenuko is apprenticed to a rich trader

who settles him after several years of living with him. He rises from grinding poverty to become a wealthy man who "established his own business as a long-distance trader" (3). When all he has worked for in life is carried away by flood, he is depressed and he says, "God Almighty, why have you reduced me to a life where death would by far, have been a better choice?" (5) From this statement, he is afraid of returning to the life of insecurity of want, fear and indignity from which he pulled himself and his family from. If he does not sell the slaves to restart his business, he would have lost the seven types of security enumerated by UNDP Human *Development Report, 1994*, which include economic security because he has nothing to trade on which would affect his food and health security. It would also affect his environmental security and personal security as well as his standing in the community of Aru Ulo, Aru Elugwu and Mgborogwu and Ikpa Oyi which are the physical settings of the novel. His political status would be diminished as Chief Mgborogwu would not have granted him the status of a naturalized citizen with his brothers and sisters and would not have entrusted him to be the regent of his kingdom until his son, Obiefula, comes of age. Also the white District Commissioner would never have allowed him to be the regent or grant him his own warrant chieftaincy or elevated him to the position of a Paramount Chief with a right to hold a court in his house with some staff to assist him.

However, with the selling of his townsman into slavery and servitude, he creates another problem for himself and his family, because the action he has taken has not been "heard of in our land. Any ear that hears it will tingle. It would be an abomination against our gods and ancestors" (8). As if the evil of selling the young men into slavery and servitude are not enough, he also plans to deprive the chiefs and parents of the children he has sold into slavery of their rights to life. His plan is to invite them to his house and, "when they had all assembled, he would set on fire two barrels of gun powder which he had been storing in his bed room. That way, everybody in the building would be burnt to death" (8-9). At this point, his brothers admonish him that he has committed enough crime by the sale of the young men into slavery. Burning their parents would be an "abomination that time can neither heal nor erase. It stays in our lineage from generation to generation" (9). They advise also that they would prefer to migrate to Mgborogwu and live as refugees because:

> It had always been the custom of their people that when anyone did anything which was an abomination to the land, the person could go into exile among the people of Mgborogwu. In the same way, fleeing criminals from Mgborogwu always took refuge in Omenuko's town (9).

With this unwritten treaty between the two towns, Omenuko's family opts to go into exile in Mgborogwu and flee their hometown at night to avoid living as "outcasts forever and ever" (9) among their people.

Having fled to Mgborogwu with his whole family, Chief Mgborogwu, the warrant chief of Mgborogwu, receives them with twenty-one gun salute, grants them the status of naturalized citizens and celebrates their arrival with festivities and merriments because, "They were very pleased because Omenuko had a very large family, and was known to be affluent and very generous to neighbors"(12). He does not discriminate against them in accordance with Article

2 of *UNDHR* and section 42(1) (a) of the Nigerian constitution which provide that no Nigerian citizen would be subjected to discrimination on ground of his community, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religious or political opinions, or by circumstances of his or her birth.

Therefore, Omenuko and his family members are given other privileges not available to the citizens by birth or registration or other naturalized citizens of Mgborogwu. The Chief does now allow him to "regret his flight into Mgborogwu. He was never treated like a stranger. The chief gave a piece of land adjacent to his palace to Omenuko and his brother Okorafo build their houses, and assigned rooms to Nwabueze to live in the palace"(15). As if the privileges he has given them are not enough, the last wish of the Chief of Mgborogwu is to make Omenuko, the regent, to hold his warrant chieftaincy so that the white man does not withdraw it on the "grounds that Obiefula, his son, was not grown up yet to take his place as a Chief" (17). When the chief dies, he gives him the most befitting burial, "he was accorded all the rites and fanfare which a noble man who had mature sons received at birth" (16).

After the burial of the late chief, the people of Mgborogwu immediately withdraw the privileges and rights which are given to Omenuko. First, they show him that he is a stranger among them as they hold a meeting in secret, when he informs them that they would meet to decide on the date they would go to Awka to see the white District Commissioner and tell him about the late chief's decision on his warrant chieftaincy. At the meeting, they decide that the sovereignty of the kingdom is at stake and withdraw some of the chief's powers, and they decide that if Omenuko takes the warrant and acts on Obiefuna's behalf, he may become sovereign over them. At the time they meet Omenuko, they have decided to truncate his powers and share them between him and Obiefula. They take two critical decisions which include that "Omenuko should live in his own house near the court, while the heir-apparent, Obiefula, lives in the palace" (18). Moreover, they also assign Obiefula the duties of "Domestic affairs in the court while Omenuko deals with the more complicated external affairs" (19). The discrimination against Omenuko with respect to the throne and sovereignty of the town is because he is not a citizen of the town by birth, not a native of Mgborogwu community nor is the town his place of origin.

As the regent, Omenuko holds and exercises powers with due diligence and performs exceedingly well. He is a wise judge and impartial in the dispensation of justice. Other chiefs see "a very good and respectable chief. He had the interest of his people at heart" (23), and the government officials, including the white District Commissioner, appreciate his sense of duty, his integrity and character as a ruler. He has an amiable disposition, very humane, has respect for his neighbours, and others around him, a very generous man that "no one thought of him again as a stranger in Mgborogwu" (23). In order to fulfil his responsibility as a naturalized citizen of Mgborogwu and as its ruler, he integrates himself further into the community that, "Nobody ever regarded him as a stranger anymore because both he and his brothers married from Mgborogwu and the surrounding towns" (24). He prospers in Mgborogwu where he flees into exile with his brothers and sisters, owns property, his debtors willingly pawn themselves to him and work on his farms. When he arrives Mgborogwu, the "chief gave a piece of land adjacent to his palace, to Omenuko and his brothers Okorafo to build their houses" (15). This right to own immovable properly is provided in Article 17(1) of *UNDHR* and section 43 of the Nigerian Constitution which stipulate that, "Everyone has the right to own property alone as

well as in association with others". He and his "brothers had become very prosperous and wealthy owning several barns of yams and countless domestic animals, including cows" (24).

Despite his glorious reign in Mgborogwu, when Obiefula grows to be given the warrant chieftaincy of his late father, because of the sovereignty of the town depends on it, "the people of Mgborogwu conspire and held a secret meeting at this time against Omenuko and his family" (25). With this conspiracy and the eventual request that Omenuko should return the warrant chieftaincy to Obiefula, Omenuko knows that the people have revoked his citizenship, and that they have breached his fundamental human right, and this is contrary to Article 15(1) of *UNDHR* and section 40 of the Nigerian Constitution which state that, "Everyone has the right to nationality". Omenuko tells the "District Commissioner that he was contemplating moving his residence to a distant forest area called Ikpa Oyi (wasteland)." (25) The Ikpa Oyi is a notorious evil forest where dead criminals, people who died of abominable diseases and women who died in pregnancies are dumped. In fact, the omniscient narrator describes it as a "no-man's land, a vast expanse of land that everyone dreaded and no one dared step into for any reason" (25). At Ikpa Oyi, Omenuko settles in and quickly develops it, and move into his new home with his family and his brothers' families, including his debtors. He advertises the sale of his houses in Mgborogwu, and "those who showed real desire in the purchase, received the houses they wanted to buy free" (32).

Subsequently, he takes Obiefula to Awka and presents him to the white District Commissioners who returns his late father's warrant chieftaincy to him as Omenuko is "now the chief only over those people living at the new site with him" (32). The people of Mgborogwu rejoice that their warrant chieftaincy which is the symbol of the town's sovereignty "had returned to the original family of Mgborogwu" (32). Omenuko's group is also filled with joy because they now have their own autonomous community where Omenuko is the ruler. When the other chiefs around Mgborogwu hear about the white administration's decision, they rejoice with Omenuko because "they never really thought that it would have been wise to deprive Omenuko of a full chieftaincy of his own" (33-34).

Meanwhile the whole communities around Awka division – Mgborogwu, Ikpa Oyi and the surroundings – continue to live in peace and harmony until Omenuko whose diligent discharge of his duties as a warrant chief with honesty and wisdom finds favour with the white District Commissioner, who then appoints him a "Paramount Chief," the highest rank in warrant chieftaincy. He was also given the right to hold court and certain cases in his residence" (65). At this point, other chiefs in Awka division resent their loss of sovereignty to Omenuko and decide among them that the white administrator has shown discrimination against them by appointing a stranger in their midst their superior:

> "We can never allow this to happen in our own land, that one who is after all, a stranger should be our executive head and overseer. If they intend him to be the Government itself, he should go and be that in his homeland, not on our soil" (65).

With this collective decision, the three components of human security –their freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity - have been violated, and communal

and political security have been lost, because the chiefs would not agree to lose their sovereignty to a stranger, a non-indigene of the area. This appointment brings Omenuko and his family personal and community insecurity. The chiefs protest to the District Commissioner at Awka, who ignores them, while Omenuko continues to act as the paramount chief of the communities. After seven years, the twenty-five jealous chiefs cannot bear the fact that a stranger has taken their sovereignty and they "went to the chief who was the owner of the land, part of which was the site Omenuko and his brothers cleared and built their houses on" (66) at Ikpa Oji to go to the white administration at Awka and explain to him about Omenuko's continued trespass on his land. Knowing Omenuko, and having confidence in his integrity, the administration accords him the right to fair hearing as provided in Article 10 of *UDHR* and section 36(5) of the Nigerian constitution that, "Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him". The chiefs having levelled a criminal charge of trespass against Omenuko and his brothers, the white administrator invites the complainants and the defendants to Awka to present the matter before him. But he warns the chief and the complainants that anyone sworn in on oath who commits perjury in the witness box would be sent to prison. On hearing this, the chief who has brought the criminal charge against Omenuko and his brothers withdraws his case.

The other chiefs do not relent in their effort to send Omenuko out of their territory by withdrawing his nationality. They decide on the course of political violence which would cause political and communal insecurity around Awka division, and personal and communal insecurity to Omenuko, his family and all those who live at Ikpa Oyi. To achieve this, "twenty-six towns allied themselves together to persecute Omenuko. They made a resolution to draw him into an open physical combat" (71). Omenuko hears about the secret resolution and instead of fleeing Ikpa Oyi, he decides to wage a war with twenty-six towns (71). He sees it as a "battle for survival and self-preservation", so at night when the enemy raided his territory and "began by destroying all the crops and vegetables in Omenuko's farms and gardens" (72), he orders his people to open "fire on the intruders" (72). His order is in consonance with the exceptions to the right to life enshrined in section 33(2)(a) of the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999,* which states that no one should claim that his fundamental right to life has been violated if that other person uses "reasonable force for the defense of property". After the violence at Ikpa Oyi, which causes political upheaval, communal and personal injuries and death, Omenuko pleads at the court in Awka that his action which has caused the death of one person each on both sides, injuries to people and the destruction of his crops and farms is done in self-defence, a fundamental right which he possesses and exercises. The District Commissioner tells Omenuko's opponents, "Do you realize that you are guilty for provoking the fight?" (73), but their collective resolve contained in their statement to the white administrator is that they are ready to bear the consequences of their action thus, "We will be prepared to listen to the law, only when we have killed Omenuko. If you want to execute all of us, because of a stranger who came into our midst, we would prefer to die rather than allow our eyes to see our ears" (73). At that point, the district commissioner is convinced that the chiefs would stop at nothing to carry out their threat to kill Omenuko and his people. And he advises him to go back to his own people, instead of waiting for the consequential insecurity his

continued stay in Ikpa Oyi poses for him and his entire family. The district commissioner sees personal insecurity around him, and advised him thus:

> "You never can say to what extent they would go in their hunt for your life. They could get a reckless die-hard to go after your life, and he would not even deny the murder? He would look upon himself as a hero, and that makes it more painful for me" (74).

Having explained to him that the chiefs would stop at nothing to take his life for the usurpation of their sovereignty, he advises him to go back to his hometown around Okigwe, and because of his good character, he would persuade the District Commissioner of the area to make Omenuko a Paramount Chief. With this advice and assurance from the white administrator at Awka, Omenuko and his family go back to their hometown. And this is possible after his act of ransoming the young men he sells into slavery, the restitution of their violated fundamental rights and the sanctification rituals where the narrator says that the chief priests of the earth goddess and the sky god performed following the reconciliation because, "They ate and drank together, which symbolized that Omenuko's reunion with the people, gods and ancestors had been consummated" (60). With this act knowing that he is free from any burden and has not violated anybody's fundamental human rights, he goes back home with his family and the "chiefs sets the stage for festivities with drummers and musicians performing continuously to herald Omenuko's homecoming" (75). When he comes back home to his hometown in Okigwe, he retires from the judiciary but accepts to "be honorary peacemaker representing the Government in my town" (77). "Omenuko continued to go to court as an interested observer" (79), but the most important fact remains that he is now an indigene, or a full-fledged citizen of his town by birth. Not having violated anyone's human rights, as he has restored the rights of those he violated, and has been reconciled to his people, there is no further fear or threat of insecurity to him and his family. The narrator ends the story with his personal fortune – his children are educated, successful business men and high-ranking civil servants.

Omenuko is therefore a testament to the fact that Pita Nwana, a literary writer, used his novel as a medium to portray the nexus between human rights violations and the consequential insecurity in the fictive world of his novel.

Human Rights Violations and the Consequential Insecurity in Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*

Kaine Agary's novel with its symbolic title of the etiolation, degradation and sickness associated with the Niger Delta ecosystem x-rays the reality of the political insecurity that bedevils the region as a result of oil prosperity, and oil exploration and exploitation. There are human rights violations resulting in persistent lack of freedom to live in dignity and the occurrences of almost all the seven types of human insecurity in the oil-producing region. The events in the novel are narrated by an innocent eye who unfolds the devastating consequences of crude oil production by multinational companies in the region. As the narrator moves from the unnamed village where she grows up to Port Harcourt, she begins to gain experience and to interpret correctly the happenings in the neglected ecosystem of the Niger Delta. She finds

out like Zurlini and Miller that the environment is the most important dimension of peace, national security, and human rights (2008). This claim is also the position of Barnett because the environmental problems are now prominent as a result of population, climate change and the rise in sea levels by high-energy societies (2022).

In the bid to produce crude oil in a country drenched in corruption and repressive military dictatorship which ironically "exported crude oil" (111), but has "petrol shortages" and a "country that housed four refineries but exporting petrol when its residents were suffering without petrol?", the narrator shows Nigeria where there are fundamental rights violations of the people of the Niger Delta individually and collectively as enshrined in Article 17(1), "Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others" and subsection 2 of the same section, "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property". The same protection of collective and individual ownership of property is also guaranteed in sections 43 and 44 of the constitution where every citizen can own movable and immovable property anywhere in Nigeria and if there is the need for the state to acquire such property, there should be prompt payment of compensation and access to court or tribunal to determine the amount to be paid. However, this right to the ownership of land and territorial waters has a proviso in 44(3), which states that "the entire property in control of all minerals, mineral oils and natural gas under or upon any land in Nigeria, etc. are vested in the government of the federation". With this type of arrangement, the component states of the Niger Delta and their people are deprived of the management and ownership of their crude oil, land and waterways. The Federal Government of Nigeria and the foreign oil companies and some wealthy indigenes of the region devastate the environment of the Niger Delta. The novel which is set in an unnamed village in the Niger Delta is symbolic of all the riverine rural areas where oil is exploited. The narrator, Zilayefa, tells the story of how her single mother loses her farmland, whose proceeds "she was able to feed us and pay my schools" (8). The destruction of the riverine environment through oil pollution that brings economic, environmental and food insecurity is brought to the reader thus, "the day my mother's farmland was overrun by crude oil was the day that her dream for me started to wither, but she carried on watering it with hope"(10). Despite her mother's hope, the oil pollution brings food insecurity to her family and the other villagers because, "The black oil that spilled that day swallowed my mother's crops" (10). The oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta creates other environmental problems. Apart from land devastation and pollution, there is also the pollution of rivers and streams that supply water to the natives because, "The water that flowed with streaks of blue, purple and red as drops of oil escaped from the pipeline …. Was the same water I drank" (39). There are total environmental degradation and human insecurity, economic and food insecurity in this oil-producing religion because:

> Farming and fishing, the occupation that had sustained my mother, her mother, and her mother's mother no longer provided gain. I had witnessed lands claimed by massive floods during the rainy season, the earth slowly melting into the rivers. Women rowed their canoes farther and farther away to find land for farming. In addition, every year it was harder to catch fish, as though the water

> spirits had tied the fishes' wombs until people barely bothered to cast their nets (39).

Despite the environmental degradation of the region, it still moves "wealth from beneath my land and into the pockets of the select few who ruled Nigeria" - the military junta, the foreigners who own the oil companies, the traditional rulers who are paid compensations, which do not reach their people.

The negative cost of oil production in the Niger Delta hinges on the communities' human insecurity, there is a total absence of social and infrastructural amenities in the rural areas that produce the crude. There is no pipe-borne water causing them to drink the oil polluted water, and "there was no electricity" and only "people like Amananaowei, the local government chairman, and other wealthy people such as the Semokes could afford a household generator" (22). For the rest of the community, they live in grinding poverty – no public library for the students in the village schools, their parents find it impossible to pay their school fees such as Zilayefa who "would not take the qualifying examinations because she did not have the registration fee" (110). And all the government agencies' programmes to improve the lot of the Niger Delta never reach her village; like the rumour in her village that her traditional ruler, Amananaowei and his elders had received monetary compensation meant for the village, from the oil company and shared it among themselves (40).

What the exploration of crude oil in the Niger Delta brings to the region is human insecurity – there are three components of insecurity in existence, that is, their freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity. There is also the existence of almost all the seven types of human insecurity – political, economic, food, environmental, personal, food and health - as a result of the violations of the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the people of the Niger Delta, particularly for the villagers, where crude oil is exploited. For instance, the people's right to life is violated by the government and the oil companies and their leaders and business men and women. It is the same water where the villages defecate that they drink, because of lack of provision of clean water for the villagers, and the absence of good toilet water systems and hospitals. There is death everywhere for them, particularly the toddlers as the narrator describes the ugly and prevalent situation in the village thus:

> My ears still rend from maternal wail piercing the foggy days when mothers mourned a child lost to sickness or to the deceptively calm waters that lay hungry below the still latrines, waiting to swallow the children whose unsteady feet betrayed them before they learnt to swim (39).

Apart from the absence of essential facilities which cause death to the children, there are "conflicts, the violence, and the depression that characterized our village more and more" (24). There is self-determination by the youths of the Niger Delta whose ecosystem is devastated without compensations as provided by the Nigerian Constitution. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* provides in its Article 22 that "Everyone, as a member of society, has the rights to social security… and resources of each state, of economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for the dignity and free development of his personality. The poor in the Niger

Delta, particularly the youths, are denied of these fundamental rights. They are denied their rights to education and employment, in spite of the fact that their land and waterways are the bedrocks that produce the wealth of the Nigerian state. These violations of their rights force them to resort to self-determination, a right recognized by the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,* 1966, and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 1966, as both covenants provide that "All peoples have the right of self - determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, cultural development". Unfortunately, this provision is absent in the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999*. The absence of this right to self-determination in the Nigerian constitution has made the Niger Delta youths take up arms to engage in militancy and violence as a way of curbing the excesses of a regressive and exploitative military government and also the oil companies with the aid of wealthy locals like Tarilabo, their traditional rulers and elders, the retired Admiral Kenneth Alawei Amalayefa, and other natives who make their wealth from the region's exploitation. The boys who suffer from abject poverty engage in violent struggle with the government and the oil companies and other ethnic groups, when they get nothing from the wealth that is taken from their land and waters in their ecosystem believe:

> …would cause as much havoc as possible until someone took interest in our plight and until justice, as they saw it, prevailed. Some of them joined the boys form other villages to kidnap oil company executives or bar oil company workers form doing their work. Mostly they were successful, but sometimes one or two of our boys failed to return from a mission. The word around the village was that the police had caught and killed them, but we would not hear about this on the radio (9-10).

The type of human insecurity, ecological devastation of the village where the oil is produced, food insecurity and grinding poverty make living in the unnamed village unbearable, particularly for the youths. The routines and the unchanging pattern of life in Zilayefa's village make the narrator feel that "life in the village would kill me if I did not escape" (10). She describes her life in the village with a smile of imprisonment, "I knew every square inch of my village, and felt like a trapped animal" (31). This imagery of caging and imprisonment is further reinforced in her desperate quest to get someone who she "would ride out the village with her saviour" (18). For her, staying further in this village with the description of death and prison, she would surely go through a "certain death in my claustrophobic village" (17). And she therefore decides to escape to the city of Port Harcourt, like the other girls in the village, who escape from their death and poverty-ridden and polluted village to sell themselves to the white expatriate workers in the oil companies.

Another problem with the oil exploration in the Niger Delta, as in the past centuries, is the violation of the fundamental rights of women in the region. The young girls, whether in the villages or in the cities, live in servitude, slavery and degrading treatment fuelled by the men – not only the white men but also the black men. For instance, Binaebi, Zilayefa's mother, had her out of wedlock. She is the product of a few weeks' affairs with a Greek sailor who

discriminates against her because of her colour and race. She was an eighteen-year-old girl who just finished her secondary school when she, "met my father at a disco and fell for him" (7). The young Binaebi "went to the Port to look for him one day, as had become her habit, and was told that his ship had left. There was no message; he was just gone, leaving behind his planted seed in my mother's *belle"* (7). Her teenage mother was heartbroken and went back to her Village, had the baby and decided to eke out a living in the village in order to train her daughter, Zilayefa. The prevalent objectification of girls as sex objects or sex-slaves is part of the degradation of the ecosystem of the Niger Delta. They are seen as sex toys to be used and dumped by the men in their lives. Sergio, a Spanish business man, who is prospecting for timber in the village and for whom Zilayefa has been moving around with when the Semokes brought him to their village for a funeral. However, Sergio disappointed her like her Greek father did to her mother eighteen years ago. Though she sees him as "my ticket out of my desperate existence, until Sergio's unceremonious exit forced me into a dungeon of tortured soul searching" (34). Besides, the denial of the Niger Delta people of their meaningful livelihood forces girls into sex-slavery as, "Girls did everything to get a whitey" (37). They feel that the white men are more profitable to sell their bodies to because, "The whiteys were always the catch of the day. Whiteys gave a lot of money; bought gifts; rented flats; and, if the girls were lucky, and had the right native doctor, they could get their whitey to fall in love with them and maybe take them away to whitey's home country" (37). In their bid to get the white men as their sexual customers, they fight off other girls, bleach their skin with chemicals with the etiolated patches they leave on their skins, paint their faces and patronize traditional medicine men to help them keep the white men. There is also personal insecurity experienced by sex-workers. There are crazy whiteys "who beat them up or pushed objects like bottles into their private parts as part of the fun" (37). In the prostitution business, they also run the risk of local boys and pimps who "would attack the shacks where the girls lived, beat them up and steal their money and, if their minds had been taken over by the evil spirits in booze and hard drugs, they would destroy all the property that had gotten in the way of their mission" (38). The narrator states that even the educated girls from the wealthy families from the Niger Delta are not exempted from this treatment of women as sex objects. Lolo, who has a degree in French and from one of the wealthy and famous families in Port Harcourt, was also used by her Fulani boyfriend, Kamal, and dumped to marry a woman from his place.

A century old eco-trauma of the Niger Delta which existed before the petrochemical activities is the half-caste, particularly the mixed race women who are given the metaphor of decay and etiolation in Yellow-Yellow. Zilayefa, the narrator of the story, is called "yellow-yellow, like everybody else" by her mother (3). In her unnamed village, she is the only person with that complexion until she sees Sergio and identifies with him. For the first time in her life, when she sees him, since she is the only one with the yellowish complexion in her village, she notices that:

> His complexion stood just as mine did in that room. His skin was the colour of ripe plantain peel. His hair was black and had the same as my own …. I wondered if he was Greek. The similarities in our physical attributes reminded me how different I was from everyone else in the village (19).

When she finally escapes from her village and goes to Port Harcourt at seventeen years, she sees other people with similar skin colour. Apart from the general and prevalent degradation, enslavement and servitude of women in the Niger Delta, half-castes suffer further discrimination from their white fathers who abandon their mothers, and also by the black community on the grounds of their colour, race and circumstances of their birth. Even though there are other black children born outside marriage, they do not suffer as much discrimination as the biracial people, who are derogatorily referred to in the metaphors of "African-profits" "born-troways", "ashawo-pickins", "fathers-unknown"(171). And most of them, like Zilayefa, whose mothers are abandoned by their fathers because they are black women are seen "running around the slums of Port Harcourt" (171). The economic insecurity, the exploitation of the natural resources of the Niger Delta and the use of their women as sex-slaves date back to several centuries, according to the narrator thus:

> I found out there were generations of yellows in the Niger Delta area, and each one had a different story. There were the yellows from the 1800s, the days of the Royal Niger Company, later known as the United African Company (UAC), which the British had set up to maximize their gains from the palm oil trade (73-74).

It is one of the half-castes, Zilayefa, whose urge to see his abdicated father, a man that left her mother without any trace that a sixty-year old Ijaw man and a retired Admiral used her as a sex-slave. Admiral has two children – a boy and a girl. The girl is the same age as Zilayefa, both are seventeen years, while his son is twenty-four years. The Admiral who is old enough to be her father exploits her sexually because of her quest to find a father-figure to dote on her, believing that Admiral would provide her the emotional and psychological vacuum in her life – the image of a father she does not know, which creates a yawning vacuum in her life. Despite his promises to take care of her – to pay for her education, give her money and love, "the relationship would give me a taste of close paternal affection that I had never had" (138). When she gets pregnant, Admiral simply gives her money to abort the pregnancy. Zilayefa suffers personal insecurity because the child would be an impediment to her as she "faced uncertainties regardless of whether Admiral or Sergio is the father of the child" (173). With the doubt on the paternity of the child since Sergio and Admiral used her as a sex-slave, she is determined that, "I could not bring Sergio's child into my world" after the casual sexual fling she has with him, and the child would remind her of her own personal experiences. Both Sergio and Admiral adore their children, though Admiral is estranged from his wife, but "Sergio talked about his family often and had shown me their pictures in his wallet, his beautiful wife and their twenty-year-old twin boys" (172). She also realizes that Admiral has used her as a sex-toy dismissively giving her money to abort the foetus, and it dawns on her that "Those promises of "I will take care of whatever you need were falling on the ears of another pretty young girl desperate for love or just in it for the money" (173). She takes a radical and revolutionary decision to abort the child and face her education to improve her future. She refuses to go to the doctor Admiral recommends for her; she gets local herbs which she uses to induce the abortion. And as the

violent death of the dictatorial head of state who "had died of heart attack after a drug to enhance his performance with two Indian prostitutes", the whole country, including the Niger Delta region's people jubilated at his sudden death. The political, food, health, personal, community, etc., which are types of human insecurity and the negative consequences of the three components of human security - freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom from living in dignity which have dug the country and the oil producing Niger Delta made the "people breathed as they had not breathed in a long time" (176) at his death. His death would bring to an end the violations of their fundamental human rights under the tyrannical dictator would end, as well as the human insecurity associated with his regime. On her part, Zilayefa is ready to end the quest to find her father and the consequential sexual slavery which has led to unwanted pregnancy for her. She is ready to manage her life without any dependence on any man. She is determined to rebuild and reform her life that has been out of focus and this prompts her to chew the leaf and bark of the medicinal plant that would induce the abortion as she promises herself that:

> … if I lived, it was an opportunity for a personal rebirth along with Nigeria. I promised God and myself that I would focus only on completing my education and making my mother, Sisi and Lolo proud of me…. I wanted the confidence that Lolo had, and if Sisi was right, the choices also that came with an education.

With the violent death of the head of state and Zilayefa's abortion, therefore, the novelist makes a statement: that the violation of people's fundamental rights and its consequential human insecurity can exist when the people are complacent and do not take serious actions.

Human Rights Violations and the Consequential Insecurity Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*

Chika Unigwe in this novel takes the onerous and devastating issue of modern slavery, particularly, sex-slavery, which is a multi-billion-dollar trade organized by trafficking syndicates all over the world. In the novel, *On Black Sisters' Street*, Unigwe deploys an omniscient narrator with multi-focal points of view to unveil the horrible experiences of violations of fundamental human rights and the consequential insecurity on the trafficked girls. The narrator shows the existence of local and international sex-slavery where women from African countries, particularly Nigeria and from continental Europe, work as prostitutes in Europe, with their destination countries being Belgium, Spain and Italy. It is interesting to write that Nigeria is the primary source for sex-slaves all over the world, and this is in spite of the *Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act*, 2015, which creates twenty-one functions for the agency in which the National Assembly's attempts to end human trafficking. The Agency's objectives include the provision of an effective and comprehensive legal framework for the prohibition, detection, prosecution and punishment for human trafficking and the promotion and facilitation of national and international cooperation in order to meet the objectives set out in paragraph (a) and (b) of the section.

Despite the existence of this legislation, Unigwe uses the main female and other minor characters to beam the narrative searchlight on modern sex slavery in Nigeria. She shows that

the entire population of Nigeria, excluding the rulers, their friends and families, are slaves. She portrays a country that provides a poverty-infested environment, where the citizens are not sure of their daily bread, for there is monumental corruption; civil servants are stagnated; teachers are not paid their salaries on time and, when they are paid, they receive peanuts. And university graduates cannot get meaningful employment; there are no decent houses for the citizens, the leaders are disinterested in the welfare of the employed; there is no rule of law; there is no accountability in the citizen; there are none or ill-maintained public facilities; the roads are death traps; there is so much indolence in the system; a system that encourages lackadaisical attitude; a system that worships wealth. Such a country and its people encourage the spread of modern slavery within and outside its borders. She shows that in Nigeria, there is the existence of modern-slavery, particularly sex slavery. The narrator presents the people's life of slavery, those who are denied their fundamental human rights, and the insecurity that goes with such denials. For instance, Chisom's father's education stops at secondary school because his parents shifted their responsibility to him to "take your nine siblings off our hands" (19). With this responsibility on his shoulders, his education does not exceed secondary school, despite his dream of, "I could have been a doctor or an engineer" (19) ended with him shouldering the enormous responsibility at an early age. His father works as a clerk in the Ministry of Works in Lagos, and he dreams of buying a 504 Peugeot car and moving out with his family from their tiny flat at their Ogba residence. However, he is subjected to the life of servitude, slavery and degrading treatment. His fundamental human right to have a meaningful life is guaranteed in Article 23(3) of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* which states that, "Everyone who works has the right to fair and favourable remuneration, ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection". His fundamental rights not to be held in slavery, servitude and not to be subjected to torture, inhuman and degrading treatment which are protected in Articles 4 and 5 of *UDHR* are also violated. But Chisom's father's guaranteed rights are violated by the Nigerian government when his dream for a better life for himself and his family is terminated by economic and promotion denials in his work place, where he has worked for almost two decades and half in the ministry, "but apart from a pay rise in his first year, his salary had remained static even as the prices of everything else rose" (89). This violation of his right to decent conditions of service gives rise to human, environmental, food, health, economic and personal insecurity, and also the three components of human security stated by Kofi Annan which are freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity, which he and his family experience. Their dream to move out of their tiny flat where Sisi's mother has always "dreamed of being rescued from the Ogba flat from which they eked out their daily existence" (91) into a better house in Ikoyi is frustrated by the violation of their right to economic security. Her father's personal security and dream for a better life is battered by the reality of the life they live. Health insecurity is also present in this damning description of her father so that he does not only avoid people's eyes when he speaks, but:

> His predicament weighed on his shoulders and resulted in a stoop that belied his forty-something years. He walked like a man in his eighties, shuffling, head bent, perpetually searching for the dot on the ground that would either signal a change

in his fortune or widen and eat him up whole, obliterating him from the earth (90).

Her mother is not also left out in the consequences of the violations of her husband's rights. She has always had dreams of "having her own bathroom, her own kitchen, her own toilet and three rooms since the day Godwin married her and brought her from her village, Oba, to Lagos" (91), but they become forgotten and dumped into the dustbin of her imagination. Chisom is also haunted by, "The memory of her mother's behind the throat laughter and her father's anger at life's unfairness…" (92).

The family's only dream of being rescued from their grinding poverty which pervades their lives is the prophecy given at Chisom's birth. And based on the prophecy, her father sends her to school because he believes that, "the only way to a better life is education" (18). Despite acquiring a degree in Finance and Business Administration, and despite several years of writing applications to banks and companies, she could not get any job because of the nepotistic nature of the country where one can only get a job if "one of your friends is the director of any of the banks"(23). With Chisom being unemployed and frustrated, her boyfriend, Peter, who won the award for "the teacher of the year" (27) in the local school, where he teaches, and who offers to marry her is not also a good alternative because Peter also lives a life of servitude, slavery and indignity like her father. Notwithstanding his brilliance, a plethora of certificates, and a good degree in mathematics, his "salary was barely enough to cover the rent for his flat where his five siblings lived with him" (28). She describes him with the metaphor of closure thus, "Peter's life was a cul-de-sac" (27), and with this she finally rejects his offer for her hand in marriage because, "I don't want to become like my mother" (28), as her mother lives in the shadow of a frustrated and failed dream of a better life for her and her family since her marriage to her father. Therefore, having witnessed first-hand her family's life of drudgery and its resultant human insecurity, Sisi believes that being trafficked by Dele and his syndicate to Belgium is "the only thing she could do" (89) to redeem her parents and herself from death.

Efe's story of her life in Nigeria is not better than Sisi's. It is another story of grinding poverty and her usage as a sex-slave by Titus who is old enough to be her father. At sixteen, Efe's mother died, leaving her with a father who is emotionally and psychologically shattered and incapable of taking care of his children. He becomes a perpetual drunkard and a night crawler, so that Efe is forced to drop out of school to take care of her younger sisters. Living in penury pushes her to fall prey to Titus, a paedophile, who has his own children that he takes good care of, while promising Efe heaven on earth. He buys things for her, but immediately she gets pregnant for him, this man who calls her "his Miss Nigeria" (49) that makes him the "happiest man in Nigeria even"(55) dumps her. Immediately she tells Titus of her pregnancy, "he picked up his car keys from the bedside table and walked out of the hotel room" (59) and out of her life. Saddled with the pregnancy, she gives birth to her son as a minor, naming him Lucky Ikponwosa, Titus' middle name. When she takes the baby to his father, believing that "all men wanted sons no matter how many they had" (68), Titus realizes that his three- week-old son is "A Titus in miniature"(69); yet, allows his wife to rudely send her out of their beautiful residence. Titus' wife not only behave in a similar manner as Madam Kate who traffics young girls as sex-slaves in Europe, but she also calls Efe a "useless Idiot" (70) without

reprimanding her husband for using the under-aged girl as a sex object. The sex slavery that violates women's rights to live in dignity is witnessed in the female sex migrants. Nobody and no agency punish the offenders, who use girls as sex slaves, for the narrator says that Efe was "The sixth woman in as many years to come to Titus with an offspring from an affair. And all six, the wife had dismissed in more or less the same way" (71). Having dropped out of school, forced to care for her younger sisters, stranded with a drunken father "snoring off twelve bottles of lager and fifteen shots of *ogogoro*", birthing an unwanted son who carries the stigma of discrimination because of the circumstances of his birth, having no support from anybody including her son's biological father and her own father, who makes it clear to her that he cannot be raising his children and be raising another man's child too, she decides to fend for herself and the son, "cleaning three offices always tired her legs"(83).

She soon realizes that the jobs cannot pay her enough to give her son, Ikponwosa, a better life. She therefore voluntarily goes to Dele, the human trafficking kingpin, and agrees that, "she would be Dele and sons limited export" (82). For her, being a sex-slave would be worth it if the proceeds from her prostitution would give her son a better life for him, so that he can go to "good schools, become a big shot and look after her when she was old and tired" (82). She is willing to become a sex slave in order to give her son a better life than she has and also protect him from the human insecurity she goes through as a school dropout and a young mother.

A brutal form of sex slavery is Ama's experience whose paedophilic step-father rapes every night from the time she turns eight till she starts menstruating at eleven years. Ironically, her mother is a domestic slave to Brother Cyril who violates her fundamental human rights and those of her daughter, with the insecurity that goes with such violations. He metes out degrading treatments by habitually beating them. Her mother endures the life of a domestic slave with her daughter, and complains to nobody. Ama, who grows up in a pink-painted house, lives a life of isolation and when her step-father whom she thinks is her father rapes her, her only confidant is the walls of her room which listen to her complaints. As she grows up into an isolated child without friends, the pink walls of her room "were her best friends. Silent, constant friends who she could trust" (122). From her childhood, she learns to keep secrets, and the pink walls are the ones whose ears she fills with the stories she does not dare to tell anyone else" (123). She has not formed the habit of confiding in the walls until "1987 and after turning eight" (123) when Cyril organizes a big party for her. In the night, after the party, "her father floated into her room in his white safari suit" (131) and rapes her. The rape of his step-daughter is an everyday occurrence while her mother pretends that the reddish eyes she wakes up with every morning are the result of an eye infection. She grows up in a house where her father flogs her with a cane, "cutting a rawness into her skin that hurt for many days after" (129). Though the father, Brother Cyril, who is a pastor in a Pentecostal church in Enugu, pretends that his house is a house of holiness; yet, he uses his wife as a domestic slave that washes his white safari suits and dashikis until the "cloth's whiteness glowed" (131). Brother Cyril pretends to other church members that his wife, whom he introduces as "My Rose whom I married a Virgin" (130), but she is a woman he "expiated her sin with a beating" (144), thereby breaching her rights to dignity, liberty, and freedom from torture, servitude and slavery. However, the lies about their lives collapse when she fails her JAMB, the university entrance examination,

because of the crises he constantly subjects her to as a result of using her as a sex-slave. At that point, he ends all pretences by telling her the circumstances of her birth, "I am not your father… I took in your mother and this is all the thanks I get. All the thanks I get from saving you from being a bastard. You know what happens to children without fathers? Children who are born at home?" (148) When he sends her out of his house, because she is not her biological daughter, he violates her right not to be discriminated against due to the circumstances of her birth. Her mother sends her to Mama Eko, her unmarried liberal cousin, who runs a restaurant in Lagos. It is while waitressing at the restaurant that she decides she cannot be serving customers all her life. She voluntarily, like Efe, decides to be trafficked to Belgium as a sex slave because:

> Brother Cyril had taken what he wanted, no questions asked. No please or may I or could I. discarding her when she no longer sufficed. And strange men taking and paying for her services. And it would even be in Lagos. But Overseas (166).

With her decision that becoming a paid sex slave in Belgium is better than unremunerated sex slave in Nigeria, she discards all entreaties from Mama Eko not to have anything to do with Dele, because she could be become a victim of ritual killing, but she has reached a point of no return. She readily succumbs to Dele's request that, "I shall sample you before you go" (168) rather than stay back in Nigeria and have her fundamental human rights violated, with the insecurity that goes with the violations.

The narrator also shows that Nigeria is not the only failed state that supplies sex slaves to the multi-billion-dollar human-trafficking syndicate, as war-torn countries, like Sudan, also supply prostitutes to the Western world. Like Nigeria, there is also the existence of domestic sex slavery in Sudan. Through Joyce, whose real name is Alek, from Sudan, Unigwe gives her readers a peep into the bizarre and violent world of Sudan, whose citizens' rights to life, to live in dignity, freedom of liberty, freedom from cruel and degrading treatment, right not to be tortured and freedom from discrimination because of their colour are violated without remedies and without punishments meted out to offenders. Joyce tells the other sex slaves – Efe and Ama – after the gruesome murder of Sisi on the street of Brussel about the heart-breaking story of her torturous journey to Belgium as a trafficked sex slave. Joyce is from Sudan, a war-torn country where the Janjaweed militia discriminates against their people on the ground of their ethnicity. Therefore, they wish "to cleanse the city of Dinka population" (187). Actually, what happens in Sudan is genocide and the war crimes committed against a particular population. At fifteen years, her family members are massacred before her eyes – father, mother and brother. Apart from the slaughter of her family members, the boys subject her to sex slavery, slap her and rape her. The narrator tells the soul-rending story of Joyce's experience that devastates her life thus:

> One by one the other men came and thrust themselves into her, pulling out to come on her face. Telling her to ingest it, it was protein.
> Good food. It's for African slaves (191).

After the murder of her family members, and the degrading treatment she receives from their murders, she falls into unconsciousness, waking up later to join the stream of refugees, "stepping around corpses strewing the streets to migrate to the refugees' camps run by the African Union. The experience of her rape and the killing of all her family members leave a very devastating emotional impact on her throughout her life as, "She yearned to wash off her nose. To wash out the raw fish smell of the soldier cum. She wanted to scrub between her legs until she forgot the cause of her pain" (192). "And the pain of the scrubbing was cathartic" (195).

She does not tell her story to anyone at the refugee camp because the people running the camp are indifferent to their woeful stories. The other refugees have also gone through unbelievable violations of their human rights and its consequential effects of human insecurity in all its dimensions. She carries her burden alone because, "the camp was a collection of sad stories. Hers was nothing special" (194). It was only when she falls in love with a Nigerian Army Peace-keeper in the camp, Polycarp, that she tells him of her experiences. It is Polycarp that she voluntarily gives herself to as, "She felt Polycarp between her thighs. There was no pain" (199), and it is with him whom she loves that she whispers to her dead mother who has always preached to her about the virtues of being a virgin, "I am a woman now, Mother. A proper woman" (199). But Polycarp who promises her a good life when they are married brings her to Lagos with the intention to marry her. His parents, however, raise resistance to his proposed marriage to a woman who is not of his ethnic group and this causes Polycarp to send her to Dele to be trafficked to Belgium as a sex slave.

Chika Unigwe, in her award-winning novel, *On Black Sisters' Street*, presents to the world a soul-rendering experience of international human-trafficking syndicate that sells women from Africa as sex-slaves in Europe. These sex-slaves, some of whom are as young as seventeen years, are recruited from Africa, particularly Nigeria, and sent to countries in Europe to work as prostitutes. She portrays sex-slavery, like slaves of centuries ago, as stripping the girls of their fundamental and basic human rights, which result in the denial of human security by their owners, which follow the status of slavery. Sex slavery involves the girls' loss of identity and personhood, as they become the property of their owners, to be used as they like. For instance, Sisi, whose real name is Chioma, despite knowing that Dele is sending her to Brussels as a sex-slave, wilfully assumes a pseudonym, 'Sisi', "a name that she would wear in her new life" (44). She does not only lie to her parents and Peter about her intended work in Brussels, but also believes that her name, "Chioma would be airbrushed out of existence, at least for a while" (44). When She arrives in Brussels, the narrator uses the simile of complete loss of identity in stating that "She would shed her own skin like a snake and emerge completely new" (98). And when she meets Efe, her flat mate who is also a sex-slave, she lies to her about her name saying, 'Ah, sorry. I'm Sisi, Sisi answered, relishing the name, her entrance into a new world" (103). In Belgium, she meets Madam, her owner, who inaugurates her into sex-slavery and completely changes her identity by instructing her to assume a new identity, a new nationality at the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the Ministry, she tells her to, 'Remember, you are Mandigo. You have no passport. You escaped Liberia with only your head and the clothes on your back' (121). She also tells them that her name is "Mary Featherwill. Yes. She was Mandigo" (176). Without a passport, and with a false identity and a false

nationality, Sisi is refused asylum and ordered to leave Belgium within three days. In Belgium, Sisi is legally a persona non grata, a non-existent person, when her Madam tells her, 'Now you belong to me. It cost us a lot of money to organize all this for you' (182). With her complete loss of identity, Sisi realizes that she is now a sex slave, "a commodity for sale, a slab of meat at the local abattoir" (182). Madam warns her that until she repays every single kobo, and 'every single cent of what you owe us, you will not have your passport back' (183). And with this threat, Madam orders her, 'Here. Your work clothes. Tonight, you start' (183).

This inhuman and degrading treatment is not restricted to Sisi; this is what other sex-slaves go through. Trafficking the girls from Africa to Europe strips them of their true identities, inaugurates them into sex slavery, which results in their loss of fundamental human rights and the attendant human insecurity which goes with slavery. For instance, the girls do not have the rights to life and movement and the freedom of association. All the components of security – freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom from indignity are stripped off them upon their entrance into Europe as sex slaves. They lose their humanity and are regarded by their purchasers as articles of trade purchased only to fetch them money. At best, they are regarded as sub-humans, and as sub-humans, they can do anything they want with them, including killing them, and nobody, and no agencies would ask questions.

The narrator shows that prostitution business is not also bereft of racial discrimination. There are differences between the treatment given to white sex workers and that given to black sex workers in Europe. The white sex worker is considered a human being, while her black counterpart is without an identity whose relevance is limited to her sexual usefulness; she does not have a face. This is succinctly illustrated in the two pictures hanging on the wall in Sisi's bedroom at Zwartezuesterstraat:

> And on them hung two pictures; a white girl, lying on her back, naked with legs splayed a tanned V. She sucked lollipop. The other picture was of an enormous pair of brown buttocks jutting out at the camera. Buttocks with no face; two meticulously moulded clay pots (99-100).

These two pictures show that there is preferential treatment in favour of the white sex workers whose safety is ensured at "Villa Tinto. The queen of all brothels, and it has its own police" (204). Within the brothel rooms, additional life safeguards are provided by the hotel operators because the '… girls who work inside here have panic buttons beside their beds, to press when a customer gets out of hand' (204). However, this hotel is not for women of colour. This is where the Belgian ministers get the women they sleep with, 'And not too many black women inside either. Two. Three tops' (204). The usual hotel patronized by the black sex workers who do not have a stand is The Potje, where no ministers come to pick their girls, but men of all kinds, races and colours, all the same, they are "paying customers" (204). The girls are dressed up in a special way to advertise the type of business they do and for the attraction of the male customers. Madam gives Sisi the trademark clothing of a sex worker. After dressing up she feels naked, "silver and gold nude. Long gold-plated earrings dangled from her ears and rested on her shoulders…. And on her lips, lipstick, the rich red tomato puree" (202). The completion of their slave status is that they are displayed like animals in "Huge windows like showcases"

(203). The male customers, who want to patronize them "would stop and stare at the window displays", before making their choice of whom to choose among the sex slaves on display in the glass booths, like chattel.

Because the black sex slaves are regarded as sub-humans without identity, their enslavers consider their lives as worthless. At Sisi's visit to Dele's office at Randle Street to negotiate the terms in which he would send her to Brussels, he informs her that she would pay him thirty thousand dollars, by instalments of five hundred euros per month without fail. He warns her that 'Any failure would result in unpleasantness', and he continues, 'No try cross me o. Nobody dey cross Senghor Dele' (42). But in her bid to enter into the sex slavery contract with the deadly trafficking syndicate, which Dele leads, Sisi ignores the dangerous and deadly instrument, "a tattoo: it was a small dark drawing of a hammer" (32), which she notices on Dele's neck. And when she decides to quit prostitution without paying off her debts, the syndicate murders her, using its deadly assassin, Segun, whose hands Sisi has earlier observed as "looking soft and feminine" (101), and whose identity and job specification none of the sex workers know, except that sometimes "he acts as Madam's driver or her bodyguard" (107). No one knows whose relation he is, Madam's or Dele's, but he works in silence in the flat when there are "nails to be hammered into the walls for Madam's paintings" (107). Ironically, it is Segun whom Sisi perceives as "harmless" (293) that murders her in such a way that "the hammer hitting into her skull had come as a shock. She does not even have the time to shout. She is not yet dead when "he dragged her out on the deserted road" (293). In their shared flat, none of the occupants mourn Sisi's death, except the other three surviving sex slaves – Efe, Ama and Joyce. Madam, the sex slave owner in Brussels, behaves as though a dog or cat is killed. Her sole interest is to ensure that the Belgian police do not investigate Sisi's death or disturb her prostitution business. Despite her education as a masters' degree holder, she has superstitious beliefs. She disposes of Sisi's property, because of her belief that, 'leaving a dead woman's property around the house is inviting her spirit' (109). She constantly burns incense 'through the flat, a warning to Sisi's ghost not to bother them' (109). Sisi's death means nothing to Madam, Segun and Dele. She is simply a chattel that can be destroyed or wasted and easily replaced by other disposable chattel. In his discussion with Madam, which Sisi's ghost overhears, Dele tells her about the future commodity he intends to send to her:

> Na good worker we lose but gals full *boku* for Lagos. I get three lined up. Latest next week, dem visa go ready. Dem full for front, full for back. I swear, dem go drive *oyibo* mad. You sabi as my gals dey dey nah, no be gorilla I dey supply (295).

They treat sex workers procured from Africa without emotions, feelings and dignity. Sisi's corpse found in the street of Brussels is treated like the carcass of a strayed animal, and disposed of by the police. Therefore, the sex slaves' fundamental rights are also breached; they live and die as slaves without dignity in life, and without dignity in death. Their movement is also restricted as they are followed around the city by their owners' workers and their violent death elicits no investigations by the state.

However, the writer makes it clear that the girls would not have been trafficked without their complicity. She presents the three trafficked girls from Nigeria – Efe, Ama and Sisi – as having a cargo mentality which makes them agree to be trafficked as slaves, except Joyce, who is unaware that she would be trafficked into prostitution in Brussels, because Dele and Polycarp lie to her that she would be a nanny in Belgium. The other girls are aware of the business they are going for in Brussels and willingly decide to go, but they are all preoccupied with the material gains and elevated status they would harvest from the business. They believe that sex slavery in Europe would not only lift them and their families out of poverty, but would also launch them into lucrative businesses. For instance, in addition to Sisi's desire to fulfil the prophecy spoken at her birth that she would pull her parents out of their grinding poverty in Lagos, she believes that prostitution in Europe would provide her with the goodies of life: beautiful buildings, clothes, cars, and even buy her a husband and, "Her fingers sparkled with the glitter of [gold] rings" (104). When she sees Efe wearing them, she says, "I want a gold ring on each finger" (15). It is this mindset of uncommon wealth that drives the sex workers, except Joyce, to take the risks associated with sex slavery in Europe, resulting in their loss of their fundamental rights and freedoms and security. Efe stays in Belgium for thirteen years without seeing her family, including her son, whom she leaves with her sister when he is a baby. She eventually realizes her ambition to establish a prostitution syndicate in Belgium, like her Madam. Joyce and Ama return to Lagos to establish a school and a boutique respectively. But for Sisi, after eight months of her stay in Belgium, she is killed by her owners when her lover persuades her to forfeit the deadly contract of sex slavery with the trafficking syndicate, which is the reason they killed her. The violation of the fundamental rights of sex workers and the consequential insecurity that follows prostitution and trafficking underscore the fact that their right to life, dignity of person, et cetera – would be trampled on without the two countries – Nigeria and Belgium – doing anything to unearth their traffickers and killers. For instance, Sisi's corpse is found in the street in Brussels; yet, there are no inquest, or arrest, or police investigations to unveil her killer, or killers. It is obvious that Madam pays the Belgium police handsomely to drop the case. Sisi is a Nigerian citizen; yet, Nigeria does not also investigate her murder. She leaves Nigeria with a false identity, lives and dies in Belgium as an undocumented immigrant. Furthermore, as far as the country and its immigration officials are concerned, Sisi has been told to leave the country since the status of a refugee and asylum is refused to her. The only way she would have been relevant to Belgium is if she had committed a crime so that her fingerprints and photographs in the database would have been used to identify her corpse. However, since she dies, the cause of her death and the lingering insecurity around her death, which may also happen to other illegal female migrants, means nothing to the Belgian authorities. To them, Sisi's death is like the death of a stray dog or cat on the streets of the city, just as her death means nothing to the trafficking syndicate, except for them to warn others that the same fate would befall them if they attempt to run away, from their contracts with the syndicate. Her death is mourned by Efe, Ama and Joyce and her parents. Sisi's death brings the girls to the realization that their owners have stripped them of fundamental rights and freedoms, when they say, 'We're not happy here. None of us. We work hard to make somebody else rich. Madam treats us like animals…. Madam has no right to our bodies, and

neither does Dele. I don't want to think that one day I will be dead here and all Madam would do is to complain about how bad my death is for business' (290).

Sisi's death is traumatic for her parents, particularly her father, who feels that it is abnormal for his daughter to die immediately if "she had sent them money, the largest amount she had ever done, strengthening his resolve to ask for a car the next time" (295). With his cargo mentality, but in a dazed state, he acknowledges the condolences of mourners, who visit his house for "he would nod, slowly, as if his head was twenty times its size, the head of a masquerade" (295). Her death also means that her parents would live out the rest of their lives in a hopeless situation, residing in a country where the government is insensitive to the plight of its citizens. In addition to the insecurity as a result of the constant and perennial breaches of their fundamental human rights and freedoms, they would have to live out their lives in a hopeless situation in fear, want and indignity without reprieve until their death.

Conclusion

This research has interrogated, investigated, and examined in detail the nexus or synergy between the violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms of fictive characters, which invariably give rise to insecurity in the worlds of the four selected novels used for the study. And it is quite clear that literary critics should take up the responsibility of joining the fight against the violations of rights in the Nigerian Society, which has been championed by lawyers, the NGOs, the human rights activists, and pronounced upon by the courts and codified in the international, regional and national laws. And a passionate appeal has been made in the "Preamble" to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948, that everyone should be involved in the dissemination of the message that individuals, groups and governments should uphold and protect the inalienable and universal rights of the citizens and foreigners in a state in order to avoid the consequential forms of insecurity that go with their breaches.

In the novels studied, the violations of the fundamental human rights and freedoms of characters, for instance, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the breaches of the of characters' rights to life and freedoms from discrimination bring untold human suffering, genocide, ecocide and influx of refugees in other clans. Also the violations of the rights and freedoms enable the evangelization, colonization, conquest and amalgamation to take roots in the clans, as well as the suicide of the tragic character, Okonkwo. It should be further noted that the colonial order which battered and shattered the once-peaceful world of the novel introduces political insecurity, personal insecurity, communal insecurity and other forms of human insecurity that force the characters to live in fear, in want and in indignity.

Moreover, in Kaine Agary's eco-fiction, *Yellow-Yellow*, the naïve narrator tells the story of the violations of the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the characters from the oil producing areas, which are denied their economic right and the right to live in dignity, despite the opulence that flows from the land and water to the pockets of other people. Despite the fact that they produce the wealth of the nation, there is environmental insecurity, as a result of the environmental pollutions from oil spillages that force the fictive inhabitants to lose their farmlands, aquatic animals, and to live in polluted water and air; yet, they are denied their rights and freedoms to education and job opportunities, as all the human security indices of the characters who live in fear, and in want, and in indignity are lost. And the young boys are forced

into violent conflicts and militancy as they kidnap oil workers, and some of them get killed, and the girls are forced into prostitution with the consequence of having children of mixed-race, who go through the trauma of discrimination and rejection as a result of the circumstances of their birth and their colour.

Peter Nwana's *Omenuko* unveils the violations of the fundamental human rights and freedoms of young men who are sold into slavery and servitude by their master, Omenuko, and are treated as chattels or movable property to be bought and disposed of at the whims and caprices of their owners. However, the crime Omenuko committed by the sale of his kinsmen forced him into exile with his brothers and sisters in another community. And despite his rise to power and wealth, and his promotion as a sovereign by the white District Commissioner of the area, over and above the other Warrant Chiefs, makes him and his family to experience human and communal insecurity and to live in fear, in want and in indignity, because of the jealousy and the gang up of the other chiefs. And when it is obvious that he would lose his life, after he has lost his status as a naturalized citizen of the area and his paramount chieftaincy, he goes back to his homeland, having reconciled with his people after he has ransomed the men he sold into slavery and reconciled with his people and the gods.

And Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street,* tells the story of the multi-billion-dollar modern sex-slavery, where young girls whose fundamental rights to education, work and economic well-being are totally denied, and who are sold into slavery and sent to Belgium for prostitution. Unfortunately, the Belgium which they dream as a land of El Dorado turns out to be a place where they lose their personhood, treated as chattels and denied their identity. The consequences of their prostitution in the foreign country is fraught with all types of personal and human insecurity, as they live in fear, and in want and in indignity throughout their stay. Their lives only count as sex-slaves, and their deaths are unnoticed and not investigated, and they are buried like strayed dead dogs.

The study submits that the fictive worlds of the selected novels for this study, and the conflicts in them are fuelled by breaches of fundamental rights and freedoms of characters, and these breaches create insecurity to the characters and their fictive environments. It is the duty of the literary critic, therefore, to use the various codified provisions of the fundamental human rights and other theories of human rights and freedoms to expose the breaches, which invariably cause insecurity in the worlds of literary texts. It is through this that those in literary scholarship would be relevant, as they join their voice in the dissemination of the provisions, and the protection of the human rights and freedoms of citizens and foreigners throughout the four corners of the earth. And in Nigeria, the spate of insecurity, which includes terrorism, farmer-herder violent clashes, militancy, banditry, secessionist agitations, ethnic cleansing, genocidal wars, insurgency, guerrilla warfare, etc., - that have besieged this country, since independence, particularly since the last two decades, can be stemmed out or, at least, minimized.

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