WOMEN’S HUB

JACQUELINE SUOWARI
Using art as a tool of dialogue leading to change
It is the last Friday in the month of April and as always, we are grateful for being alive despite all that is going on across the world. We remain hopeful that things will take a positive turn soon.

It is our intention to lighten your mood and we hope these beautiful, bold and colourful works of excellence in creativity, displayed by Jacqueline Suowari, the dynamic lady using art as a tool of dialogue leading to change, will not only enthuse you but brighten your day.

Oluseye Aderonke's story on promoting healthy living with natural alternatives is truly inspiring. How she navigated through life's challenges to find her purpose and live in fulfillment of her goals is one you will enjoy.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of gender parity enough. In this edition, it is about a research showing that product companies with female directors recall products with high severity issues 35 percent faster than those that do not have females.

We teach you how to make some yummy snacks and exercises to do at home.

You are in for a treat.

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JACQUELINE SUOWARI

Using art as a tool of dialogue leading to change

BY KEMI AJUMOBI
BIOGRAPHY

Jacqueline Suowari is Ballpoint Pen Artist and Draughts-woman.

Her foray into art started from the early age of five and for the past decade, she has stunned her ardent collectors with magnetic pieces which over time, have grown larger than life.

Jacqueline is motivated by the intriguing art of drawing. The thousands of ballpoint pen strokes which make up every single piece of her work reveals the countless hours which it takes to achieve perfection in her eyes, with a single piece sometimes taking several months to complete. In each piece, she combines various elements of design to share her experiences and inspiration with the audience.

Jacqueline has participated in several group exhibitions and Art fairs locally and internationally. Her last Solo Exhibition was concluded in March 2020 at the Adrienne Arsht Centre for Performing Arts in Miami, Florida, in the United States of America.

Jacqueline has been featured in several publications including Chukwuemeka Ben Bosah’s book “The Art of Nigerian Women” which chronicles some of the best of Nigeria’s artists and most recently an international publication by Sandu Publishing “Ballpoint Art: Complexity in Simplicity” which features 30 (thirty) Ballpoint artists from around the world. She is currently represented by Avant Gallery in the United States of America.
Early Years

I was born in Zaria, Kaduna State. My Dad was working at Ahmadu Bello University (A.B.U) at the time and we lived on Campus. I have a lot of fond memories from Christmas and Salah celebrations in our neighborhood when I was younger. Everyone knew each other, if you were walking down the road, they knew whose child you were and where your house was.

It was a very cordial and warm neighborhood despite the fact that we were from different tribes, countries and practiced different religions. This gave me an unbiased outlook on religious and tribal differences.

My parents were guardians to many young adults and students, a lot of them stayed with us, so I had more early interactions with older people and this continued throughout my formative years.

As a teenager, I began to notice the disparity in levels of consciousness and understanding between people.

I became fascinated with watching scenarios, how they played out, how they were interpreted and how interpretations varied from one individual to another.

When I was 16, we moved to Port Harcourt in Rivers State. I had just gotten the admission to study Fine Art at the University of Port Harcourt. Life was very different there. First of all, it was a very big city compared to Zaria. People went about their businesses differently and were very suspicious of overly nice strangers (laughs).

It was overwhelming for me at first, the many nuances that come with living in a big city but as time went by, I found new fascinations.

I began to notice the impact of growing up with a ‘single story’. How stories influence people’s perception of life and of other people.

I began to observe the impacts of stories and how they can be used to sell real or tainted narratives.

With all these curiosities, I became very obsessed with understanding and exploring human expressions, emotional responses, body language and identity and how these factors affect the communication and receptivity of any given story. These are the themes I’ve been exploring with my work.

Through the work that I do, I am realizing that even though we are different, we all have similar wants, experiences and stories and this was and is our unification.

Discovering your love for ballpoint pen artistry, being a draughtswoman

I have always loved drawing. I began to really draw when I was 5. My mum would buy crayons, coloured pencils and paper, and I was pretty content with those materials.

When I got into secondary school, the readily available writing material was a ballpoint pen. I began to do a lot of sketches with the pen in my school books.

In University, while studying Fine Art, I abandoned the pen as it wasn’t a traditional medium for creating art.

The love for drawing was further ingrained in me during the months I spent at the Universal Studio of Art in Lagos doing industrial training in 2009. We practically drew everyday for throughout the six months of my training. Drawing for me, had now become a way of life.

In 2011 while I was serving, my senior colleague Duke Asidiere invited me to participate in a drawing-only art exhibition. I was very excited. As I began to create the pieces for the show, I wasn’t quite satisfied with the level of contrast the charcoals and pastels were giving. Also, the intricacies of my shading were always lost. One day, I decided to use a black ballpoint pen and the results were amazing.

It solved all the problems, the details, the contrast, needless to say, I was hooked on the black ballpoint pen.

Since finding your passion, how has your life changed?

I found my passion when I was 5, so it more or less shaped my life. I asked my primary school Art teacher what people who draw as grown ups are called and he told me ‘Artists… they are called Artists’. That was all I wanted to be, from then on... an Artist. Most of my life’s decisions were towards the actualization of this dream. The dream to become an Artist.

Do you feel artists are appreciated and well valued in Nigeria? What is your personal experience?

Art appreciation in Nigeria has grown over the years. I’ve been practicing professionally for over 10 years now and in that time; the Nigerian art scene has grown exponentially.

There was a time Artists were regarded as the crazy people of society, people who had nothing to offer or contribute to the grand scheme of things. That has long changed.

With the springing up of Art institutions, organisations and events like Art X, in the country, especially in Lagos, people in Nigeria have begun to see and respect Art as a tool of dialogue that leads to change, change of opinions and perceptions and ultimately, the birth of a new way of life.

This in itself is the duty of an Artist - to provide a lens through which one can see life differently.

What informs your choice of persons to draw and how do you know what method to use for which?

I am inspired by body language and expression. But recently, I’ve been inspired by identity, how identity plays a role in expression and how a persons expression affects the way their communication is received by another.
From experience, I’ve realized it’s not about how people look, what they wear, how they talk but it’s about reading between the lines and finding the “Why.”

As to the method of portrayal, I can’t tell what design the figure would yield at the finished stage at the beginning. Sometimes, it’s a maze which I’m excited to follow, sometimes it’s pretty straightforward but in all, I just listen to the work and follow where it takes me.

How long does it take you to finish a drawing and how do you pull it through?

It takes from two weeks to two months, depending on the size of the work. The small works, which are about 3 by 4 feet (I rarely do that size now), take two weeks. My daily work routine is pretty much fixed. I’m in the studio by 10 am and I work till 5:30 pm on weekdays. Although, when I’m really fired up about a piece, I get engrossed in it. I would work throughout the day and sometimes at night to finish it.

Exhibitions you have participated in and your first experience at one

My first exhibition was a group exhibition organized by The Department of Fine Art and Design at the University of Port Harcourt in 2007. I can remember feeling some anxiety before the show opened to the public. When the show opened, the feedback from the guests about my work was very exciting. From then on, I began to look forward to participating in exhibitions.

In the course of my career, I have participated in over 30 group exhibitions. The last one which was concluded in March was a solo exhibition at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts in Miami, Florida.

My experiences with exhibitions have always been very rewarding. It’s all always to get public feedback about your work. One of the most memorable experiences for me was exhibiting during the Art Basel week in Miami. There was a flood of feedback, it was really overwhelming.

What exhibition are you looking forward to?

The one exhibition I am happily looking forward to is my first Nigerian solo exhibition scheduled to hold sometime this year. Right now, there isn’t a definite date because of the current pandemic we’re fighting as a nation, but I’m excited about the new frontiers the exhibition will bring when it comes to life.

You studied Fine Arts in University of Port Harcourt and majored in painting, how then did you end up in ball pen drawing?

After school, I was a painter for a while and my paintings sold pretty well but, I just wanted to draw. I found that I could express myself in an entirely different form with the ballpoint pen.

What gets me about ballpoint pen is the individuality of the strokes. I’ve never been a hyperrealist artist. I like art that offers new details each time you look at it. I like art that is complex; art that has intricacies. With the ballpoint pen, I’m able to create those intricacies. I actually tried it with charcoal, pastel and pencil. With pencil, I drifted from normal pencil to 2b, 3b, 5b, but I didn’t get what I want. Somehow, the strokes always blur out.

Why the choice of bright colours and why the humongous sizes?

The colours are deliberately bright as a metaphor for “Happiness, peace and contentment” juxtaposed within a theme of Afro urban style and pop culture to tell a story of confidence, self awareness and determination in a world where cultural concepts and systems are transient.

Because of the intricacies I am exploring, I want the pieces big enough for people to see these intricacies. I need my pieces to talk to people when they encounter them physically. When I look at the pictures on social media, it doesn’t do justice to the works. When you see them in real life, there are these details you can’t miss because of the size.

What do you portray in your works? Do people easily get the message?

I have always been fixated on human beings; features, gender, expression, communication, language and identity. The themes in my work generally revolve around these parts of my human experience and the best ways I am finding to portray them.

In the themes I choose to explore, I am pushing the ordinary concept of portraiture and figure painting from “Oh! That’s a beautiful person” to “What’s this person’s story? Why does he/she have that hairdo? Why is this person wearing these clothes? What’s on their mind? What’s their influence? In a sense, I am tasking the viewers mind, making them ask and answer questions that create a dialogue between their own stories and that of the person in the work.

People who are close to me always tell me how I am constantly finding connections to things that don’t seem connected but in fact are. I believe, no matter where we come from, our personal experiences permeate the walls of gender, race, religion and culture. I choose themes that are centered on these contact zones or links in experiences that we share and the issues surrounding them and I present them in a way that while standing in front of one of my pieces, you begin to see the similarities between you and the person on the wall and suddenly, you realize that even though that’s a stranger you are staring at, even though they have a different ethnicity, gender or religion from you, you have the same story.
Being represented by American based Avant Gallery with spaces on NY and Miami. The internet is a small world. We met online, started a conversation and began what has now blossomed into a beautiful relationship.

Being represented by Avant Gallery has been a very humbling and overwhelming experience for me. The ability to connect with new audiences and observe how my work makes impact in their lives, even though the stories I tell are inspired by my immediate environment (Nigeria), is simply amazing. Also, I have been participating in several art fairs and group shows in America. This has opened up my work to new audiences and experiences. Finally, I have a new and exciting international collector base and more collaborations on the way.

Would you say your works are pricey?
When it comes to the price of artwork, I definitely do not consider my work to be pricey.

If I were to compare my work prices against people I look up to at the international art scene, I'm still at the beginning stages for work prices. People like Toyin Ojih Odutola and Njideka Akunyili Crosby have their work listed in hundreds of thousands of dollars, (if you can get your hands on a piece) so I'm still growing in comparison to them.

These people were within my price ranges about 8 years ago. A popular Nigerian who once bought an Njideka piece back then for $30,000, recently sold it at auction for about over a million dollars. So was the piece expensive? I don't think so. It's most times shortsighted to put a price on great art.

This question came up when the discourse of my holding a Nigerian exhibition held and frankly, I believe that there are quite a number of Nigerians who can pay the prices happily, as long as they're getting a work of art with unquestionable quality.

My works sell at the same prices irrespective of which country it's being sold in and I definitely do believe that there are quite a number of Nigerians, who can afford my works.

Why would you advice anyone to invest in art works?
Investing in Art is like planting a seed and waiting for it to grow. A collector has to patiently follow promising prospects and wait for the investment to yield. Sometimes, it takes a while, sometimes, it may be shorter, but art is always yielding.

There are many stories of tremendous financial returns from art investment. For many investors, the Art market has grown too big to ignore. Last year, global sales reached $63.7 billion, according to an Art Basel and UBS report.

My personal favorite is a story about a Filipino couple; Kim and Lito Camacho. The couple bought their first Yayoi Kusama for about $7,500, one of the artist’s “infinity net” works from the 1960s. As their collection grew, they sometimes sold off lesser works in order to buy better ones.

That strategy of “buying deep” paid off. Their Kusamas have risen between 20 and 30 times in value.

Are Nigerians appreciative of your works enough?
Oh yes! My experience with Nigerians and my work is mainly amazement. I’m told they’re pretty striking. I’m told a lot of things but maybe it’s because I have spent so much time with them during the process of creation, I sometimes don’t see the reason for the elaborate reactions. I however later get it when they’re framed, at that point, I see them with new eyes.

What important thing is it about artworks that people need to know?
Art is an experience. It influences society by instilling values and opinions through experiences that span across time.

Art is communication between the viewer and the artist. It is a communication that transcends verbal language, cultural backgrounds and sometimes the physical.

Art is therapeutic. In whatever form it is expressed, it uplifts the soul and soothes the mind. Nothing can fill a void like art.

Art also captures history and in some cases predicts the future and gives people a form of identity.

Who are you looking forward to draw?
At the moment, drawing Teni and Naira Marley would be quite an experience. Not only are they both incredibly talented musicians, they also both have really powerful identity structures and their stories marry a lot with the themes I'm currently exploring.

How has COVID-19 affected your work? How are you pulling through?
Studio life is pretty much the same; I still wake up and go to work like normal. The only difference is that, the days all seem to fade into a big blur. I saw a work by Matthew Zarembo about days of the week where he cancelled out the first parts of the words from weekdays leaving only day in each word. The work sums up how I feel about the passing days. I literally have to check my phone to remember what day it is.

With these times, I’m learning to be grateful for all the little things that I once took for granted.

Final words
If you like to get a first hand feel of my works, you can follow me on Instagram @jacquelinesuowari
In this piece, I marry the concept of pregnancy and the weight of its expectations with the thrill of satisfaction. "Exhale" is a metaphor for the pursuit of happiness. I use the concept of pregnancy, precisely the end of the third trimester, where a mother is expectant and longing to meet and hold her new child...it could be any day now and it could be weeks. We all go through that phase in life where we have done all we know how to do and what is left is to wait. As you might well know, waiting isn't quite comfortable and there is the temptation to be restless and anxious because...it could be any day now and it could be weeks too but let's find peace in the moment and EXHALE.
It is often said that where there is life, there is hope, but this life is filled with questions, suggestions and crossroads. This piece reflects the inner contemplations of the heart and the intuition that sprout into actions. As a young girl growing up in Northern Nigeria, one of the major “what if” questions I had to contemplate was when at the age of 11, my friend Mariam had stopped coming to school and upon further enquiries, I was told she had been married off to her father’s friend. The questions that plagued my young and confused heart at the time were countless; What if she is sad, What if she is happy, What if she never comes back to school, What if I never see her again, What if I never saw Mariam again?
Ebipere is a strong, confident and stylish woman. Like a lot of people, Ebipere is searching for love but this love seems hard to grasp, it’s here today and gone tomorrow. What do you do when you give your all for a love you believe in? A love you could die for and get nothing in return? Here’s a suggestion “Sit back and breathe”. 

‘BREATHE’

Ballpoint Pen, Ink and Acrylic on Paper. Size: 91cm/122cm
Old age is synonymous with experience, stories and a wealth of knowledge. I have always been intrigued by the beauty of ageing, how each old person can have countless stories on their faces worn like a badge of honour in the form of wrinkles. From the burden of experience that literally shatters the will to try new things and be adventurous to the joy that comes with each small victory that one took for granted in the younger days. I still remember how my late grandparents always got excited when they danced, like it was something to be grateful for.
Hair is an important part of identity. The way a person chooses to carry their hair portrays a sense of confidence and self-appreciation; especially when they choose to do it in a way that is not the usual. Dreadlocks and unusual amounts of facial hair in Nigeria used to only be associated with the spiritualist and mentally disturbed people and so was not widely accepted. Today, that ideology of identity is rapidly transforming in its narrative but some people are still passively discriminatory about it. So, being able to boldly and confidently carry hair this way, whether you are male or female is something that I admire.
SOCIAL DISTANCING... CAN AFRICANS COMPLY?

WRITTEN BY DESMOND OKON

When world and local health experts suggested isolation and living in solitude as the only way to wage the spread of a deadly virus, it wasn’t a problem for some of us, those you call loners, who for ‘strange’ reasons just like indoors.

But for others, it was a battle between self. For them, to practice social distancing is like removing the very fabric that forms their existence and humanity. Life without others in it is utterly unfathomable.

A typical Lagosian can shake hands with a friend 10 times before a conversation ends. It’s a way of bonding. “So, why do you want us to give up this gesture?” I can imagine some of you are asking.

After the first and second day of the lockdown, in Akinyemi, my street, you would not get the sense of the existence of coronavirus in Lagos. Everything seems to be normal.

Like most Lagos streets, Akinyemi doesn’t have exciting structures, but as a compensation for its complacency, it’s a bubbly street and that life, that energy and street spirit rises at dusk.

The pubs and bukas (local restaurants) lining the streets spring up, inviting street boys to come. Soon, a crowd appears filling up chairs and tables and forming various clusters merrying and cheering over bottles of ‘Heroes’ and smoke from St. Morris’ sticks poking their lungs.

When the lockdown was fresh, the owner of the pub prevented the customers that thronged her shop, but within two days, she began to enjoy their company.

Sometimes, they ‘flex’ into the night making loud noises.

All this in the face of a virus that jumps from human to human, especially when clustered up and has killed thousands across the world.

For weeks, I have spent time trying to understand this behaviour. Why can’t they just observe social distancing? What’s so hard in avoiding groups and crowds? Why is beer so sweet with friends? What on earth is wrong with these people?

The answer is simply that most Africans cannot live in isolation. Social distancing, as it is now advertised, is in practice, alien to Africans. It’s a new concept.

The behaviour of my street boys which epitomizes sharing and communing is how Africans have lived for years. Africa itself was built on communalism based on the assumption of common identity, belief that people belong to specific groups, sharing history, language, culture and historic space.

In his attempt to explain this pluralistic culture, Aborisade Olasunkanmi, researcher and lecturer at Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso says that Africans emphasize community life and communalism as a living principle of which the basic ideology is community, identity, driving social cohesion, a state of affairs whereby individuals in the society consistently pursue certain fundamental virtues on the basis of enhancing a common or social good.

Traditional Africans have enjoyed living like this for many years. This culture is the very nature of their ‘Africaness.’ Till date, this way of life is still present in rural communities but it has taken a new shape in urban environs due to civilization hence, the gatherings you see at pubs, clubs, bukas, beer palours, parks and the likes where most of the socializing takes place.

Africans are not used to a life in isolation and especially one without socializing, thus, they will always find ways of sharing everyday life whether a virus exists or not because all the African knows is an ingrained communal living.

Heinz Kimmerle, a scholar explains it thus: "...a person is a person in the community and through the others of his or her community. This makes a culture most important especially in granting mutual help, caring for each other and sharing with each other by means of dialogues,” Heinz said.
Quite alright, we never expected this pandemic would last this long and many of us are conditioning ourselves to the situation just to keep our sanity. This period has however taught me a couple of things and I’m sure I’ll still discover more.

Little things matter! A simple hug that we used to dash almost everybody seems like its extinct now. A simple cough just to clear your throat is what would cause accusing eyes to turn on you.

We all love money right? The excitement that fills our eyes when someone gives us fresh cash is gone because now we’re scared to touch currency as it’s a quick medium to spread the virus. What about freedom? No more “I want to take a stroll” or “I need to get to the gym” because everyone has to stay indoors.

There can never be too many supermarkets. An estate could have well over ten supermarkets and one will be wondering why there are so many. They have become the essential services now that we need. Seeing that we can’t go far distances, the closest supermarkets are our life savers because pandemic or not, we must eat. So if we need to have more supermarkets then, let them come. When the one close by runs out of stock, I know I’ll have others to save the day.

Wi-Fi is very important! Working from home sounds like a relaxing way of working but then you get to appreciate some services the office environment provides. If we’re all to give account of how much we’ve spent on data and Wi-Fi these days, we would be shocked ourselves.

Staying home makes you eat too much. As a result of this, some have gone on diets because they still want to be able to recognize themselves post-COVID-19. I don’t know how, but just being home makes you want to eat. Then those cravings start to dance around in your mind. “I feel like munching something” becomes a common line in the house. What to do?

Who knew having a calendar would be so important? Seeing as the days seem frozen, we’ve lost count of the dates and literally have to check the calendar to be sure what day we are in. Ultimately, one thing I’ve learnt the most is to make good use of time while you have it.

Procrastination is called the thief of time for a reason. Don’t think because there’s free time you can postpone what you need to do to a later time. Many are torn between being productive because they might not get this free time again and slacking and chilling because they won’t get this much free time to “rest” again.

In as much as we need to work while at home, these days, you are more involved in sleeping, eating and watching movies. I am not saying it is wrong, I am only saying we need to find a balance. So, a little work and a little play.

We will surely get above this. We will!
Companies with female directors are more likely to quickly recall dangerous products, researchers say.

A group of researchers found that the presence of female board directors made it much more likely that companies do something about dangerous products.

This goes to reiterate the significance of gender parity in boards of organisation, and the effect women could have when they are empowered.

According to The Influence of Female Directors on Product Recall Decisions by Kaitlin Wowak, George Ball, Corinne Post and David Ketchen, medical-product companies with female directors recall products with high severity issues 35 percent faster than those that do not have females.

The research looked at 4,271 recalls between 2002-2013 reported by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration by 92 publicly traded companies.

The Paper found that recalls also became more efficient as the number of women on the board rose.

“The greater degree of caution is even starker when the danger is more of a judgment call. Companies with female directors announce 120 percent more recalls involving low severity issues than those with all-male boards.

“Put another way, executives are less likely to triple dare their boards to keep a potentially dangerous product in stock when at least one of their members is a woman,” the researchers said.
Oluseye Aderonke is the CEO and Lead consultant at FD Naturales & Essential oils. She is a graduate of Industrial Mathematics from the Federal University of Technology Akure. Her business journey started in 2004 as a young undergraduate who just wanted to be as independent as she could. Her journey into natural health started in 2016 after she lost a family member to death after being diagnosed of an ailment that was caused by the accumulation of chemical substances found in processed foods.

Shortly before the incident, she had started experimenting with natural spices for cooking and making drinks but not until the unfortunate incident did she take it very seriously.

She felt that there just must be a way that people can cook good meals without using Mono Sodium Glutamate (MSG) seasonings. After three months of experimenting with cooking without MSG seasonings, she felt it was time to introduce it to people and the feedbacks were very encouraging.

As she progressed, she saw a greater need in the health sector and decided to explore. She started using natural alternatives personally and also for family and friends and with the feedbacks which were positive, it further reinforced her resolve to keep pushing her dream of getting people off pills using nature.

With just one product in 2016, they now have 8 MSG free seasonings and over 150 natural health products. Aderonke is a firm believer that there is nothing nature cannot cure. She loves to read and research on nature and the amazing wonders and benefits embedded in it. Her mission is to help people get off pills using herbs and essential oils. She is the pioneer of several natural health programs and the “Green Challenge” movement which has recorded outstanding testimonies since its launch in December 2018.

She is a certified Holistic Health Practitioner and certified Master of Herbalism.

Oluseye Aderonke, an intriguing story of promoting healthy living with natural alternatives

WRITTEN BY KEMI AJUMOBI
MY STORY

You see, I am what society will call a late bloomer. I was out of school at an early age. I graduated at 23 but life really didn’t do much for me until I was 32. I have always had an independent mindset. By the time I was out of school, I told myself it was time to start taking care of my parents. No more of them being responsible for me.

My parents were very responsible parents. They don’t joke with our upkeep but I felt they had done their bit and it was about time I was responsible for them.

So, I started out in life. Job hunted for 6 good years without anything positive. I was either under-qualified or over-qualified for the job. Like I was ready to take on a school certificate job just to get out of the house but my parents would say “No”.

I know I am one smart, intelligent and hard working person. The type of person you would love to have on your team. The type that was almost indispensible but I just never got the opportunity to ‘Show them’ if you get my drift.

I kept asking myself “What is wrong with me?” I mean, folks who weren’t as intelligent as I am were clinching good jobs. I actually concluded that maybe I had a ‘spiritual problem’.

I decided to do some freelance jobs. I got one and worked there for two years. My transportation allowance was all I got, N10 000, but I worked like a banker.

My office was at Palmgrove axis, and home was at Alagbado. My parents didn’t understand why I would give so much to a freelance job. I was at work by 7am and resumption was 8am. Most times, I would wait till the person with the key comes to work but I had a very good boss. On how I met my boss, I was volunteering as an admin staff at my church then. One of those days, we needed to get a flyer design out. It was time bound. My Pastor gave me the task of communicating with the person to design the flyer.

He is a very busy person with so much going on for him to do but I got on his ‘case’ so much that he delivered on the project within the given time frame. I gave him no breathing space. He told me later on that he wondered what type of human being I was. My follow-up was top notch, I dare say that myself. We got talking over the phone and he asked if I would not mind working with him because he needed someone with my skills. I said “yes”, we met, discussed and that was it.

It made no sense, I wasn’t going to be getting any salary but I wanted something more than what I was doing. Now, my volunteer admin role in church was from home. I wasn’t going out. That was how I ended up work-
I am the first child by reason of circumstance. A lot depends on me as it were. I will never forget Christmas and New Year periods when my siblings will do stuff in the house, change this, change that, buy this, buy that and all I could do was to look. I couldn't bring anything to anything: No, my parents weren't complaining or putting any pressure on me, but I was feeling the heat even though nothing was said. My siblings didn't mean bad, they were just happy to be doing what they were doing but it broke me that I couldn't assist in any way to celebrate the season.

I resumed my work in the church office by 2014 and oh my, it was work. I worked my 'head off'. My director of operations called me "miracle worker" because truth is, if you needed to get anything done, go to Ronke, she will help you fix it.

I got to a point where I told myself that I had to drop one for the other. It was then I realized that the brain-child I had been asking God for was FD Naturals.

So I can say that I started blooming at 34. My mates were 'made' by societal standard, married with kids and I was just starting life nevertheless, I am fine. Really, really fine. I am a happy soul. I am living one day at a time and making the best use of it. I learnt early that that I couldn't rate myself by societal standard. Everyone has their course in life. Everyone has their race to run. I will not run yours, you will not run mine. As long as we all get to the finish line, it is fine. It doesn't matter when. If I had gotten the type of 9-5 job I had dreamt of, I dare you will not be reading this today. There will be no FD Naturals today. The lives I have impacted wouldn't have been impacted. This is my race and course, and in it I find joy and contentment.

So, no matter where you are in life, know that you are designed for a specific purpose. It took me 34 years to discover mine. That doesn't make me a failure, if I died without fulfilling purpose is when I can be termed a failure.

Live your life; walk with GOD, only He knows what the blueprint of your life is. The road may not be an easy one but if you stay at it, one step at a time and will not be weary, you are sure to get to your destination.

There are better days ahead. I can say I am living the life I wanted to live by my standards. No pressures, no stress, and fulfilling purpose. Nothing gives great joy than to live the life of impact and meaning. I hope my story encourages you.

You can link up with me on Instagram @fdnaturales
The Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF) an umbrella body for self-identifying feminists, and North Normal, a women’s group fighting against sexual violence in Northern Nigeria, called for the resignation of the First Lady of Kaduna State, Hadiza Isma El-Rufai.

The call for her resignation, made through separate statements by the organisations, was occasioned by her tweet which was found to be “justifying” and “endorsing” her son’s threat to gang rape a person’s mother in a brawl that broke out between Bello, her son and another Twitter user.

Also, the chairperson of the Kaduna Sexual Trauma Centre, in response to reactions to her son’s threat, Hadiza Isma El-Rufai tweeted under the handle @hadizel:

“All you people talking about @B_ELFUFAI. Don’t @ me. Sow the wind, reap the whirlwind. All is fair in love and war. I didn’t see any threats of rape. I would never condone that.”

The statement was fiercely condemned by women groups and feminist across the country including NFF and North Normal who demanded her resignation and the prosecution of Bello El-Rufai.

Condemning the use of rape in all its linguistic guises as a form of punishment for someone that has erred, NFF said, using rape as a weapon of war is not and will never be acceptable.

The group said the perception that women’s bodies are available to be used as agents of revenge cannot be encouraged and the wider society has a responsibility to call out those who err and fail to adhere to proper etiquette, rules of engagement and laws of Nigeria.

“In a country with a high level of unreported and undocumented cases of rape, sexual assault and domestic violence, it is only an astonishing level of arrogance that results in a governor’s son threatening to gang rape someone’s mother, and then gets full support from his mother the First Lady of Kaduna state and the Chairperson of the Kaduna sexual trauma taskforce,” NFF said.

In the statement titled All Is Not Fair In Love And War, When Nigerian Women’s Bodies Are Involved, the group said Bello’s threat speaks volumes and should not be taken for granted. Therefore, they called on the Nigeria Police Force to invite Bello for questioning and prosecution under the Cyber Crimes act sitting a violation of section 23.

In addition to calling for Hadiza Isma El-Rufai’s resignation from her position as Chairperson of the Kaduna Sexual Trauma Centre and taskforce, they also want the police to ensure the safety of threatened persons.

“There is an alarming increase in cases of SGBV crises in the country, whether by social media, or other ways, it calls for all hands to be on deck, to eradicate sexual and gender based violence,” they said.

Also irked by the First Lady’s comment, North Normal said the very foundation of the saying ‘all is fair in love and war’ is a product of the crude feudal era where accountability of atrocities evaded society at large. “We do not live in those times anymore,” the group states.

North Normal said she insisted that her son’s threat to ‘pass a woman to his friends after he’s done with her’ does not amount to threats or insinuations of gang rape, when it is clear that the statement objectifies a woman at the very least, and gives her no control in being sexually exploited and “passed” around at worst.

“This calls to question her competence to chair a panel seeking to fight sexual assault at the meanings and language of rape and violence are lost on her. Consequently, we call for her immediate resignation as chair of the Kaduna State sexual assault task force, and a public apology. We also call on all people of good conscience to join us in condemning this behaviour,” the statement reads.

Both Hadiza Isma and Bello El-Rufai later made public apologies on April 13 and April 17 respectively.
EASY EXERCISES AND GUIDELINES TO DO AT HOME

Take a walk.
There has been a lot of security issues so please do not go walking at night. If you have to leave your compound, your street should suffice and it should be during the day. When the lockdown is over, you can return to your routine. Stay safe!

Check out various fitness apps.
Once you have identified your choice, download and get to work. You will find it engaging and encouraging. Ensure you follow through because if you cheat, the results will show.

Lost about which exercise to do?
Not to worry, go to YouTube and you will see quite a lot and after looking through a few, it shouldn’t be hard to make your choice on which to choose from.

Zoom exercise
Get your co-gym members to meet on zoom with your gym instructor monitoring you all and guiding you like he or she would do if you were all physically present at the gym.

5. You can engage in the usals, alternating reverse lunges, squat jumps, elbow planks, push-ups and the likes.

Skipping is one of the best solo exercises ever.
Listen to your favourite music while you skip, it helps. Do not forget to take a break in between each session and then go back again. Make it your daily routine and you will see the results. Start with 30, take a break and do 4 other sessions. You can increase it as you continue.

Peloton Bike
The Peloton bike is like an indoor cycling bike and it is best for people who miss the studio experience.

It requires a four-by six-foot space and it is engaging. It is certainly excellent for cycling enthusiasts.

A treadmill
If you are a runner and cardio lover, this is for you. You can increase the pace as you like. It is a good help for burning calories.

Hydrow connected rowing machine
If you want a full-body, low-impact work-out, this is for you. This machine gives an entire body workout which includes shoulders, arms, chest, upper body parts and arm. It is different from the others because it gives an entire package.
A 68-year-old Nigerian woman has delivered a set of twins. Her delivery was described as the first in Nigeria and Africa’s first.

The delivery, which occurred on 14 April at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), followed an IVF conception. Wasiu Adeyemo, Chairman, LUTH Medical Advisory Committee (CMAC) announced the unprecedented news in a statement shared on LUTH’s social media verified page.

Adeyemo said the woman was pregnant for the first time, adding that she was delivered at 37 weeks, through an elective Caesarean section.

He explained that both the IVF and embryo transfer were done at a facility outside LUTH, stating that the woman was, thereafter, referred to LUTH at early gestation and was subsequently managed till she was delivered.

“This is the first in LUTH, Nigeria and Africa,” Adeyemo said, “mother and the babies are well.”
African Egg Roll Recipe

**Ingredients**
- 2 Cups Flour
- 1 Egg
- 1 Tsp Baking powder
- 1/4 Tsp Salt
- 1/2 Tsp Nutmeg
- 2 Tbsp Margarine
- 8-9 Tbsp Water
- 5 Eggs Boiled
- 2 Tbsp Sugar
- US Customary - Metric

**Instructions**
In a large bowl, mix together the Flour, Baking powder, Salt, Sugar and Nutmeg until it's crumbly.

Use your fingers to blend the Margarine into the flour until it's crumbly.

Add the beaten egg and mix together. The dough should look dry at this point.

Begin to introduce the water a little at a time and work the dough till dough is soft and sticky but still workable.

Work the dough for about a minute then cover it and let it rest for about 15 to 20 minutes.

Work the dough again for a couple of seconds to a minute and divide it into 5.

Tightly wrap each of the dough around each egg.

Fry on a medium heat turning over and over again until it's golden brown.

Serve your Egg Roll hot or warm. Enjoy!

**Important Notes**
Do not wrap all the eggs at once except you are ready to fry them right away. Only wrap as you fry. If you do otherwise, the dough around the egg will continue to rise. This will cause the dough to lose its snug fit around the egg by the time you fry.

The Egg Rolls should be fried on medium heat. Frying on a high heat will prevent the Egg Roll from cooking on the inside. Don't worry; the Egg Roll will not get soggy in the oil as long as the oil is not cold.

Use enough oil to deep fry in order to get the best result.

You can also bake this if you choose to, but the Egg Roll will not be as soft on the inside as the deep fried one.

**Nutrition**
Calories: 265kcal | Carbohydrates: 37g | Protein: 10g | Fat: 8g | Saturated Fat: 2g | Cholesterol: 164mg | Sodium: 206mg | Potassium: 173mg | Fiber: 1g | Sugar: 4g | Vitamin A: 405IU | Calcium: 60mg | Iron: 3mg
HONEY OATMEAL RAISIN COOKIES WITHOUT REFINED SUGAR

INGREDIENTS
- 1 Cup oats
- 3/4 Cup All purpose Flour
- 2 tbsp Coconut Oil
- 1 tsp Vanilla extract
- 1 tsp Cinnamon Powder
- 1.5 tsp Baking powder
- 1 Egg
- 1/2 Cup Honey
- 1/4 Cup Raisins
- Salt Pinch
- US Customary - Metric

INSTRUCTIONS
In a bowl, whisk together the Oats, Cinnamon powder, Baking powder and Salt

In a separate bowl, whisk the Egg, Coconut Oil, and Vanilla extract till fluffy. (About 1 minute)

Mix the Oats and the whisked Egg and Coconut until combined. Add the Honey and fold till just combined.

Add the flour in two batches. Fold in the first half until just combined. Repeat for the second half. Then, fold in the Raisins and place it in the Fridge for 20 minutes to solidify.

Drop one heaping mound of cookie dough into the prepared sheet spacing them about 2 inches apart and Place in a 325F preheated oven for about 12 to 14 minutes or until slightly brown.

Leave to cool completely before serving.

NUTRITION
Calories: 132kcal | Carbohydrates: 25g | Protein: 2g | Fat: 3g | Saturated Fat: 2g | Cholesterol: 13mg | Sodium: 7mg | Potassium: 133mg | Fiber: 1g | Sugar: 11g | Vitamin A: 20IU | Vitamin C: 0.2mg | Calcium: 38mg | Iron: 0.9mg

NOTES AND TIPS
Lining the baking pan with a parchment sheet is very important because it will make your baking pan come out clean and your cookies release effortlessly.

I used the old-fashioned oats for this recipe. However, you can use the quick oats for this.

I also used all-purpose flour but wheat flour will work perfectly well.

It is advisable to use a metal baking pan over glass pans because glass pans retain heat longer and it may over bake the cookies.

Since the dough will turn out quite wet it is very important to place it in the fridge before baking it for at least 20 minutes. Please don’t miss this step it is very important.

If you have any leftover simply store it in an airtight container on the tabletop for up to 3 days.
9 INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES TO KNOCK OUT FEAR THIS PERIOD

Thinking will not overcome fear but action will.
W. Clement Stone
FEARLESS SOUL | ITUNES, SPOTIFY, DOOGLEPLAY

Start living your life fearlessly.

You control your destiny. Be fearless.
GymQuotes.co

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.
Nelson Mandela
SUCCESS.com

Take every chance. Drop every fear.

Strength doesn't come from what you can do. It comes from overcoming the things you once thought you couldn't.

Inhale courage, exhale fear.

Please do not feed the fears. Thank you!
GLAM & GENUINE
FASHION PIECES

ACCESSORIES | BAGS | DRESSES | JACKETS | SHOES | SKIRTS | SUITS | TROUSERS

SHOP QUALITY & AFFORDABLE FASHION PIECES AT
LEKKI CENTRO MALL, PLOT 69A, OFF ADMIRALTY WAY, LEKKI PHASE 1
SHOP D7, ADENIRAN OGUNSANYA SHOPPING COMPLEX, (SHOPRITE), SURULERE, LAGOS
44, OPEBI ROAD, IKEJA, LAGOS

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