

## Glory Kilanko – “Family Sacrifices”

They went and arrested my mother, they held my mother for twenty-one days when they took her, and in the process of taking her away, my father had like Omar and was really bad on one side and was managing with the other one so you said um 'please, please don't take her away. She's the one who helps me to administer my hydro' and the other one pushed my mom and was like I was told taking her out and then one of them who had my dad talked. Before they came up because I live on this, just a two story building, I'm the six flat, my neighbor is on flat four. When they were trying to ask him about me, he said 'I don't live here there's no one by such name.' The one who had my dad say that came back and said to my dad 'You're a bloody bastard you're talking about eye drop. Your daughter is out there internationally and embarrassing the government; trying to bring down the government and you're talking about eye drop. Here that's you're eye drop'. Bam, he shot tear gas through his eyes **(KILANKO GETS EMOTIONAL)**. He shot tear gas right into my dad's eyes and at close range and when the neighbors heard my dad scream. They thought they had shot him. And because they had brutalized the other neighbor and used the butt of the gun to break his head, nobody had the courage to come in to give my dad aid. **(KILANKO WIPES TEARS FROM EYES)** So, um, they have come to my house since 2am in the night, making noise, shaking the gate; they broke cartons of alcohol, liquor, they drank all the bottles that were there. They came in the lowery loads. So, um, it was the Muslim man that was going to the mosque around five when he opened the gates and that's how they had access to the gates because they couldn't come in. I had to spend money to fortify my whole gate because they were always coming so I built gates, three different layers of gates at each floor. By the time they left, when finally people were able to go into my flat and saw my dad, I took him to the hospital and the tear gas had done some destruction because he was too close my dad had had like three different surgeries including even laser, **(KILANKO GETS EMOTIONAL)** but now he's completely blind because of that. **(KILANKO GETS EMOTIONAL)** Even my younger brother, when this happened my younger brother wrote me a letter and said he has told his lawyer that anything that happens to my parents he's going to take me to court; that I'm going to be responsible. That he does not understand what human rights workers are doing to be fighting soldiers and now they are descending on my parents. You brought everything in my family **(KILANKO GETS EMOTIONAL)**.

**Glory Kilanko – “Forced and Arranged Marriage/FGM”**

So on the aspect of force and arranged marriage, forced and arranged marriage because, which also ties into the female genital cutting a little bit because why are women being mutilated. They would give you all kinds of reasons, some of them not true like a woman being told if she didn't go forward with the practice that she would be getting pregnant and any child she has the head of the child tortures her clitoris during the process of delivery and that the child will die. That's to instill fear in her and no woman wants to get pregnant, have a baby and the baby is passing away because she didn't go through that so she ended up subjecting herself to it but for the most part we discovered that it was to be able to control the women's sensitivity. It was to check women from being promiscuous, so that they could only be there to service their husbands and to produce babies. And that also ties into a forced and early child marriage, because in some cultures, it is believed that a young girl is ripe enough for marriage when she experiences her first menstrual cycle. And young children, young girls now days they experience their first menstrual cycle from age 11, 12, 13, 14 and so when you say a child who is a baby at 11, 12, 13, 14 is ripe enough for marriage, and you have to rust to give the child out for marriage to protect your family because it's the pride of the family for a young girl to be married as a virgin. So the preservation of virginity is the pride of the family and so for that you would risk the life of that child? And you are not giving the child to marry somebody of her age. That's where my fight comes in. You're giving the child to marriage to somebody who's old enough to be her grandfather. Somebody who is 45, 50, who already has 2 or 3 other wives in the house. So, we were; it's something that is justified that we had to take at the level of the U.N. to talk about the rights to child education for children because at some point in time female children were being sent to school as a privilege and they were told that when the ships are down and the economy was bad in the family they were the first to be withdrawn from school and given out to marriage or sent out to domestic servitude to make money to which they would train the male child. And in some cases where they had sent the young girl to go and be a servant in other people's homes, they also experienced sexual abuse in those homes all while they were there to bring money to raise the male child even if she was the most brilliant in her family, all because she's a female child, they had the belief that female children do not hold onto the family tree. That she would get married to somebody else and would bear somebody else's name and then that would be it so why do we train her, why do we send her to school, she's going to be somebody's wife? So she would rather work the money to train the male child. Nigeria is a country that people had lived together as one before the colonial era. It was as a result of divide and conquers when the Colonial masters came and were trying to have control and they started breaking and saying you are north, you are south, you are this. In Nigeria, the people used to live together, farm from the same farmland

and went to the same stream to fish. So people should go back to the Nigeria that we used to have and that's why even though we do have a new national anthem, that national anthem is not as unifying as the very first national anthem that we had, you know, so if people go back to the meaning of that word they would understand that it says that though tribe and tongue may differ, in brotherhood we stand. You know, we may speak different language but we are one. Why do we have to kill each other?

**Glory Kilanko – “Women's Rights Work”**

Everyday I have to fight for a situation of forced and early childhood marriage, female genital mutilation. We really have religious violence in times of intolerance like the Osuka system where some people are seen as the lesser beings than the other. We still have issues of women as to the right to inherit land, women are not allowed to have rights to inherit land so in some cases we've been able to fight that but it's still going on. You see, Nigeria, when you're a patriarchal society, where everything that is put in place is put in place by men, it will take a long time to be able to work to change those things. And sometimes you don't have to wage war to change some of those things because the men feel uncomfortable, they feel freighted, they feel threatened when they see these changes are coming, you just have to work with them as allies to gradually bring about these changes. I started working with women farmers first because they didn't own the farm lands and yet they were the ones who would teal the soil. And in the traditional Nigerian society, women are known to carry their babies on their back. So this would mean they would have their babies wrapped at their back and when they begin to work with the child is asleep, they take the wrapper out, spread the wrapper and put the child out on a half and take the other half and cover the child. That child is lying down there on the farmland directly inhaling the pesticide from the farmland and then that child grows up and starts having all kinds of symptoms, diseases and everything that comes as a result of that pesticide that the child has inhaled. The mother who has worked on this farmland is also teal the soil and in most cases cannot read and write, does not even know the contents of the pesticides that are down on the farmland, and yet she teals the soil and produces this food and an example is the cocoa plantation, she produces this cocoa in the raw form. The cocoa is exported and when it's exported and its brought back to Nigeria in its finished form, in the form of hot chocolate, ovaltine, and when it's brought back in this form, this poor woman who tealed the soil from the period of planting the cocoa is unable to afford that on her table for that child to drink. That gave me concern and we started working in terms of eliminating poverty and how to give more credence to women who work in the farmland. And at the same time we are doing this we're looking side by side also on the issue of women farmers in the Niger Delta area where the oil devastation area had destroyed their whole land. So we had to deal with all in one force because we felt you could not be working piece by piece when the issues are interrelated and so you can build a movement by drawing each person's issue and making it a web to put them together so people will now know that you're not alone, it's affecting me and you know we started working from that.

**Glory Kilanko – “No Turning Back”**

After my first arrest, I felt there was no turning back because the lady had; they had arrested me, and took me into this place and I was blind folded, it was a big room, all I could hear is the voices. With me being blind folded and somebody saying 'come here, come here', so I'm hearing the voice and just walking in the direction of the voice. I didn't know that there were soldiers side by side, lined up as I was going. And because I was blind folded, sometimes I'm walking and I would attempt to lean towards this side, when I would lean, somebody would push me. When I would lean on this side, they would push me. I was still moving and going. When one of the men pushed me, at some point when they say, 'come here' I stopped. At that point I'm like, you're telling me come, I'm blind folded, I'm moving and moving and when I leave here you push me and push me, what's going on? I'm not moving no more. So, I wasn't saying anything, I just, I stood there. I didn't move. 'Come here, I said come here', the woman was talking, and I could hear her voice, 'I say, come here'. I'm not moving; I was there. So, she now told them to take off, so they took off the scarf that was in front of me and then she looked at me from afar and she said come here and then I walked to her because then at least now I could see and I know now where she was. So and then as I was walking to her, she came from where she was seated and moved to the front and asked me 'do you realize you are a woman?' I said 'yes'. 'Why are you doing what you're doing, why you be following men to be doing human rights and going about trying to bring the government down, why are you doing?' I said, 'I'm not bringing no government down. I'm saying that I think it's not right that the government is doing. You are aware that they kill students, 104 and they are saying that they should payback and then you're asking me why you are doing what you are doing. You just answered it. I'm doing what I'm doing because of my children because someday my children would ask me what did you do to bring a change.' I said, 'do you mind if I ask you too, do you have children?' Because I asked her, 'do you have children?' she slapped me. Okay, I'm thinking that we're beginning to have a conversation as women, as mothers and I was opening up to tell her why I'm doing what I'm doing because she's asking, and so you ask me do I have children and I say yes and that's why I'm doing and I'm asking you if you mind if I ask you - and the moment she slapped me before her hand got down I slapped her back. Because I slapped her back, those soldiers beat, oh my goodness; they beat anything you can think of from me, they beat me real bad. Beat me real bad and because I slapped her with my right hand, the way that they twisted my arm to the back and kicked me with his boot, and kicked me to the ground with my hands still twisted, occasionally from time to time as I started growing older and older I still used to feel the pain there because they really beat me real bad that day.

**Glory Kilanko - "IMF Loan to Nigeria-‘Give us one life.’"**

We had President General Ibrahim Babangida as the military dictator at that time and he had engaged women in Nigeria to do a national debate on the acceptance of the IMF loan, the IMF being International Monetary Fund. We conducted the debate and everything and at the end of the day the country rejected the IMF loan but little did we know that he was only wasting our time. In fact they used to call him Maradona, a dribbler because of the way he dribbled the entire country. We didn't know he already accepted the loan and was just wasting our time. So students got angry and you know there was demonstration mass demonstration countrywide and you know taking to the streets and expressing the dissatisfaction because there were suffering mothers in the villages who felt that the only legacy they can give their child is education. So they would toil and toil from sun up till sun down selling hawking on the streets selling the arepas to raise money to send their children to school. And with the acceptance of the IMF loan it came with some conditionalities that made the devaluation of countries' currency, the removal of medical subsidy, the removal of subsidy for students, and an increase in tuition. So that you know made all the women who were struggling to send their children to school to really take to the streets and rather than the government listening to us they decided to send lorry loads of soldiers everywhere and they started shooting. A total of 104 students were killed from across the university campuses. At that time I had a British Council Chevening Scholarship and was in London when that was going on. I had to abandon it to come back home. I could not stand being out and those things were happening so I came back home. When I came back home the country at that time the government had shut down all the university campuses and said they would not open the campuses. No student would go to school. They had done an estimate of the damage and they said until the students would pay back the cost of what was destroyed both public and private and um other than that they would not go to school. Now there was something we normally used to do. Even if we have to hold meetings, we would say the meeting would be at this venue but we would have like three different venues and we end up holding it somewhere else because each time you say you are having a meeting, the soldiers were always there before you get there. So we end up not being able to have the meeting so we always have three alternate venues. At the end of that press conference that we had that day, I ended up saying that I was going to launch an appeal fund countrywide to raise the money and pay the government whatever amount the government is saying is the cost of the destruction but that before I do that I'm asking the government to give me back one life, one out of the 104 that they took. I said give me back one life and we'll pay you back your money. So the students got really energized and then they took to the streets again saying, "Give us one life and we'll pay you your money. Give us one life and we'll pay you your money. " As we were going they had gotten

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wave that we were having this conference and by the time they would come we were already on the streets and as we begin to go we started building movement. It became a mass movement of people even from the streets who were really already upset by the government and then they started shooting at us. As you know, they were shooting to disperse us they were shooting so we started singing. The students then carried me shoulder high and you know was, they formed a barricade. The students used their bodies to form a barricade protecting me even though I had a tear gas canister that met me on the head. I started bleeding but we were still going. And then we were singing, "How many people soldier go kill, oh, how many people soldier go kill...(more singing) How many people soldier go kill?" So they started shooting with the few of us who were still waiting and singing and going like that. The soldiers themselves at some point became uncomfortable. And then they said, ok you guys just have to move. We're not going to shoot you. You just have to move. Then I was arrested. And then that was my first detention experience.