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Standard Edition

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# Swift 4G

So my [Dropbox ploy of last month](#) was **quite a failure**. I'm glad I didn't hold out much hope in you guys. As it turns out, my space was being taken up by an **iPod Photo Cache folder** that [iTunes](#) automatically creates whenever I sync my iPad. Once I deleted that, there was plenty of space to spare. But moving on to other things, I have some good news - both for me, and for Nigeria.

Remember back in February when I talked about the shoddy Internet in Nigeria and how [MTN F@stlink](#) had saved me from a life of dialup misery? Well, my Internet at home has taken **another leap forward!**

Introducing **Swift 4G**. Brought to you by [Swift Networks Nigeria](#). The next evolution in Nigeria's modern day Internet. We've only been with Swift for a few weeks now but the difference is clear. I can stream videos, download moderately sized files in a reasonable time frame, and do everything F@stlink allows me to do a little better. Now that companies like [MainOne](#) have laid fiberoptic cables to Nigeria, I expect more companies like Swift will be popping up with great service and lower prices. Did I mention it's wireless? Wi-fi all over the house now. **It's fantastic!**

Ooh, More good news! For The Red String this time. We've got a new contributor! **Akin Ogunsola**, with his short story Andoral - reads like [J.R.R Tolkien](#). It's at the end of this edition if you want to [skip right to it](#).



The downside of our Swift 4G plan is the 20GB data consumption limit :(

# A Response

This is a response to an [article on Facebook](#) that my friend **Shope Ogunkeye** pointed me to. The original author is unknown, and the original location of the article also is unknown (at least to me). The Facebook version is simply a duplicate by someone else who saw it, was annoyed by it and decided to share. So we could all be annoyed by it. Lol.

Before you read on, I ask that you visit this link <http://dcicons.org/forums/topics/a-letter-to-nigerian-parents> and read a copy of the article there. Also please **take note of the comments**.

Now, assuming you have read the article, you are likely in one of two minds about it. You either think it's a great article worth pondering (like the people on the forum), or think it's a bad article with a few valid points (like myself). If you fall into my category, then you may choose to ignore the bad and ponder on the point the author is trying to make (like Shope) - and that's all well and good.

As for me, I am **too put off** by the glaring generalisations and untruths in the article to even consider the point. So my response is to fix it.

# A Response

Just to clarify, the aim here is to **cut the original article down to size**. Not to call into question the original author or to belittle his attempt to talk about something close to his heart, but to put the entire article into perspective. Stripping it of all that I know to be false or exaggerated.

Let's start with his very first paragraph where he asserts that virtually all Nigerian students abroad do not work. As a Nigerian student studying abroad, **I know this not to be the case**. I personally work and so do the majority of my Nigerian friends over there. In fact, **some of them work as many as 3 or 4 jobs depending on their financial situation!** Those who do not work often either cannot because of immigration laws, or find it difficult to get hired. In the author's defence, I will say that I am based in the U.S and not the U.K but add the caveat that my U.K based friends have all also worked. Many of them having to leave the U.K to do so because they could not get hired for the reasons mentioned earlier.

It certainly isn't a matter of status-consciousness for the Nigerians I know.

# A Response

Moving on to his second declaration about students flying only business or first class, again **I know no such students**. However, I do realise that as with my previous point, the fact that I don't know of them doesn't mean they do not exist and I actually believe that they do. Why I do is alluded to in his third paragraph where he accuses all Nigerians of stealing their money. **Obviously this is untrue.**

But what is true is that corruption has indeed **run riot** in Nigeria. As a result there are many millionaires and billionaires whose fortunes are built on stolen money. Some of them have children, those children go to school, those children get large sums as pocket money, and they may have flown first-class at least once. Still where there might be 100 or even 5,000 such people, that is as against a population of **over 150 million**. Most of whom do not to consider 200,000 naira "pocket money."

If you then consider the rest of his article based on this fact, you realise that this author is addressing a minority as if they are the majority. A deaf minority at that, because I cannot imagine that there is an unscrupulous billionaire out there who will teach his/her children about hardwork and honesty when that was not how they "succeeded" in life.

# A Response

Now, now, don't throw away the article just yet. Somewhere in the midst of all this **libel and slander**, he actually gets around to making some real points. He talks about over-parenting and parents who finance their kids well into their 30's. About how doing so encourages them to be lazy, lacklustre, and expect more than they deserve from the world.

Yet his solution to this **minor problem** is lacking, and his analysis of it poor. It does not take enough into account the Nigerian (and more broadly African) culture. Where, in the western world fending for yourself is the norm, in our world fending for your family and community is the norm - and as you fend for them, they also fend for you. It's reciprocal, and it's **everlasting**.

Trying to adopt the western approach to something that is ingrained into the very fabric of society in my opinion is just plain folly. Do I have a better solution? **Heck no**. Rather than focus on the minor problem caused by a minority of elitist Nigerian parents and calling it "the root of our national malaise," I think we should focus on bigger and more pressing issues like **electricity** and **education**.

# Facebook & The Wall

As for the [Facebook](#) where I read [that article](#), is it just me, or does it also irritate you when people disable their Facebook walls? I mean seriously, **it's a problem**. Facebook is all about [social networking](#), and **90%** of that networking is done by posting on walls and getting responses to those posts. There was a time when Facebook was **only walls**. No "Like" button, no notes, no apps, no marketplace, no comments (I think), everything was done through the wall. Therefore at a very base level, your Facebook is your Facebook wall!

Thus my question is, if you're disabling that wall, then **what the hell are you doing on Facebook?** Clearly you **don't want** to socialise. So go to [Twitter](#) where you can just broadcast status updates and those who will listen will follow. Leave Facebook for those of us who actually want to do some real socialising. It's really annoying when every time I want to communicate with X friend who has a disabled wall, I have to click Messages and go through that process. Half the time, I just conclude that whatever I want to say is really not that important and move on. A friendly "Hello" simply isn't worth the trouble.

# Facebook & The Wall

Now don't get me wrong, I totally understand that there are issues like people posting spam on your wall, or photos that you'd rather ~~your employers~~ **"certain other people"** not see. It's understandable. Keeping some parts of your social life private on Facebook is not entirely up to you. **It's up to your friends as well.**

But with **Facebook privacy settings**, you can customise who gets to see what on your wall. Yeah, most people (including myself) don't want to go through the trouble of doing that - and choosing those who can and cannot see something really isn't all that fine-grained. Actually, all these reasons are why people just opt to disable their walls. It's faster, it's easier, and I really can't blame them for that.

Still, here's what I can blame them for. If your boss is your friend - and I mean **really your friend**. Both on Facebook and in real life. Then shouldn't he or she understand when you **party like a rockstar**? On the flip side if you're one of those people with **5000 friends of whom you only know 5**, then it's time to re-assess your friend list and friend acceptance policy. It's the ones you don't know who are posting all that spam.

# Facebook & The Wall

If you then have some friends who fall into the grey area - they're your friends but they're conservative and will judge you based on what they see. Be it an employer or relative. Only then do you have a problem worth empathising with. Even then, **disabling your wall still isn't the answer** in my opinion.

I don't know the answer though, because I've never had friends **whose opinions I cared about** give a **flying Dutchman** about what I post on my wall OR done anything in my social life that could impact my employment (to the best of my knowledge).

In the end, there're really only **3 options** whichever bucket you fall into. Edit your privacy settings, edit your friends list, or **get the hell off Facebook**. Don't worry, Facebook will still be there when you're ready to come back. Considering the amount of money **Zuckerberg's** making it shouldn't matter whether you're back in 2 weeks or in 2 years.

In any case, disabling your wall just isn't right, and FYI, **it pisses me off**.

# Rhythms & Reminiscences

Moving from my **virtual social life** to my real one, I've been getting to see a lot of art & theatre during my stay here. Last month I got to see the **Nigerian National Troupe** perform at the **National Theatre** in a free musical show called **Rhythms and Reminiscences**.

Although it was called a musical show, there was actually more to it than just music. There were **2 comedians** (including the host), and a performance of traditional dance and song from the **3 corners of Nigeria**. The other comedian had a slow start on the laugh meter but he quickly ramped it up and soon had the entire audience in stitches. Sadly, I do not remember his name.

The real music took up the second half of the show with a performance from **Zulezoo**, a choir rendition of several traditional folk songs, and also a bunch of popular Lagos **highlife** songs. Many by **Victor Olaiya**. The highlife was **spectacular** and soon had people standing up from their seats to dance in the theatre. **People including my mother**. LOL.

I had never seen the national troupe perform before so I was quite interested to see how they would perform. My mum has always been a big fan and she highly recommended them. It was a good show, and while it wasn't exactly what I expected, having seen it, I highly recommend them too.



# The Cost of Living

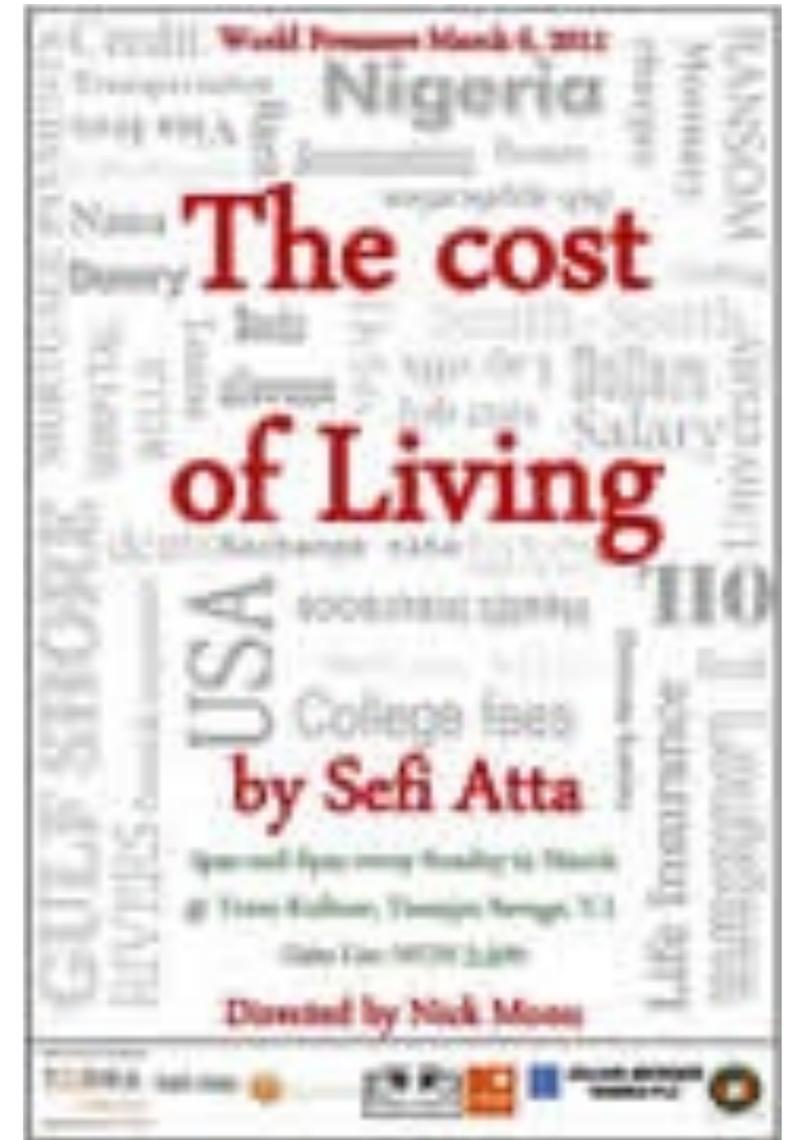
As at the National Theatre, I also got to see a couple of plays at **Terra Kulture**. The first of the plays that I had the pleasure of seeing is called **The Cost of Living**, by **Sefi Atta**.

The play is essentially a parody of the **situation with kidnapping in the Niger Delta**. In it, a stubborn Oyinbo (Caucasian) man in dire straits and working for an Oil Company is kidnapped by a pair of kidnappers. While one of the kidnappers negotiates with the Oil Company, the other watches over the man in captivity.

The setting is at the kidnappers hideout. Where the kidnapper sentry and the victim wait to hear the results of the negotiation. You watch as the kidnapper and victim engage in at first reluctant conversation and eventually become friendly - mutually understanding each other's circumstances.

While I wasn't a fan of the minimalist set, the dialogue between the 2 actors was **hilarious** and it drove home a few lessons:

1. The kidnappers exist with good reason even though kidnapping isn't the answer to their problems, and
2. Everyone ( including expatriates working for oil companies) has their own problems to deal with in life.



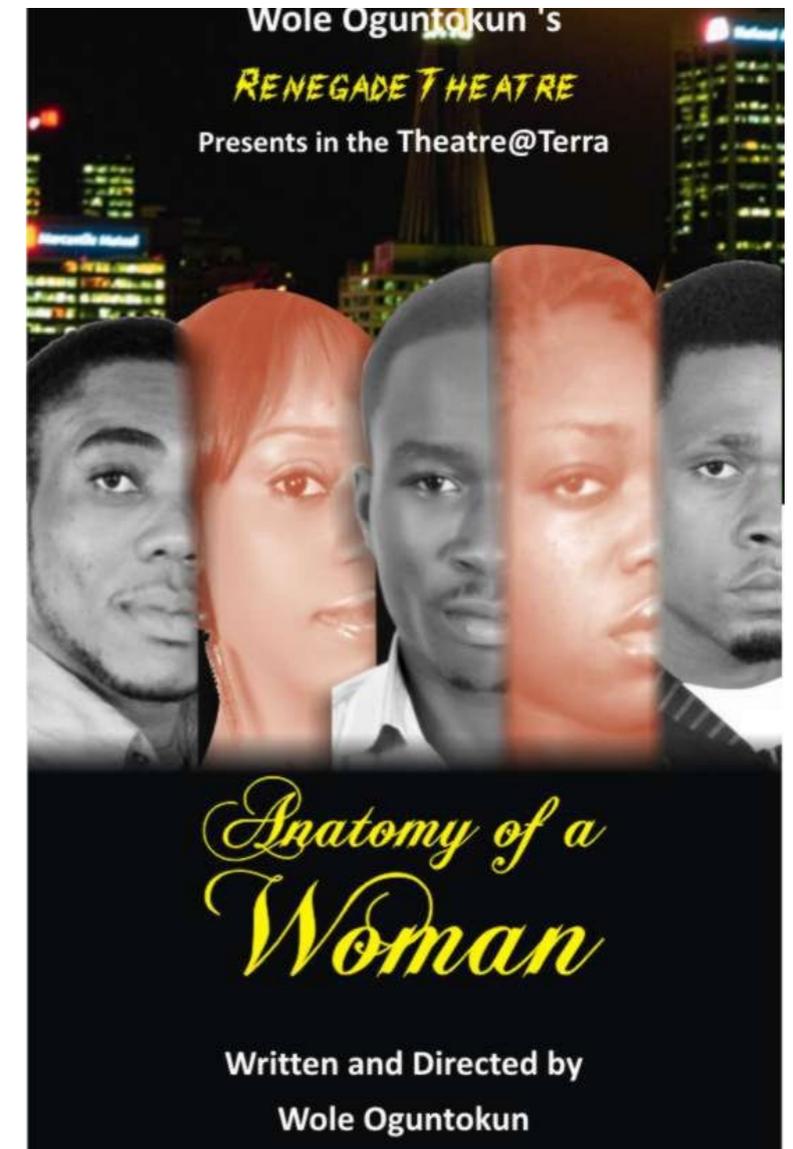
# The Anatomy of a Woman

The other play I got to see at **Terra Kulture** was **The Anatomy of a Woman** by **Wole Oguntokun**. First off, let me just say that I personally liked this play a lot more than **The Cost of Living**. The set was fuller, the cast was larger, the characters were more unique, and the laugh value was higher.

The play addresses the complex topic of **What Women Want** - like **that movie with Mel Gibson**, and provides a straightforward yet equally complex answer. "Women want to be, what they want to be."

It's funny, I don't even remember the name of the woman who starred as the central character because she seemed to mainly be the pivot around which all the other more colourful characters rotated. Like my favourite **Aunty Jebba** - who believes women want money and comfort; **Mohammed** - who is more interested in what he wants than anything any woman may care about, and my other favourite "**Inconsequential!**" whose name I can't recall but remember him by his catch phrase.

I really enjoyed the show. It came with plenty of laughs, and many memorable scenes. If you are in Lagos, I **highly recommend** that you go and watch it at **Terra Kulture** the next time it is performed.



# An Educated Guess

I have to say that I agree with [Wole Oguntokun](#) in that what women want, or more specifically what women want from men, is a man who will enable them to be what they want to be. Unfortunately for both sexes, neither of us quite knows what that is until well into adulthood.

You see I have a theory. My theory states that no young person knows exactly what they want. Where young loosely applies to anyone of age 25 or below. We don't know what we want from life. Let alone what we may want from another person and yet we think we do. We think we do because our backgrounds, environments, early experiences, personal tastes, and even the media have fashioned out a template for what the perfect guy or girl should mean to us. A template that to the untrained eye may seem complete...

Usually this template is quite detailed, and may contain terms such as funny, taller than me, good [insert your religion here], muscular, shapely, and so on. This template is what we young ones like to call "**our type.**" Sooner or later, many of us find out that "our type" is not necessarily what we are attracted to. Girls who thought they wanted a [prince charming](#) find themselves in and out of relationships with **bad boys** and boys who thought they wanted a [Halle Berry](#) find themselves making out with the **awkward nerd.**

# An Educated Guess

Thus begins the process of reconciliation between what we think we **should** like, and what we **actually** like. Our once pristine template soon becomes full of conditionals, additionals, deletions, and optionals. We find out that things we like, we only like up to a point and things that we thought bearable must never occur. We begin to prioritise attributes, reorganise hierarchies, include dependencies, and define ambiguities.

For every good relationship we make some additions, and for every bad one some restrictions. Such that where you once said I want to marry a good Christian, you now say I want to marry a man who knows the Bible well. Where you once said your girlfriend must have **T&A**, you now say tits most definitely but ass I can manage without. Those things that you thought would make or break your relationship become less and less critical, while other things you had never considered begin to surface.

The entire process takes such a heavy toll on our hearts and our minds, that none of us ever quite completes it. That is to say, we never leave it with a complete personification of our **soulmate**. We all just drop out. But no matter at what point we drop out, the partner we leave with is always better than the one with which we started.

# An Educated Guess

Now even though we leave the process with a better personification of what we want, the fact remains that we leave as **dropouts**. We have no degree to show that our personification is any better than that of the 15 year old who has never been to reconciliation school.

Just like them, our girlfriends, boyfriends, husbands, and wives, are nothing but an estimate. A guess at the personification of a soulmate. But unlike them, our guess is more defined, more informed, and more likely to be accurate. Because our guess, is **an educated guess**.

So next time your partner starts misbehaving, just look them lovingly in the eyes and say "My dear, our entire relationship is based on the educated guesses of two dropouts. If you keep this up, it may be time to guess again."

WARNING: Try this at your own risk!

# Journey to Self

## And I've made up my mind

I wanted to be excited about the idea of bringing new life into this world. It just didn't seem to be in the cards. I was unhappy as it seemed that my future would have to be put on hold for the baby. I was hoping that my boyfriend would be happy and that I could feed off of that until I found my own. It was a comfortable Friday night and we were on the couch watching a movie when I decided to tell him. I only wish I could forget his reaction.

**“F-ing Great!”**, he said between barred teeth as he got up to leave. I ran up to him to comfort him, to let him know it would all be okay. Not only did he push me away, but he pushed me so hard that I fell into the coffee table. I was a little scared. Maybe he was too. Not a big deal, right. Everything will turn out okay..

# Journey to Self

## I ain't wasting no more time

Unfortunately the next five years were **hell**.

Over the next five years, his business had never quite taken off. Either he was experiencing equipment problems or employee problems. The business only ever did marginally better than break-even. All of this only contributed to a boyfriend with a **perpetual sour mood**.

And now me with a new baby. I was expected to maintain my old work schedule, coordinate some sort of child care with friends and family because we just couldn't afford to pay someone. Then I was expected to maintain the household and keep up after the baby once I got home. And heaven forbid that child caused any sort of disturbance when he was in one of those moods..

# Journey to Self

Here I go again

I spent those years walking on egg shells. Hoping that my little boy wouldn't do anything to upset his father. I found ways to make sure that nothing showed outwardly. He was equally careful to make sure that he didn't hit me anywhere like the face or something. I didn't know what to do. Here I am with a child, very little education and a snowball's chance of making it on my own. I hid my pain, swallowed my pride, wiped away the tears and did the best for the sake of my child.

I sacrificed my happiness because I thought that life would be so much worse for both me and my young child. I didn't want to be in this situation. In those rare moments I had to myself I always found myself in tears, begging for some way to get out of this situation. I needed help. I needed hope. That was when I created my icon of hope. I created an image of something that promised re-birth from ashes, peace after pain, and **just simply hope**. My new icon of hope was that of the [Phoenix](#).

**- End Part 2 -**

# Andoral

This message comes with a disclaimer - **Do not** read it in haste nor when your mind is unsettled. **Do not** skim over the words, instead read **slowly and carefully**, and though the message is obvious, with some luck perhaps it will take form and make its way to your heart.

Once upon a time in the vast lands of **middle earth**, man, goblin, elf, and ork lived in peace. This was not a tense kind of peace brought about by treaties and agreements, but a true peace, where one could argue that they were truly unaware of their differences.

It was in this time that a young ork fell in love with the maiden of elves. For years they enjoyed a happiness that was as pure as it was unlikely. This pair were cut from the same roll, the only difference being that she was an elf, and he, an ork.

# Andoral

Now legends had told of a **terrible evil**, a faceless enemy that would seek to destroy the very fabric of peace in middle earth, or at least to alter it **forever**. For the sake of time this evil came upon middle earth and its effects turned man from goblin, goblin from elf, and elf from ork. Middle earth was divided into factions with treaties, diplomacies, and worst of all, **tensions**.

These tensions did not spare the young couple, and despite the all encompassing nature of their affection, they were soon thrust into a **demonising cycle** of expectations, disappointments, and preconceptions. The darkness had begun to descend... but the legends also told of one thing...

**Andoral** - the name of the mightiest and most feared royal sword in middle earth.

# Andoral

**Andoral.** A sword whose very existence was surrounded by much myth, immersed heavily in rumour, and influenced by the changing times and culture...! To think the ancient texts would describe this weapon as being the only hope for middle earth, to many, this seemed a **death sentence** already delivered.

And so it was. Many an ork and elf saw the better days of their union lost to bickering and contempt - it was like every heart was lost to a coating of ice. In fact, so deep and wicked was the plan of the faceless enemy that in just a matter of months, orks, elves, and humans alike could barely remember what the peaceful times felt like, nor could they understand why they had even sought peace to begin with! The veil of compassion, friendship, love, and forgiveness had been eaten away, never to be restored...

**- End Part I -**