

ABSTRACT

Abandoning children has become a very regular and ugly practice in Africa and indeed Nigeria. Calixthe Beyala, the Author of *“C’est le, soleil qui m’a brûlée”* a Cameroonian writer has shown in her works through her many books, the reckless act of abandoning children by their mothers. Firstly, in our texte *C’est le soleil qui m’a brulée*, we see how “Betty” Ateba’s mother

“PARENTAL FAILURE: THE CAUSE OF THE CHALLENGES OF THE GIRL CHILD” THE CASE OF BETTY AND HER DAUGHTER ATEBA IN *C’EST LE SOLEIL QUI M’A BRÛLÉE* BY CALIXTHE BEYALA

DIBIE GODFREY ATUNU (PhD)

Department of English and Literary Studies, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State

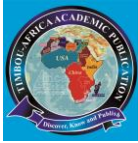
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INTRODUCTION

Africa and indeed Nigeria are going through a lot of challenges today, these challenges, are too many to be listed but we are compelled to mention some of them. We have issues of youth restiveness, kidnapping, drug abuse, the devilish yahoo practice, examination malpractice, hooliganism, banditry, armed robbery, prostitution, homosexuality, rape, divorce, the reckless practice of parents abandoning their children, a practice which has become so rampant in Africa and Nigeria, etc. The Holy Bible state’s very clearly in the book of Proverbs chapter 22:6 where it said in King James Version.

Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.

This portion of the bible makes it obvious, the importance of parental responsibilities and the need for parents to give their children and wards adequate attention if the

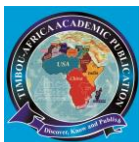


through her reckless and loose lifestyle could not identify the father of Ateba who was supposed to father her child, Again we see how she had to abandon her daughter “Ateba” because she was not ready to go through the pains and troubles of motherhood. Thirdly, we also see how “Ateba” got to the hands of her niece “Ada” who was a prostitute like “Betty” “Ateba’s mother, and because of the life of prostitution lived by “Ada” Ateba’s niece, we also see how “Ateba” ended up her life as a prostitute.” The paper also highlights the costly consequences of parents abandoning their children. In this case (the girl child) and the costly consequences of such practices. The paper equally suggests measures that can be taken by both Government, Religious bodies, Non-Governmental Organizations and spirited individuals in the society to remedy the situation if our society must get any better so that the vulnerable people in the society and the suffering masses can experience some relief from their pains, suffering and shocks. For Methodology, the analysis method was used, we have tried to analyse “*C’est le soleil m’a brûlée*” from the socio – cultural points of view drawing facts from other literary works, the internet, etc. while the theory of radical feminism was employed. A theory that talks about women fighting for their rights and better treatments.

Key words: Abandoning, children, loose lifestyle, pains, troubles of motherhood. Prostitution, Vulnerable suffering masses.

child must grow up well to have a sound mind in a sound body.

Calixthe Bayala is a seasoned and prolific African female writer who has written so many books exposing the poor and inhuman conditions of women, the hazards, they are exposed to, the brutal treatments they receive from their male counterparts like the case of rape (both adults and children) by men, constant and regular beating of wives by husbands and leaving wounds on their bodies, frequent cases of divorcing women and abandoning their responsibilities, the restriction of women from taking parts in so many activities by men, the practice of the man having the privilege of marrying so many wives while the woman is left to marry one husband and several cases of violence and unfair treatments against the woman, but in this work we are going to concern ourselves with the case of abandoning children by parents and we will be looking at “Ateba who is the



principal character in "*C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée*" one of the literary works of Calixthe Beyala.

Definition of Parents

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, The meaning of PARENT is one that begets or brings forth off springs. While the Vocabulary Dictionary defines a parent as a mother or father. Your mum and your dad and one of their jobs is to parent you. While LexisNexis defines parent as a person who has parental responsibility for, or one who cares for a child or young person, parents are usually the biological mother or father of the child. From the various definitions given it is very clear who a parent is or who parents are.

Definition of responsibility

Dictionary, Cambridge.org defines responsibility as "something that is your job or duty to deal with, in other words, one's responsibility to carry out a task assigned to him and some of the synonyms here are protection, control, care, guardianship, while the Cambridge Advanced Dictionary and Thesaurus defines responsibility as a duty to take care of something."

Methodology

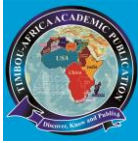
For this work, we have decided to use the analysis, method. Where "*C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée*" by Calixthe Beyala is analysed from the social, cultural and psychological angles while also drawing facts from other literary works, the internet, Articles and write-ups."

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of radical feminism was employed. It is a philosophy emphasizing the patriarchy roots of inequality between men and women or more specifically the social domination of women by men. Radical feminism views patriarchy as dividing societal rights, privileges and power primarily along the lines of sex and as a result oppressing women and favoring men. What makes it radical is the militant approach applied by the women to get to the root of their problems and trying to get solutions.

A brief summary of the Book

"*C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée*". It is the story of a young girl called Ateba the daughter of a prostitute called Betty. Who was born to an unknown father, and



abandoned by her mother who was equally an orphan. Ateba was brought up by her aunt called “Ada” in a place called Awu. In a popular ghetto called Le QG (quartier général). (QG) is a place with overcrowded and very old buildings in very bad conditions where poverty, prostitution and immorality of all kinds are on display, A place where women are constantly raped, and brutally beaten, molested, and exploited, Biddon Ville is a place known for its criminalities, rottenness and moral decay. This was the place Ateba grew up. A slum where prostitution flourished: Ateba was a child to a mother who was a prostitute, brought up by an Aunt Betty who was a prostitute and she herself “Ateba” who also was not left in the circle. Ateba ended by killing a man who came to rape her in the process of defending and fighting for her freedom. Hear Ateba, while trying to defend herself from a brutal and violent attack by a rapist.

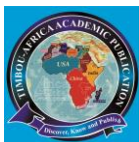
Lâchez – moi!
non, chère amie pas avant
de t’avoir aime!
elle tente de se liberer, il l’agrippe. Plus fort. l’oblige à
s’llonger sur le lit. Il s’abat sur elle. elle le frappe, il
s’attaque à son slip elle le merd.
elle ne veut pas (132)

Here we see how Ateba struggled and fought with the rapist who came to devour her.

Ateba again narrating another very ugly experience.

<< D’où tu vient maquillée comme ça.? >>
Ada ne lui laisse pas le temps de répondre. Elle la cravate,
le tissu craque. Un sein de découvrir. Elle le gifle. A toute
volée, Ateba saigne du nez et de la bouche.
<< pute! Espece du pute. Je me déshonore! Que diront les
voisins... Je ne te nourris pas assez...
Je veut la tuer.

Here we see a kind of violence that can best be described as war of words between Ada and her niece Ateba where Ada told her niece Ateba she will kill her. It goes a long way to show Ateba’s troubles and pains as her destiny was thrown to the market for sale.



DUTIES/FUNCTIONS OF A GOOD MOTHER

The role or duties of a good mother are so many that we can not really write all of them down, because mothers play very crucial roles in the upbringing of their children, that is why we are talking about good mothers. The society can never be well where there are no good mothers. It will be very difficult for a child to grow up properly. By properly, I mean for a child to grow up in the fear of God, knowing the difference between good and evil, and having the will power to say “NO” to what is wrong, then, that child must have been carefully and painstakingly brought up by a very patient, caring and loving mother who must have sacrificed a lot of time to attend to the child’s needs, nurture the child, provide for the child, prayed for the child, and must have spent some good time, counselling and protecting the interest of the child. According to Davidonu.com Qualities of a good mother, for raising good and happy children.

Good mothers are primary care givers of their children.

A good mother provides love for her child/children.

A good mother provides support for her child/children. A good mother also guides her child/children to ensure good upbringing.

“According to Susan Gale, Mothers are like glue, even when you can’t see them, they are still holding the family together.”

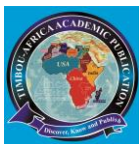
Good mothers give unconditional love and support to their children.

A good mother is emotionally intelligent and attuned to her children’s emotional needs. She understands the importance of validating her children’s feelings and empathizing when they experience strong emotions like anger, sadness, or fear. She is always there to help her children learn to regulate their emotions and cope with challenging situations.

A good mother understands that children need time to learn and grow. She does not get angry or frustrated when her children make mistakes, instead she offers counsels, guidance and supports to encourage and help them over their pains and challenges.

A good mother is flexible and adapts to changes very easily without, gambling. So as the children grow, she adapts along with them.

A good mother must communicate effectively with her children both verbally and non-verbally. She must listen actively to her children.



A good mother establishes clear boundaries, rules and expectations for her children and follows through with them. She sets positive examples for her children.

A good mother empowers her children and helps them develop a sense of independence and self reliance. She encourages her children to take risks and try new things allowing them to learn from their mistakes.

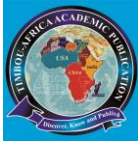
A good mother is very caring and nurturing. She provides her children a safe and supportive environment where they can strive and grow. She attends to their physical, emotional and psychological needs.

A good mother must have empathy for her children. She must understand their feelings and prove to them that she cares.

A good mother must manage her time well. She balances her parental responsibilities with other obligations such as work or household duties and still ensures that her children are properly cared for.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF PARENTAL FAILURE IN THE UPBRINGING OF THEIR CHILDREN.

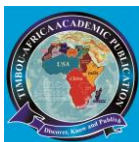
According to Davidonu, a good mother must possess the above qualities and a lot more that have not been mentioned. For me, being a good mother goes beyond a mother carrying the baby in her womb and delivering the child, she must ensure that the child gets all the attention and care, be ready to go through all the processes of motherhood to ensure that the child grows up to be a good child not just to the parents and the immediate community but also to his or her fatherland. Unfortunately, in the case of Ateba she was abandoned by her mother who in her reckless and very promiscuous life style could not even recognize or identify who impregnated her, that act alone showed the height of her irresponsibility which of course automatically made “Ateba” her daughter an orphan since the father was not known. Her inability to know who the father of Ateba was remains a shame to her and indeed the entire womanhood, this kind of thing is very common in our society, today. As if that was not enough, she abandoned the child, Ateba was left at the mercy of her niece who was not only a prostitute with so many concubines, but also very morally indecent that Ateba too became a victim of the very life style of her mother and niece, exposed to all forms of abuse, exploitation, rape and man’s inhumanity to man. All these evils happened to Ateba because her mother “BETTY” abandoned her. According to Marie Aimée Hélie-lucas the number of



children abandoned in Africa are so much, this to her is a new phenomenon in Africa, hear her.

Twenty years ago, this didn't exist at all. It's a new phenomenon, which is appearing in all African capitals. I don't know about elsewhere, but I know about Africa.

This act of abandoning children has become a norm in the African soil. In many major cities of Africa, children are seen roaming the streets aimlessly, some with plates in their hands, a lot of them putting on tattered clothes, many of them bare footed begging for alms and food. The Author "Calixthe Beyala used Cameroon, her own country as case study to expose the pains, challenges and crisis the African woman and children are going through. In our own country Nigeria, the situation is even worse, because of the biting economic conditions and the extremely harsh economic policies especially since the era of Buhari's administration till today, a lot of cases of divorce have been recorded, children's living conditions have deteriorated because poverty and hardship have been hitting hard on parents. I use Lafia, the capital of Nasarawa state as case study where a lot of children who were attending schools before have dropped out, I have interviewed several parents and most of them end up with "the times are very hard. We can hardly eat food once a day, so school or education must wait. This is the true picture of the situation; children are seen in motor parks, inside and around market gates desperately begging for alms, they sleep where ever night catch up with them. These children were born by a man and woman coming together to have sexual pleasures for selfish desires without bothering to think that the children that will follow their selfish and ungodly desires will need care and attention. Hardship has made a lot of men to refuse to get married, many that were married have abandoned their wives, running away from their responsibilities because they do not seem ready in any way to bear the heavy burden of being a responsible father or mother. The society can never be well as long as parents are not ready to face their responsibilities, these responsibilities will be made easier for parents when the policies of government are people friendly and are geared towards addressing the needs of the poor masses. The present economic condition in Nigeria, has made many women to become like "Betty the mother of Ateba" who had to abandon her daughter for prostitution and hooliganism. The same hardship that made Ateba's mother to become a



prostitute due to exposure to all forms of challenges of life, including lack of parental care, bad government policies and unbearable living conditions have pushed so many women in Nigeria today into these very irresponsible and ungodly life styles. Many men and women out of frustration and unbearable hardships have abandoned their families, gone into drinking of alcohol and drug abuse, (both men and women). Prostitution is now seen as a kind of soft landing for girls and women while men are into yahoo practices and kidnapping. This is the ugly case of Africans particularly Nigeria. The very big question is “will things ever get better?”

CONCLUSION

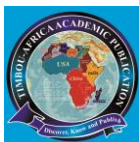
This article has exposed the short comings of Betty as an irresponsible mother, who gave birth to Ateba her daughter for a man she could not identify. Her inability to identify the father of her child is a testament to the fact that she lived a very loose and immoral life sleeping with so many men to the extent that she could not remember or hold any man responsible. This act of recklessness made her to abandon her daughter Ateba because of the challenges of raising her. The responsibility of raising Ateba shifted to her niece who equally was a loose woman, (a prostitute). Ateba also had no better chance or opportunity rather than to equally end up also as a prostitute. The story of Ateba in “*C’est le soleil qui m’a brulée*” shows the consequences of abandoning a child, the troubles the child will go through in life and the troubles it will bring to the society.

If our society must change for the better, then some basic steps must be taken to address the basic necessities of life of the people by a responsible and democratically elected government.

Government policies must reflect the plight of the people and deliberate attempts by government must be made to solve the people’s problems like, food availability in affordable prices and in accessible locations.

Government must ensure that young adults from workable ages must be gainfully employed and be useful to themselves, their parents, their environments and indeed their fatherland.

Elections must be conducted to be transparently free and fair so that the masses can freely chose the right persons to lead them and not the reckless and inhuman politicians exploiting our country today.



Women must be empowered to be independent to help them tackle their challenges and provide support for their families financially which will help to make them financially independent.

Religious bodies must wake up from their sleep and be alive to their responsibilities to make their followers know that prostitution is not an alternative to hard work. Indeed religious bodies should make their followers understand that prostitution is a very bad form of employment, besides the ungodly nature of the act, it is equally a very ugly and unhealthy practice. First to the woman who is the prostitute and to the man who is the customer to the prostitute and finally to the general well being of mankind.

Government should make loans/funds available for young people to start small businesses and ensure that the interest of such loans are within single digits and good time space provided for repayment so that they will be able to face their responsibilities as fathers and mothers.

Non-governmental bodies and spirited individuals should be of help to vulnerable children and the poor masses in the society. These can be achieved through making education in primary and junior secondary schools free and compulsory for every child of school age.

Very harsh laws must be made by government to punish any man or woman who decides to abandon his or her family.

If government, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and spirited individuals in the society can do these and more, by the grace of God, our society will gradually begin to change for the better and humanity will begin to experience better living conditions as these measures will help to drastically reduce the sufferings and hardship of the vulnerable people and the very poor masses in our society.

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