



Strathmore
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION
END OF SEMESTER EXAMINATION
BSG3202: GENDER AND COMMUNICATION

Date: Thursday, 19th March 2020

Time: 8:00 -10:00

Instructions

1. This examination consists of **FOUR** questions.
2. Answer **Question ONE (COMPULSORY)** and any other **TWO** questions.

Winnie Nyiva Mwendwa never leaves her house without a smudge of redness on her lips and the arc of her eyebrows drawn to perfection.

At 76, a lot of things about her have changed. She has retired after 43 years of being in active politics and spends time with her grandchildren in her Nairobi and Kitui homes.

Age has slowed the agility on her feet but she still wears heels. Her sense of style that she cultivated when she was studying Home Economics at Manchester University remains. "One thing I will never get tired of is taking care of myself," she says, adjusting her neatly pressed suit tailored in Bangkok. A tinge of her expensive perfume lingers in the room as she runs her fingers through her weave.

Tired of being oppressed

Her obsession with looks and love for beauty products landed her in trouble when she led a delegation of 450 women to the Beijing World Conference of Women in 1995.

She was the minister of Culture and Social Services and an explosion of voices from women tired of being oppressed was echoing across the globe. The Beijing meeting was where they would strategise and take over what they had been denied for long -- women power. They left in fanfare, dangling a promise of liberation from a culture that demeaned women. The wind of change was blowing, and Nyiva was anchoring it. But back at home, things crumbled when it was reported that she had flown her hairdresser to Beijing.

"Everyone was talking about how I went with a hairdresser. I had a group of women drawn from different sectors, from elites to illiterates. It is no surprise that a hairdresser was in my team," she says, contradicting the much quoted phrase at the time where she said she needed to take care of her appearance as a minister; because image is everything.

Then came reports that lesbianism was discussed at the gathering with allegations that some members of the delegation had been lured. Kenyans were livid. Preachers shivered on pulpits yelling to God to descend and the former Cabinet minister to resign.

"A lot of lies were said about our visit to Beijing. Sadly, there are people who believed them," she says.

Beth Mugo who was advocating the economic rights of women and also went to Beijing laughs when she recalls the criticism they faced when they returned home.

“It was said we were being coached to control men and become tough headed. Nyiva was put in a tight spot,” she says.

Nyiva believes the Beijing conference sparked a conversation many women wanted to have, but were too scared because of the narrative they had been fed. They were told they did not matter, and they believed it. The conference instilled in them the desire to question things.

“Most employed women were not even being paid house allowance because they were expected to be housed by their husbands. Nobody was asking about women who did not have husbands,” says Nyiva.

Upon returning from Beijing, she claims former President Moi asked: “What do women want?” Her answer was simple: “Women want to be heard!”

She says she was tired of abuses about her womanhood. Anytime she vied for a political seat, she was reminded that she was not capable to lead. “Do you also want to wear trousers like men? Do you want to pee while standing?” she was asked whenever she took to the dais to address campaign rallies.

Nyiva vowed never to wear trousers. She wanted to prove that a woman can engage in politics in stilettos and skirts.

Dr Naomi Shaban who watched the former Cabinet minister’s political life blossom says she never imagined the murk she would have to walk through when her time came.

“For us women, they go low. They threatened me with rape, insulted me for being a single parent, and kept saying they will throw my child in the toilet,” says Shaban.

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Questions

1. Define the term gender roles, and exemplify these with three illustrations from the passage. (5 marks)
2. In the passage, Dr.Naomi Shaban experienced hostility in her quest for a career in politics. Identify the three forms of hostilities she experienced, and explain why the hostile parties issued such threats. (6 marks)
3. With reference to the passage, demonstrate in three ways how the media portrays men and women in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed view of gender. (6 marks)
4. “I had a group of women drawn from different sectors. From elites to illiterates. It is no surprise that a hairdresser was in my team.” Explain what you make of the statement above on the view of hairdressing as an occupation and offer your views on the same. (4 marks)
5. Think through your lessons on feminism, and your engagement with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s thoughts on feminism and explain the following statement, “Nyiva vowed never to wear trousers. She wanted to prove that a woman can engage in politics in stilettos and skirts.” (3 marks)
6. In the passage, it is said that the preachers shivered in their pulpits and that they called upon God to descend. Based on this statement and based on your readings in class such as “Heaven and Earth” by Wangui wa Goro and “A letter to my sisters”, demonstrate in three ways how religion condones gender based violence. (6 marks)

Question 2

Read the following interview between Andrea Kelly and a journalist in the recent “Surviving R. Kelly” series. The parts in bold are the questions from the journalist, and the responses from Andrea follow. (Some parts have been edited for appropriateness and relevance)

When did you fall for him?

I think it was something about him being vulnerable because the rest of the world saw him as R. Kelly. At that moment, I just got to see Robert, a boyfriend from the outside. And I think it made me open a place in my heart that maybe I shouldn't have, because when you come from abuse you attract abuse. The first time I saw a man abuse a woman was actually my grandfather. He was a Baptist preacher.

Are we talking physical abuse?

It was physical abuse, emotional abuse, and verbal abuse. For me, God, love and pain were all the same because that was what I grew up with. If the man of the cloth is abusive, why wouldn't a man of the world be? So it wasn't unfamiliar to me. It was very familiar when it did happen.

Tell us, when did you say things turned abusive in your marriage?

That is a question people ask women. You can't pin point it, because people do not understand that the physical is the aftermath of all the abuse you have been in. You have been in the verbal, you have been in the emotional. I was already in the financial and economical. So when it turns physical, it is like breaking a tree. It doesn't take one swing of the axe. It takes several swings of the axe to weaken the trunk for the tree to fall.

I think you are pointing something very important because considering this is domestic violence awareness, a lot of times people think it has to be physical for it to be abuse. But there is physical, mental, emotional.... Is that how it started for you?

It did because it was very hard to differentiate between him being controlling and how he was running his ship because gain you have to understand that he started off as my boss. When you are controlling and say the dancers have to be in their room at a certain time, you are not allowed to talk to other people on tour. We were not even allowed to look.... people who were on tour with me understand what I am talking about. We were not allowed to talk to other dancers or artists. We had to stay in our dressing room, so of course I was like; this is my boss. That is how he runs his ship. Without knowing that, that was his part of being controlling.

Right! So many people are gonna look at this and go: That is not R. Kelly. How do you convince people that the man you were married to did the things that you alleged?

People need to understand that R. Kelly is a persona. Robert Kelly is the person. I was married to Robert Kelly the person.

When did you know you had to get out?

Uh... when I contemplated suicide. When I tried to kill myself.

You are way too vibrant to have thought of something like that.

No. No. That is what people think. They think, “ Oh, it is for the uneducated woman. It is the poor woman who ends up doing things like that.” Again, going through verbal abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse and sexual abuse, you get to your lowest low. You are like,” I'd rather die than spend another day with this man. For me, it was; we were in Miami and I took my kids to Pear Chungle Island. We were looking at photographs. We were going through and all of a sudden his demeanour changes. I used to know. It was something in me that was like, “here we go.” He just switched! Here I was sitting with a monster. His eyes would change, and then his body. His posture would change, and then he is looking at the picture and then he said, “What is this? I asked, “What are you talking about?” because I had not seen the photo yet. “Who is this man in this picture behind you? You should have eyes in your damn head! You didn't know this man was behind you?”

Today we call it photo bombing. I didn't know he was behind me, and I was thinking, "who has eyes at the back of their head?" What changed it for me was my daughter who was sitting at the foot of the bench and she said, "Daddy, why are you being so mean to my mum? Why are you talking to her like that?"

How old was she?

She had to be around six. A light bulb just went off in my mind and I said, "Drea, if you stay you are signing her name on a contract that she never read. Drea, if you stay and she ends up with a man like this, and you tell her to leave, and she's gonna say, "Why would I leave? You stayed with dad for all those years." I believe in being a living, breathing example of a good mum. Not a hypocrite mum and I just couldn't do it.

People do not understand what a big step that is, especially considering the high profile marriage you were in and then to say, I gotta get out of here.

You know, the most important thing for me, and I always say, I want my life to be their example. That honey, if I can leave R. Kelly mail box and drivers, then you can leave Dan there with a bus pass and no job.

What do you say to those women who are tied to their men because they need money? There has to be some words of encouragement that you can say to them.

Your soul. There is not a price tag that you can attach to your soul. You have to remember that. I also have some words for the abusers too. They have a level of air of confidence about them that they need to be careful about, because they are a lot of women sitting in prison today because they said, "that is the last time you are laying your hands on me."

Since you have come out and started telling your story, you have been victim shamed. How have you been shamed?

People said that I didn't say anything because I got money, and now I am speaking because I want more money. That is the craziest thing I have ever heard in my life. Matter of fact is, the reason I left is because you had so much money you thought I'd stay. People need to understand that a woman's life, especially when you are a mother... I had to calculate every move because my children had to deal with the repercussions of me telling the story. I said, God, when you say it is time to move, I will move. When my children give approval, I will give my story. It reached a point when my children said, "Mum, tell your story." God gave me the peace to tell it. That is why I tell it, and I need people to understand that there are women out there who are going through it. There is no time limit to your healing. There is no expiry date on your story. I don't care if you are 99 and it happened when you were 15. Tell it!

Why are you telling the story now?

I am telling the story now because I hope that it will bring a level of validity to these women, young girls who are coming forward. Unfortunately, bringing a brown woman in America and it will not get much attention. If my name was Amber, it wouldn't have taken this long. I am telling it not because I heard it, not because I read it, but because I experienced it. I need to speak to be a voice for the voiceless. I need to use my platform as a celebrity to be power for the powerless because no one is listening to these women when they speak.

When was the last time you talked to Robert?

It has been years. He was a very dark period in my life. He does not get to share my life.

He said in his book that he divorced you because you were not going to be a stay at home mum.

Heey! We got divorced because he needed to understand: I am not your fan, I don't work for you, and there isn't enough money in this world that would allow you to make me black and blue so that you can give me some goodies to say sorry later. I threw the ring in the pond because he did ask me, "Drea, if it is not about the money, if it is not about the fame, then throw the ring in the pond. I said, "Are you sure you want the answer?" Because I have a God given right to be free. I am not your prisoner. I have a God-given right to go after my dreams just like you do. I'm your wife. I am not your maid, I am not your help, I am not your driver, and I am not your fan.

Did that set him off? What do you think would trigger R. Kelly to do the things you said he did?

It could be anything from the milk being too cold or not cold enough for breakfast. It could be what I was wearing was too revealing. It could be someone came to our house and I spoke. He would be like, "Why were you talking to him? You should be looking at your feet!"

Was it only with men?

Only with men

If you had five minutes with him, what would you tell him?

Get help. Get professional help.

How are you able to smile so big?

When I go on social media and someone says, "Drea, you are telling your story. I left my marriage after being married for 59 years!" or "My sister lost her life and she reminds me so much of you. I wish she could have met you." That's what keeps a smile on my face. I know this isn't about me. I am just a vessel because in my humanness, I don't have the courage or the strength to endure, but God will give me.

Questions

1. Andrea states that, "If you come from abuse, you attract abuse." Using a theory of gender and communication, explain why a person who comes from abuse might attract and even condone abuse. (4 marks)
2. Identify the type of Gender based violence that Andrea went through, and highlight the various forms that it comes in. (3 marks)
3. Study the following statements carefully:

"I left my marriage after 59 years."
"My sister lost her life. She reminds me so much of you. I wish she could have met you."
With the above statements in mind, discuss communication as the fulcrum for change. (5 marks)
4. With an example from the interview, and one more from experiences that you have come across in real life, demonstrate why victims of abuse do not come out to tell their story. (3 marks)

Question 3

Gender often influences whether or not boys, girls, men and women attend or remain in school. In addition, gender affects males and females differently. With this in mind:

- a) Exemplify in three ways how gender relates to exclusion from education and, raise two arguments to demonstrate the impact of education exclusion on both genders. (7 marks)
- b) Identify and explain the three main barriers that children and young people in developing countries face in accessing or remaining in school. (6 marks)
- c) Suggest two ways in which communication can play a role in education matters in order to improve education access and retention while reducing gender inequalities. (2 marks)

Question 4

- a) The media is one of the most powerful influences of how we see men and women. The media communicates images of the sexes, many of which perpetrate unrealistic, stereotypical and limiting perceptions. With this in mind, briefly discuss the three themes that describe how the media represent gender. (9 marks)

- b) The media encourage us to view normal bodies and normal physical functions as problems, a phenomenon known as pathologizing the human body. Raise three arguments to support this statement. (6 marks)