



## Art foundation empowers women, children

**N**O doubt, creative enterprise generates unlimited employment opportunities. An art and craft workshop, which kicked off yesterday is a confirmation of this fact.

Being organised by the WY Art Foundation, a women and youths art initiative, the venue of the workshop is the Universal Centre for Children and Youths Development (UNICCHYD) along Montgomery Road, Yaba, Lagos. The workshop, which runs till August 24, aims at teaching women and youths artistic skills. Areas of focus include Goldsmithing, Beadwork, Baking, Hat-making and tie and dye.

WY Art Foundation, a non-governmental organisation, (NGO), is conducting the teaching exercise, in collaboration with UNICCHYD.

The event is planned to end with an exhibition and auctioning of products made by participants at the workshop on the 24th at the same venue.

Dr Peju Layiwola, a Fine Arts lecturer at the Department of Creative Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, is co-ordinating the project.

According to Peju, founder of the foundation, the WY art initiative was borne out of her early experience as a youth. She informed that she set out on the course of action following what she learnt as a child from her artist mother, Princess Elizabeth Olowu, who was always engaged in such public orientation activity. Speaking about the mother, Peju said, "She also was involved in art training and as a teacher, she not only taught her students while in school but was involved in several community projects sponsored by the then Bendel State Government to teach women and young girls in rural communities. She also taught art and crafts lessons on television. So as a young girl, I used to tag along with her to teach women. For her, it was a rewarding experience contributing meaningfully to the lives of these people. They will show gratitude by praying for her and some will even give her coins as a show of appreciation. Many of them were really poor women; unemployed and school dropouts. Such women formed the majority of the groups she taught over a long period of time."

Borrowing from her mother, Peju established her WY Art Foundation, two years ago. Ever

### Workshop

Stories by Chuka Nnabuife

since the body has done such workshop exercise, yearly, in Lagos, Ibadan and Benin.

She informed, "We hold two major workshops annually in Lagos in August and December. However, we organise several other study and workshop groups in and around the country as often as the need arises. We help you hone your creative skills and provide you with one if you do not already have one."

From those events the metal art specialist and printmaker has evolved another regime of teaching basic art skills to housewives and youngsters, most of whom have no initial art training or previous knowledge of their own creative skills. The foundation has therefore produced vocational training video compact discs (VCDs) which teaches skills in goldsmithing, beadwork, baking, hat-making, tie and dye, stone jewellery, as well as on preparing choice Nigerian dishes.

The art teacher said her desire is "to see art being taught in every home and school. I, therefore, call on women to acquire skills because once you have a skill, you can never go hungry. Additionally, as a mother it is so easy to pass these skills to your children. It has worked for me and I think it is a success story."

She estimates that about 2,000 women and children have passed through her workshops. The venture even takes her through churches and schools.

The lady who was garlanded last month in Senegal as a laureate of the Codesria Gender in the Arts Institute, Dakar, has taken the campaign to other frontiers. She participated in the Black Women's Conference in New York University and had been regular as a facilitator at the Bruce Onobrakpeya Foundation's yearly Harmattan Workshop in Agbara Ottor, Delta State.

Observing that even professionals and 'working class' women have become interested in the workshop as the list of participants in the last editions have shown, Peju emphasised: "Much as we may want women of all classes to acquire these skills. Our target audience is the unemployed women. We desire that the skills learnt are used to make a drastic improvement to their living standard."



• Participants in 2005 WY Art Foundation Workshop, held at National Museum, Lagos, display their works to mark the ending of the exercise



• Layiwola, (left) and participants in the Goldsmithing section of last year's WY Art Foundation

## K-12 lifts Nigerian art education

# s over for the industrial court?

By Lemmy Ugehge

itioner in Nigeria has been so qualified for a period of not less than 10 years and considerable knowledge and experience in law and practice of industrial relations and employment conditions in Nigeria".

Section 2(4) (a) provides that a person shall not be eligible to hold office of a judge of the court unless "the person is a legal practitioner in Nigeria and has been so qualified for a period of not less than 10 years and has considerable knowledge and experience in the law practice of industrial relations and employment conditions in Nigeria".

The provision made in those sections cannot be merely glossed over, being crucial to the operations of the court as they seek to guarantee legal and judicial competence of not only the president of the court, but also its other members. It is even more significant if we take into considerations the fact that disputants, under the Trade Dispute Act 1976, never had confidence in the court manned by "laymen" like them.

The new Act also seeks to take away the constraints imposed on the industrial court in terms of waiting on the High Courts and Federal High Courts before to refer disputes to it as it defines specific jurisdiction on special cases under the provision of Section 7(1).

The section provides thus: "The court shall have and exercise exclusive jurisdiction in civil causes and mat-

to; and (b) relating to grant of any order to restrain any person or body from taking part in any strike, lock-out or any industrial action, or any conduct in contemplation or in furtherance of a strike, lock-out or any industrial action".

Nobody could have appreciated such enormous powers bestowed on the court more than its President, Justice Babatunde Adejumo, who it must be stressed went the miles necessary in getting the court enlisted amongst the superior courts of record as he said: "The section fortifies the court and confers on it the judicial capacity to effectively exercise and discharge its mandate".

But Chief Adegboyega Awomolo (SAN) was quick to point out the possible conflict between the provision of the Act and Section 251 and 272 of the 1999 Constitution.

His words: "There is no doubt that the jurisdiction of the National Industrial Court is very contentious, particularly, having regards to the use of the words 'exclusive jurisdiction'. The effect is that the High Courts of the Federal Capital Territory, all the 36 states of the federation and the Federal High Court have been divested of jurisdiction in respect of matters covered by Section 7 of the Act".

The Senior Advocate contended that the National Assembly lacked the power to use an Act to amend the provisions of the

constitution with regards to the jurisdiction of the Industrial Court vis-à-vis the jurisdiction of other High Courts, constitutional lawyer, Fred Agbaje, suggested an amendment of the latter.

"To achieve all the lofty objectives underlying the new Act, every machinery should be put in place to amend the present 1999 Constitution to include the NIC as a Superior Court of Records in view of S.251 and 272 of the constitution which talks of the jurisdiction of the state High Court to entertain any civil proceedings", he suggested.

But the incongruity between Section 7 of the Act 2006 and Section 251 and 272 of the constitution does not diminish or derogate from the quintessential goal of the Act, which ultimately is to enlist the court as a superior court of records, duly empowered and qualitatively empanelled to preside over trade disputes and do justice to all manner of men.

This fact was not lost on Adejumo as he succinctly put it thus: "Hitherto the passage of the Act, the National Industrial Court was regarded as an all inferior court of record as the court was not expressly listed among the superior courts of records by Section 6 of the 1999 Constitution. This put the court under the supervisory control of the High Court and was subject to writ of certiorari, a mandamus or even prohibition or even appeal by the

fortifies the court and confers on it the judicial capacity to effectively exercise and discharge its mandate.

Section 4 [2] of the Act elevates the President of the Court to the same rank as the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court, or that of the Federal Capital Territory and with no less than 12 judges, a third of whom must be legal practitioners with considerable experience in Industrial Practice and Law and employment conditions. They are all appointed by the country's President on the recommendation of the National Judicial Councils".

Worthy of note are also are the provisions of Sections 16 - 19, which confer powers on the court to grant injunctive and declarative reliefs, as well as to make orders of mandamus, prohibition or certiorari, appointment of a public trustee for the management of the affairs and finances of a trade union or employers' organisation, award of compensation or damages.

What is interesting is

not just the powers conferred on the court to make such injunctive or declarative orders, but the fact that the Act further empowers the court to order an immediate compliance with its decision or deal with contemnors is a welcome development in the wake of the hues and cries of even the apex court of the land over flagrant disregards of people and government to court orders.

From the foregoing, it is unarguably true that the National Industrial Act 2006 has added the needed judicial impetus to the Industrial Court to navigate its way out of darkness and the lethargy of the past as it has provided the wherewithal for it to execute its statutory responsibility of fostering industrial peace and harmony in the country by doing justice to all manner of men. The ball is, therefore, now in the court of Justice Adejumo as stakeholders and observers watch keenly to see how his court would avail itself with the enabling Act to end the 30-year-old sojourn in the dark.

## Oha Akenzua's Granddaughter Makes Women Better

LIVINGWOMAN / 11

akes it inferior in both composition and judicial strength. Though the industrial court, under the law establishing it, was conferred with the onus of arbitrating over disputes arising from employers and employees, it was handicapped from carrying out the mandate. Often times, the court had to literally wait for judges of the High Courts and Federal High Courts to volunteer some of the cases before them to it, more out of benevolence than out of right. The reason for this untoward and debilitating scenario was clearly not fatched as the enabling law had actually disabled the court by making it inferior and subordinate to both the High Courts and the Federal High Courts.

While members of the court lamented their fate over the "disabling" law and its attendant reluctance to confer on the court enough powers to tackle industrial discord and grant remedial therapy, the Nigerian workers had been more at the receiving end of the raw deal from their employers. Yet, it is instructive to state that the fact that the court was not created by a specific industrial act underscore the little or no premium the government placed on industrial harmony at

the President of Nigeria and four ordinary members who must be persons of good standing, well acquainted with employment conditions in Nigeria and at least one of whom have a competent knowledge of economics, industry or trade. It is instructive to observe that the Act did not make the knowledge of law a prerequisite for seating in the court.

The debilitating scenario above stands to reason why the National Industrial Court (NIC) Act 2006 signed into law by President Olusegun Obasanjo on June 14, this year, has elicited reactions from lawyers, judges, workers and all other stakeholders. Simply put, the 2006 Act was unmistakably aimed at curing the malady of the court caused by the Trade Dispute Act 1976, which established it. It thus becomes pertinent to pose the question - has the National Industrial Act 2006 cured the Industrial Court of the weakness foisted on it by the Trade Dispute Act 1976? To answer that question successfully, a perusal of the new Act 2006, which embodies 55 sections, must be done.

Section 2 (3) of the new Act clearly redresses the error in composi-

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