



# INSTITUTE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN LAW FLAGSHIP REPORTS

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WOMEN SENIOR ADVOCATES OF NIGERIA:  
STICKY FLOORS OR CONCRETE CEILINGS?



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women in Nigeria are not alien to leadership positions. In the stories of Queenmothers such as Amina of Zazzau or the numerous Female Monarchs and Merchant Queens (Nwando Achebe, 2020) or Ahebi Ugbabe- the Female King of Colonial Africa (Nwando Achebe, 2011). Nigerian feminist/womanist scholars have also done an excellent job in grounding the power, resilience and leadership of Nigerian women, whether it is through the accounts of the Aba Women's War of 1929, or the gender fluidity in Yoruba and Igbo societies (Oyèrónké Oyèwumi and Ifi Amadiume).

Despite these historic accounts, women continue to struggle against persistent institutionalized patriarchy—partly a product of the society, and partly a persistence from colonial inheritance of what the law is, what the legal profession ought to be, and where the place of women within that profession should be.

The effects of the feminization of the Nigerian legal profession can be seen in the number of women who are partners and senior associates in some of the top law firms in Nigeria. Within the corporate sector, women continue to make their mark as heads of corporate entities. Within the judiciary, a woman has risen to the top judicial position as Chief Justice, and two women have been heads of the Court of Appeal. Despite these leadership advances in law, the number of women Senior Advocates of Nigeria remains dismally low.

This report provides a historic and quantitative analysis, that combines oral interviews with women Senior Advocates on the current state of women SANs. We hope the recommendations will go a long way to change the current state of paucity of women SANs.

Prof. J. Jarpa Dawuni  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# INTERVIEWEES



**Funke Adekoya, SAN**  
AELEX Law



**Anthonia Titilola Akinlawon, SAN**  
Akinlawon and Ajomo Law



**Funke Agbor, SAN**  
Dentons ACAS-Law

# INTERVIEWEES



**Oluyemisi Bamgbose, SAN**  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor for  
Research, Innovation and  
Strategic Partnerships,  
University of Ibadan, Nigeria



**Adedoyin Rhodes-Vivour, SAN**  
Rhodes-Vivour & Co. Law



**Boma Alabi, SAN**  
Primera Africa Legal

# DID YOU KNOW ?

## ONLY 1 IN 23 SAN IS A WOMAN

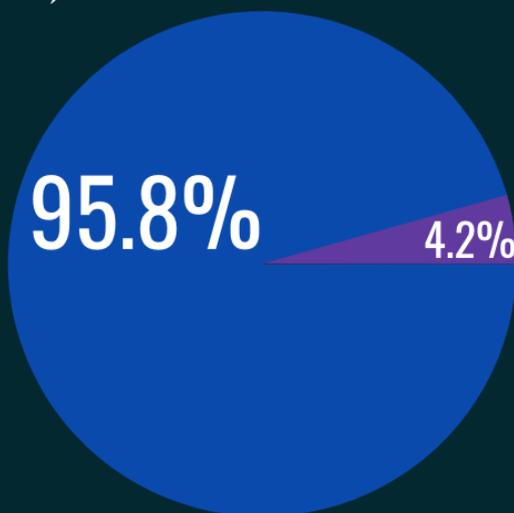


### GENDER SCORECARD

SENIOR ADVOCATES OF NIGERIA (1975-2021)

656 Men (95.8%)

29 Women (4.2%)



# INTRODUCTION



On December 8, 2021, 72 legal professionals were sworn in as Senior Advocates of Nigeria. Out of this number, only two were women—from the academia category. For women aspiring to be Senior Advocates of Nigeria, the journey continues to be marred by sticky floors and concrete ceilings. In Nigeria, being called to the bar and referred to as a lawyer or an advocate in the legal profession is probably the first stage in one's legal career. A subsequent prestigious rank of a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, commonly referred to as SAN conferred on legal practitioners is perhaps the peak of the legal profession. The Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) title is an award for excellence in the legal profession and can be equated to the United Kingdom's rank of the Queen's Counsel [1].

A Senior Advocate of Nigeria is deemed to have been admitted to the "Inner Bar", as distinguished from the "Outer" bar, consisting of junior advocates. Like most areas of our lives in the world today, there is a gender imbalance among the holders of the rank of SAN, where women are fewer as compared to men. The purpose of this report is to shed light on the gender imbalance in the rank of SANs and to provide recommendations on how gender parity may be achieved.

Using a purposive sampling approach, the report interviews five women SANs and combined with secondary data sources, it adopts a historical analytical approach to understand how one becomes a Senior Advocate of Nigeria. It also analyzes the women who have been awarded the title, their areas of practice, why fewer women are Senior Advocates, and challenges inhibiting women from becoming SAN. It concludes with recommendations on how the number of women Senior Advocates can be increased.



# BACKGROUND

The Senior Advocate of Nigeria title was first conferred on April 3, 1975, to two male lawyers; Chief Frederick Rotimi Alade Williams, and Dr. Nabo Graham-Douglas [2]. It has since been conferred annually per section 5 (1) of the Legal Practitioners Act [3] on legal practitioners in active practice in Nigeria of not less than ten years standing who have distinguished themselves in the profession. Besides the years 1976, 1977, and 1994[4], the award of the rank has taken place annually since it began in 1975, marking forty-six years in 2020. As of 2021, the rank has been conferred on about six hundred and eighty-five (685) lawyers. Six hundred and fifty-six (656) of these lawyers are men, while the remaining twenty-nine (29) are women, a situation which is synonymous with the Queen's Counsel (QC) in the United Kingdom, where women applicants are "stubbornly low" as women account for less than 20% of QCs[5]. The Queen's Counsel since its inception in 1995 has equally recorded fewer women applying for the award as compared to men [6].

In a 2019 speech, the president of the Law society for England and Wales, Christina Blacklaws expressed concern about the low number of women applicants to become QCs and the general lack of women in leadership positions in law.

In Nigeria, a similar situation is experienced with women senior advocates accounting for less than 5% of the total number of Senior Advocates. With the growing advocacy for gender parity in all sectors, there has been a growing concern on why women account for a total of less than five percent of the total number of senior advocates of Nigeria. A similar position was expressed by Adedoyin Rhodes-Vivour, SAN in her speech [7] when she was being conferred with the title in 2019.



# BECOMING A SENIOR ADVOCATE OF NIGERIA (SAN)

The Legal Practitioners Act, 1975 [8] and the 2018 Guidelines for the conferment of the rank of senior advocate of Nigeria and all matters pertaining to the rank[9] set the standards and requirements for the award of the title. Per section 5 (2) of the Legal Practitioners' Act, 1975, and 22 (1) of the 2018 Guidelines for the conferment of the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria and all matters pertaining to the rank, a candidate will only be awarded the rank if he or she is a legal practitioner called to the Bar and practicing in Nigeria as an advocate and has been active in legal practice for at least 10 years immediately preceding the date of application.

Candidates must also be of good character and must have no pending disciplinary case or complaint relating to professional misconduct against them. Candidates should also demonstrate clear qualities of leadership and loyalty to the legal profession, consistently paying their practicing fees and membership dues to the local branch in the last 10 years preceding their application. Applicants must also provide evidence of the payment of income tax for at least three years preceding the application. And evidence of the provision of at least three pro bono cases.

A candidate begins the application process by applying for the title as the LPPC does not grant the title on its own to qualified persons. The applicant must register with a non-refundable fee of six hundred thousand naira (NGN 600, 000) [10]. The applicant then submits to the LPPC a list of at least 10 judges of Superior Courts of Record before whom they have appeared in contested cases of significance. The LPPC then selects three judges from the applicant's list from whom it will request a detailed confidential reference.

The applicant must also provide at least six legal practitioners by whom the applicant has been led or against whom they have appeared, in contested cases of significance. Similarly, the LPPC selects 3 of such legal practitioners from the applicant's list from whom it will request a detailed written confidential reference about the applicant. Applicants are also required to provide particulars of contested cases that they consider to be of particular significance to the evaluation of their competence in legal practice and contribution to the development of the law.

# BECOMING A SENIOR ADVOCATE OF NIGERIA (SAN)

Finally, applicants are required to provide 20 final judgments of the High Court, 5 final judgments of the Court of Appeal, and 4 final judgments of the Supreme Court. However, where it is established that the applicant personally conducted the case from the High Court up to the Supreme Court, the required number of cases to be submitted is 3 final judgments of the Supreme Court. Every applicant is also required to provide particulars of contested cases that they consider to be of particular significance to the evaluation of their competence in legal practice and contribution to the development of the law.

For academics, paragraph 2 (e). [11] of the 2018 Guidelines for the conferment of the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria and all matters pertaining to the rank provides that:

....in exceptional cases, the LPPC may approve the award of the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria to members of the legal profession who have distinguished themselves as academics by making substantial contributions to the practice of law, through teaching, research, and publications that have become a major source of reference by legal practitioners, judges, law teachers, and law students. It further provides in paragraph 18 that, an applicant under the category of an academic must furnish the committee with at least 15 copies of their published works to the LPPC along with their application.

The applicant shall also show a substantial contribution to legal scholarship and jurisprudence through teaching, research, and published works in any Nigerian University, Research Institute, Nigerian Law School, and other recognized institutions. The academic must also show evidence of supervision of students, mentorship and leadership qualities, references from at least three professors of law (with no less than ten years experience as a professor who must be resident in Nigeria). And evidence of having consistently paid national practicing fees and local bar dues in the five years preceding their application.

The Legal Practitioners Privileges Committee (LPPC) on the other hand will inspect the applicant's firm to assess the size and quality of their library, the number and competence of staff, and the space and quality of other required facilities in the firm. Applicants who are not qualified will be notified of the reasons why they were unsuccessful while the list of successful ones will be submitted to the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) for the conferment of the SAN title. The LPPC however reserves the power to withdraw the title from any person holding the title if in its opinion the person acts contrary to its standards and principles as provided under section 26 of the 2018 guidelines.

# THE LEGAL PRACTITIONERS' PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE (LPPC)

The Legal Practitioners' Privileges Committee, set up under section 5 (3) of the Legal Practitioners Act regulates the award of the title of a Senior Advocate of Nigeria. It is the body legally mandated to award the Senior Advocate title to deserving applicants. It exercises full control and management of the process of appointing and preserving the dignity of the rank of Senior Advocates of Nigeria. Among other things, it assesses the qualifications of applicants, grants the award, and also ensures discipline among the Senior Advocates.

The Legal Practitioners' Privileges Committee is made up of the Chief Justice who acts as the chairman, one Justice of the Supreme Court, the Attorney-General of the Federation, the President of the Court of Appeal, five of the Chief Judges of the States, chosen by the Chief Justice and the Attorney General, the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court, and five legal practitioners who are Senior Advocates of Nigeria, also chosen by the Chief Justice and the Attorney General. All members of the LPPC each serve for a renewable two-year term.

As of December 2021, the table below presents the members of the LPPC. Disaggregated by gender, there are only five women as compared to ten men on the LPPC.

Name	Position	Gender
Chief Ngige Emeka, SAN	Member	Male
Chief Tartenger Sebastne Hon, SAN	Member	Male
Dr. Ademola Ajibade Babatunde, SAN	Member	Male
Honorable Justice A. Dipeolu Mosunmola	Chief Judge of Ogun State	Female
Honorable Justice Arisa Ogwe Onuoha	Chief Judge of Abia State	Male
Honorable Justice Dongban-Mensem Monica	President of the Court of Appeal	Female
Honorable Justice Ikpeme Akon	Chief Judge of Cross River State	Female
Honorable Justice Sa'idu Sifawa Muhammad	Chief Judge of Sokoto State	Male
Honorable Justice Ukaego Odili Mary, CFR,	Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria	Female
Honorable Justice Umar T. Rabi,	Chief Judge of Bauchi State	Female
Honorable Dr. Justice Muhammed I. T., CFR	Chief Justice of Nigeria	Male
Honorable Justice Tsoho John	Chief Judge of the Federal High Court	Male
Malami Abubakar, SAN (HAGF)	Member	Male
Prince Fagbemi Lateef, SAN	Member	Male
Professor Utuama Amos, SAN,	Member	Male

# ANALYSIS OF THE NUMBER OF LAWYERS CONFERRED ANNUALLY

Having conferred the foremost SAN title to only two men in 1975, no SAN title was granted in the next two years. Upon its resumption in 1978, thirteen men were awarded the title, while five men were conferred in both 1979, and 1980 respectively. The first woman to be awarded the SAN title was Chief Mrs. Folake Solanke in 1981 [14], as opposed to four men in the same year. Chief Mrs. Folake Solanke began her primary education [15] at Imo Methodist primary school and then to Methodist primary school and then proceeded to the Methodist Girls high school Yaba Lagos in January 1945 before Queens College in 1950, then to England for her post-basic education. In 1951, she attended King's College in the University of Durham, presently the University of Newcastle in England where she obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Latin and mathematics in 1954 and acquired a Diploma in Education in 1955. In 1960, she was admitted into Gray's Inn London for her professional training and was called to the English bar in 1962.

Upon her return to Nigeria, Chief Folake Solanke joined the chambers of MA Odesanya, who became Honorable Justice Odesanya and subsequently moved to the chambers of Chief FRA Williams in Ibadan as a Junior counsel in 1963. She has held many positions in various institutions and associations such as Zonta International and has written several papers and publications covering law, women's rights, and Christian topics.

Eight years after the first woman SAN award, Chief Mrs. Phoebe C. Ajayi-Obe was next to receive this title in 1989. Within this eight-year period, thirty-six men were conferred with the title. Chief Mrs. Phoebe C. Ajayi-Obe [16] is often described as the first female Senior Advocate from the old eastern region. The late Chief (Mrs.) Phoebe C. Ajayi-Obe attended St. Monica Girls School, Ogbunike, near Onitsha, Anambra State, and Women Training College, Umuahia, Abia State. She was the first female graduate from the faculty of law, at the University of Ife and had her law practice in Ibadan, Oyo State. She was called to the Nigerian Bar in July 1969. The next four years witnessed the absence of a woman SAN, as opposed to twenty-eight men. In 1995, Otunba (Mrs.) C. O Ajayi-Okunuga together with fourteen other men were granted the award. She became the third woman Senior Advocate of Nigeria.



# ANALYSIS OF THE NUMBER OF LAWYERS CONFERRED ANNUALLY

In 1998, Mrs. Abimbola Williams was the only woman conferred the rank of SAN while eleven men were awarded. Her areas of practice [17] are Corporate/Commercial Law, Energy, Taxation, and Real Estate Law. The years 1999 and 2000 had thirteen and eleven men awarded respectively while no woman received the title in both years. In 2001, Funke Adekoya was the only woman to be awarded the title, as opposed to eleven men.

Funke Adekoya [18] has over 45 years of experience in commercial dispute resolution and is frequently appointed to arbitral tribunals where she acts either as a sole or party-appointed arbitrator conducting proceedings under the rules of the ICC, ICSID, UNCITRAL, and LMAA. She is the head of the arbitration practice group of AELEX Law Firm. The years 2002, 2003, and 2004 had a total of forty-two men senior advocates while no woman was awarded in 2002 and 2003. However, in 2004, only Chief Mrs. Anayo Offiah, SAN [19] was granted the title. She is a legal luminary with over 38 years experience in legal practice and the first female Senior Advocate of Nigeria based in the south-eastern part of Nigeria. She is a member of the body of benchers and has demonstrated a remarkable degree of hard work, honesty, and integrity in the legal profession.

The years 2005-2006 equally marked a fallow period for women in the award of the SAN title while sixty-four men were awarded the title within this period. In 2007, Miannaya Aja Essien [20] was the only woman who became a SAN against fifteen men. She is a lecturer at the Nigerian Law School, Abuja. She is also the Managing Partner and one of the founders of Principles Law Partnership[21]. The following year, Olabisi Oluyemi Soyebó was the only woman conferred the title. She is an experienced arbitrator and conciliator who specializes in complex civil and criminal appellate litigation. She is currently a Partner at Abdullahi Ibrahim & Co.

Fortunately, the year 2009 marked the first time three women were awarded the title. They are; the late Sylvia E. Shinaba, Mrs. Nella Andem-Ewa, and Mrs. Dorothy Udeme-Ufot. Although in contrast, sixteen men were awarded, it marked the first time more than one woman [22] was awarded the prestigious title. Unfortunately, in 2010, the number of women dropped to two, Obiozo Agatha Mbamali and Anthonia Titilola Akinlawon were the only women conferred with the title, while that of the men also dropped to thirteen. Although no woman was conferred the following year, fifteen men were elevated to the senior advocate rank.

# ANALYSIS OF THE NUMBER OF LAWYERS CONFERRED ANNUALLY

Chief Mrs. Connie-Jean Aremu and Joy Okungbowa Adesina (Mrs) were awarded in 2012. While Olufunke Aboyade [23], a seasoned arbitrator and a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitration UK (Nigeria Branch), and Chief Olufunmilayo V. Awomolo SAN, who is known to have switched from chemistry to law, were awarded in 2013. In 2014, No woman was elevated to a senior advocate while fifty-six men were elevated.

Subsequently, in 2015, Abimbola Akeredolu [24], a target-driven and goal-oriented lawyer with a practice in Litigation, Arbitration, ADR, Corporate and Commercial Law was made a SAN. Olufunke Abimbola Agbor [25], a Partner and the Head of the Shipping and Disputes Group at Dentons ACAS-Law, and the first female maritime lawyer to become a SAN in Nigeria [26], and Dr. Valerie-Janette Ogonna Azinge, known for denouncing violence against women [27] were granted the title in 2016. No woman was awarded the rank in 2017, although Ms. Bashorun Oluwatoyin Ajoke's name was announced [28].

The first female academic and Professor of law in Nigeria to be awarded the title is Professor Oluyemisi Adefunke Bamgbose SAN [29], who was awarded the title in 2018. She became a professor of law in 2003. Now a professor of criminal law and criminology, she has held several positions in both her legal and academic careers. Including being the first female Head of Department in the Faculty of Law of the University of Ibadan. And an internal member of the Governing Council, of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria since 2015. She is also the Chairperson of the Nigerian Bar Association Women's Forum and the Director of Women's Law Clinic (WLC). In 2021, she was appointed the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation, and Strategic Partnership at the University of Ibadan.

In 2019, two women made the cut for the award. Being the senior-most during the honor of the award, Mrs. Adedoyin Oyinkan Rhodes-Vivour [30], a Chartered Arbitrator and founding partner of Doyin Rhodes-Vivour and Co., a firm of solicitors, advocates, and arbitrators. She has practiced law for nearly four decades, specializing in litigation, commercial dispute resolution and transactions, internal and domestic arbitration, and alternative dispute resolution.

# ANALYSIS OF THE NUMBER OF LAWYERS CONFERRED ANNUALLY

Rhodes-Vivour is a highly recognized international arbitrator and has acted as sole, co-arbitrator or tribunal chair in various arbitral proceedings including under the rules of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), London Court of International Arbitration (LCIA) and Kigali International Arbitration Centre (KIAC). She is a member of the ICC International Court of Arbitration and a member of the World Bank Group Sanctions Board. Mrs. Adedoyin Rhodes-Vivour is also an author of a highly regarded arbitration book and reference material “Arbitration Law and Practice in Nigeria Through the Cases.”

The second woman, conferred in 2019, and the first female Senior Advocate of Nigeria from the north [31] or the Fulani or Hausa ethnic groups, is Mrs. Safiya Umar Badamasi [32]. Now a high court Judge of the Katsina State. The indication then is that, while only six women became senior advocates between 2015 and 2019, one hundred and thirty-one men were awarded the prestigious title.

Although sixty-eight men were awarded the title in 2020, four women were made Senior Advocates, totaling seventy-two persons [33]. They are, Mrs. Boma Florence A. Alabi [34], the founding partner of Primera Africa Legal, Ms. Jean Chiazor Anishere [35], described as one of Nigeria’s successful authors, Ms. Bashorun Oluwatoyin Ajoke [36], and Mrs. Funmilayo Adunni Quadri SAN. Although there remains a sharp contrast between the number of men as compared to women in 2020, it marked the first time four women were awarded the title since its inception in 1975.

Mirroring the year 2020, 72 lawyers were elevated to the rank of senior advocates in 2021, 10 from the academic category, and 62 lawyers in advocacy. However, unlike 2020, only 2 women were elevated to the rank, they both fall within the academia category. They are, Professor Oluyinka Osayame Omorogbe, an internationally recognized expert and consultant in energy and natural resources law. She has served as the secretary and legal adviser to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). With areas of specialization and research in energy, natural resources, and international economic law.

# ANALYSIS OF THE NUMBER OF LAWYERS CONFERRED ANNUALLY

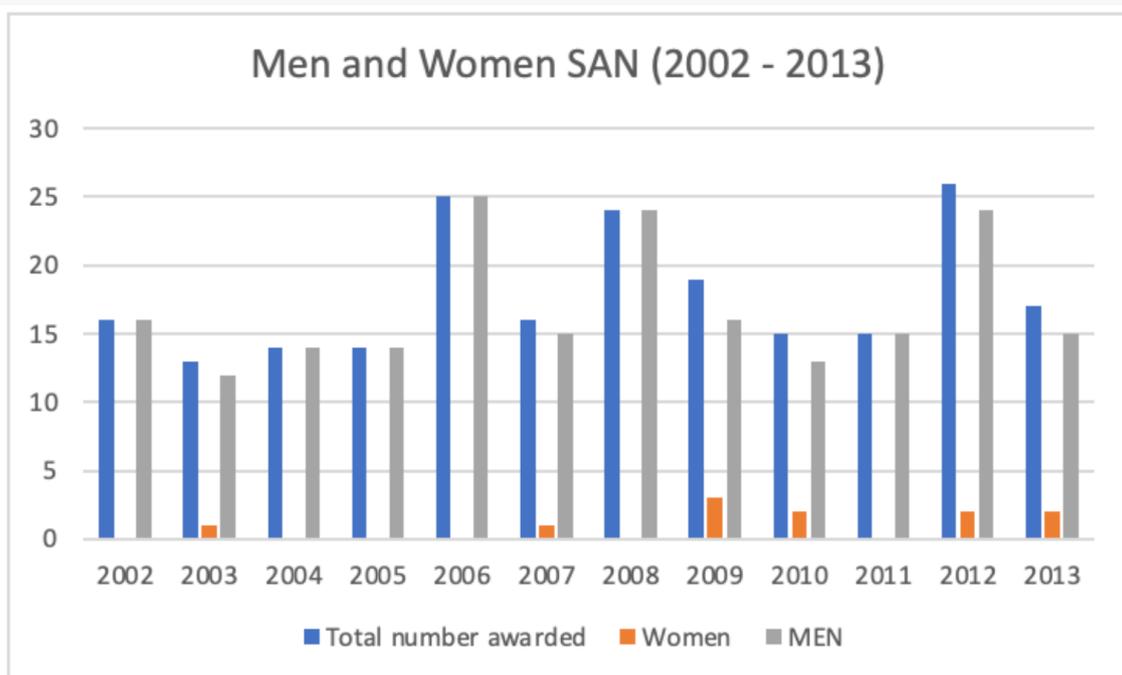
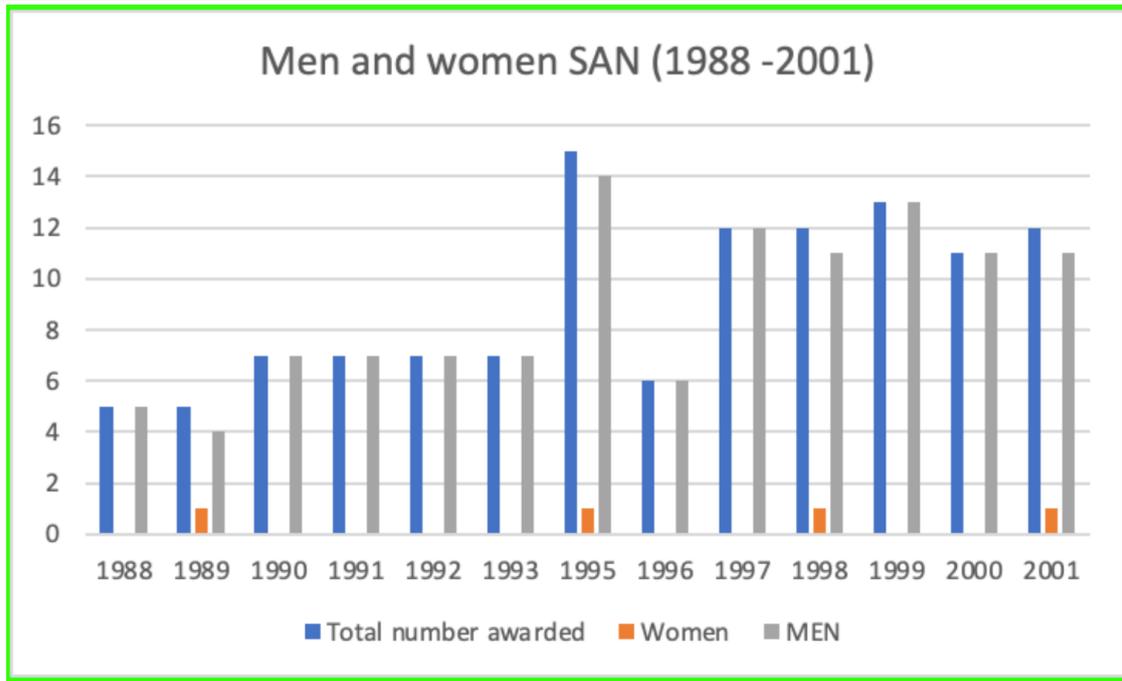
Prof. Omorogbe has lectured in various international law subjects at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels including, international law, refugee and migrant law, as well as international humanitarian law (the laws of war), and has solely authored two books. Dr. Josephine Aladi Achor Agbonika is the second academic conferred with the title in 2021. Meaning, as of 2021, there are only 3 women, senior advocates, from academia, Professor Oluyemisi Bambgosi being the first.

Hence as of the year 2021, there are twenty-nine (29) women, making about 4.2% of the senior advocates of Nigeria, as opposed to six hundred and fifty-six men (656), constituting about 95.8%. These twenty-nine women have distinguished themselves in the legal profession and proven their worth, hence, meriting the prestigious title. The preceding analysis indicates that from 1975 when this prestigious award was initiated to 1993, on average, the award has been conferred to at least two men and at most thirteen men. And at most one woman and at least no woman at all.

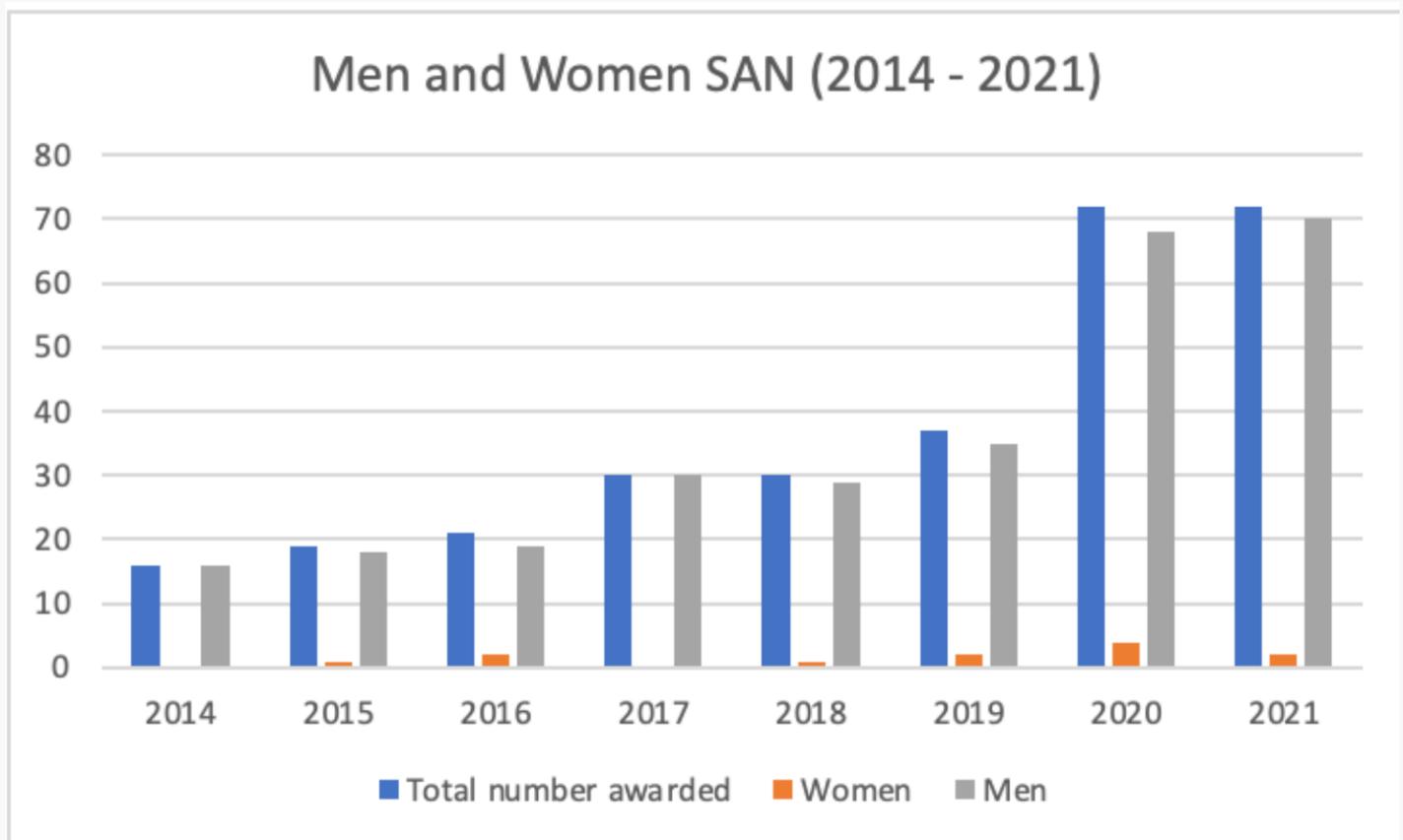
From 1994 to 2021, at least six men and at most sixty-nine were elevated, while at least no woman and at most four women were awarded the title. It can then be concluded that even in the worst-case scenario where few men have been conferred the title, they happen to be more than the highest number of women awarded annually. More importantly, considering the three deceased women senior advocates, Chief (Mrs.) Phoebe C. Ajayi-Obe SAN, Otunba (Mrs) C.O Ajayi-Okunuga, and Sylvia E. Shinaba (Mrs) the current number of women SAN remains only twenty-six.



# MEN VS WOMEN APPOINTED SAN



# MEN VS WOMEN APPOINTED SAN



Data source: List of Senior Advocates of Nigeria (1975 – 2019). Nigerian Law Intellectual Property Watch Inc. (2019, July 21). <https://nlipw.com/list-senior-advocates-of-nigeria-1975-2017/>.



# EXPLAINING THE PAUCITY OF WOMEN SENIOR ADVOCATES

# EXPLAINING THE PAUCITY OF WOMEN SENIOR ADVOCATES

The analysis above indicates that men constitute about 95.8% while women constitute the remaining 4.2%. For an award scheme that has existed for over forty-five years, it is disconcerting to have women constitute less than 5% of the entire number of senior advocates of Nigeria. This sentiment was raised by Adedoyin Rhodes-Vivour, SAN, in her speech on the occasion of the swearing-in ceremony of the 2019 SAN. To her,

"A large number of women are brilliant and hardworking as are many men and deserve in every respect the recognition accorded. However, we must ask ourselves why few women apply and/or merit the rank? Why otherwise brilliant and hardworking women drop out of legal practice? Why do some women in law who have earned the respect through diligence and hard work are not in a position to be conferred? and what remedial steps need to be taken?" [38].

With similar concerns on the low number of women as Queen's Counsel [39], which should not necessarily be so in Nigeria especially due to the drastic increase in the number of women in law in recent times. In the next section, we discuss some of the variables explaining the low number of women. These include legal and policy challenges (the selection process), the lack of diversity in the selection body, institutional or workplace challenges, personal reasons, and socio-cultural challenges.

“

*A large number of women are brilliant and hardworking as are many men and deserve in every respect the recognition accorded. However, we must ask ourselves why few women apply and/or merit the rank? Why otherwise brilliant and hardworking women drop out of legal practice? Why do some women in law who have earned the respect through diligence and hard work are not in a position to be conferred? and what remedial steps need to be taken?*

Adedoyin Rhodes-Vivour, SAN



# THE PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

The selection process to become a SAN has been described as arduous, competitive, and time-consuming, as detailed earlier in this discussion.

We highlight two procedures that are often beyond the control of candidates. One of the requirements is for the candidate to have had at least three cases heard before the Supreme Court of Nigeria. Due to the poor case management system in the Federal courts, cases take a long time to make it to the Supreme Court. It takes an inordinately long time for cases to be heard, and on average, an appeal to the Supreme Court for instance can take ten to fifteen years to be heard. Titilola Akinlawon, SAN recalls the difficulty in getting bailiffs and sheriffs to serve court processes as, without them, courts cannot assume jurisdiction. She notes that in her office presently, there are over 16 pending appeals ranging from 2016 to date at the Lagos Court of Appeals. This, coupled with the abuse of the litigation process by other litigants makes it onerous and almost impossible to meet the requirements within the mandated ten-year period.

The load of paperwork to be completed and submitted to the LPPC can be voluminous, as Funke Agbor, SAN describes her application portfolio as “bulky.”

The requirement that one has to have a record of cases up to the Supreme Court, is a major deterrent for women lawyers who are otherwise excellent lawyers. Given the general challenges with litigation, women tend not to specialize in this area, thereby leaving only a few women who are able to build the needed profile and caseload to qualify for the SAN application process. Some analysts have suggested that the requirement for litigating cases before the Supreme Court also tends to weed out other legal professionals like academics who may not necessarily be engaged in litigation.

Thus it comes as no surprise that Professor Oluyemisi Bamgbose is the first female legal academic to be conferred with the SAN rank 43 years after its inception, notwithstanding the special provisions made for academics pursuing the title of SAN in section 2 (e) of the 2018 Guidelines for the Conferment of the Rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria and all Matters Pertaining to the Rank [40].

# DIVERSITY IN THE SELECTION BODY

As the selection body for the award of the SAN title, The LPPC ought to be diversified. The composition of the LPPC has been discussed above and based on the type of offices represented, there is a high probability that those offices are often held by men. Furthermore, considering that a high number of members of the LPPC are from the top positions within the judiciary, it stands to reason that if there is no parity in the judiciary, there is a high likelihood that it would translate into the composition of the LPPC. This is reflected in the current composition of the LPPC where women constitute only five out of its fifteen members.

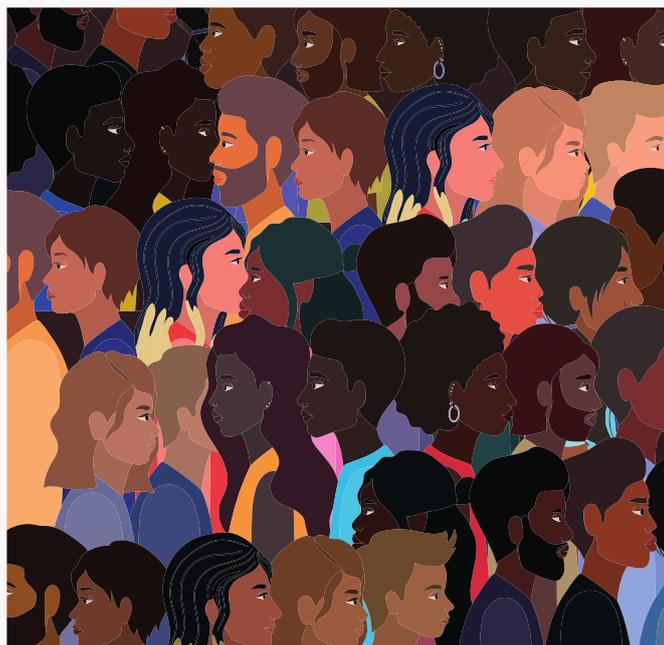
To date, Funke Adekoya, SAN is the only woman SAN to have served as a member of the LPPC on the five seats reserved for SANs on the LPPC. Adekoya was nominated by the Honorable Chief Justice Aloma Muktar, who was a female. This reflects the position that men tend to nominate their fellow men. Chief Justice Mukthar's nomination of Adekoya is instructive and lends support to the fact that more women in leadership positions can lead to other women being nominated to serve on the LPPC, given that she is the only Chief Justice of Nigeria to ever nominate a woman as one of the five SANs to serve on the LPPC.

According to Dawuni, African women have served in high numbers in international courts due to their personal agency and not tokenism[41]. This shows that women are capable of attaining those top judicial positions that make up the LPPC. Although reports indicate that the wide gender imbalance in the Judiciary appears to decrease[42], a lot remains to be done to ensure gender parity. For an award scheme where irreproachable integrity and good character are key requirements, the determination of such can be quite subjective as the measurement of integrity and good character is quite complex.

Especially within Africa where the concept of gender equality has not yet sunk into the mindset of most men, including even educated ones. Hence in a situation where such men constitute members of the LLPC, there is a high probability of being prejudiced against women in awarding such a prestigious title, if in their estimation a woman does not necessarily need to attain such heights.

# DIVERSITY IN THE SELECTION BODY (2)

With this issue of bias identified [43], if the body of selectors is not diverse, it could lead to prejudicial outcomes in the award of the SAN title. In their paper titled “Her Ladyship Chief Justice: The Rise of Female Leaders in the Judiciary in Africa”[44] Dawuni and Kang indicate that existing literature shows how the civil law system, as opposed to the common law system, is better in selecting women to top judicial positions. They conclude that in civil law systems where exams are taken to qualify to enter into the judiciary, women perform much better, increasing their chances of attaining top positions in the judiciary as they move up the ladder. In most common law systems, on the other hand, judges join the lower ranks of the court or are selected from experienced lawyers or legal practitioners. As such, compared to the civil law system, the common law system may be said to reduce the chances of women becoming judges early. Nigeria being a common law country is no different. Similarly, women judges in Nigeria do not enter into the judiciary early or at an early age. This does not allow them to attain top positions in the judiciary. As indicated earlier, the majority of the members of the awarding body - the LPPC are top judicial members. Hence, if women are unable to attain top positions of the judiciary, they will be unable to make the cut for members of the LPPC thereby, taking away the probability of having a diverse selecting body, until a critical mass of women moves up the judicial ladders.



# INSTITUTIONAL /WORKPLACE CHALLENGES

Research conducted by Forbes indicated that some women lawyers are often relegated to non-legal office work[45]. This research indicates that women lawyers are more likely than their male counterparts to be burdened with administrative tasks like organizing meetings, planning parties, and actual housework in the office such as cleaning up the food after the meeting. This takes away the needed attention for legal work, thereby undermining women's ability to compete with their male counterparts.

Farai Maunganize and Debbie Bonnin in their article, An uneven playing field: Experiences of female legal practitioners in Zimbabwe[46] stated that most firms were organized with the mindset of an ideal employee being male[47]. As such, these organizations are structured and shaped by leading principles in favor of masculinity, thereby increasing the attrition of women lawyers from practice. Institutional challenges as these reduce the chances of women meeting some key SAN requirements.

In a report by the Institute for African Women in Law - Unveiling Subalternity? Women and the Legal Profession across Africa [48] the challenges within institutions such as the systematic and institutional challenges in seeking promotions, the burden of being a working caregiver among others, were highlighted as part of the issues faced by women in law. Another study in South Africa by the International Bar Association also revealed that almost half of female legal professionals in South Africa have been sexually harassed and 73% have been bullied at their workplaces [49].

This has resulted in these legal practitioners losing faith in law firms and other workplaces. Women, therefore, shy away from legal practice as even a call for sexual harassment policies draw huge backlashes for women [50]. Even in governmental appointments, women continue to face challenges. In South Africa, some senior women lawyers of color had to call on President Cyril Ramaphosa for his failure to appoint a woman lawyer [51] as part of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) in regards to State capture prosecutions.

# INSTITUTIONAL /WORKPLACE CHALLENGES (2)

Another challenge women face in litigation and a deterrent for many is the treatment received in the courtroom. A documented challenge women face in the practice of law is being interrupted in courtrooms [52]. Research indicates that women are more likely to be interrupted by men during litigation. Women in an attempt to avoid such situations are criticized and labeled as not welcoming criticism. This makes it difficult for women to properly argue out their cases, thereby discouraging their interest in litigation.

This challenge can hinder the chances of women being awarded the title as the desire to litigate can be diminished thereby negating their chances of meeting key requirements indicated above. Titilola Akinlawon, SAN indicates her love for litigation, to her, **“a day is good for me when I am able to cross-examine”** if this makes her day, one can only imagine the efforts she puts into her work which indirectly contributes to legal jurisprudence.

As indicated by Boma Alabi, SAN in an interview with the institute,

“

*They may say you are shouty and a loud woman, not nice, and domineering. Those qualities they like about men, and think it's all very masculine and very positive. But when found in a woman in the workspace can be seen as negative. Don't let that put you off. Because in the workspace, you're not a woman, you're a professional, and that's what matters. At home in your personal space, that's where your gender might matter. But certainly not in your workspace, and anybody who tries to make that an issue, don't put up with it. And that's how I have dealt with those specific challenges.*

Boma Alabi

# SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS

During the 2018 Nigerian Bar Association's annual conference, hosted in Port Harcourt, the Chairperson of the Section on Legal Practice (NBA SLP), Miannaya Aja Essien [55], a Senior Advocate herself alluded to the fact that the reason for women Senior Advocates of Nigeria constituting only about 4.2% was not because the legal or justice sector was partial to men but rather due to the way society was and is structured. According to her, the delay in allowing women to be educated some years back contributed to the gender disproportion in the number of women Senior Advocates in Nigeria.

When women were eventually allowed to be educated, they were only encouraged to pursue careers that were aligned to women such as nursing, teaching, and secretarial jobs as they allowed women the time to cater for their children and their homes. As such, when women finally decided to pursue careers in the legal field, a wide gap had been created by men. The delay in women's legal career progression is evidenced by the gap between the first man and first woman lawyer.

The first man to practice law in Nigeria was called to the English bar in 1879-Christopher Sapara Williams [57], while the first woman to practice law in Nigeria-Stella Jane Mark [58] was in 1935, fifty-six years later. Similarly, the first male Senior Advocate in Nigeria-Chief FRA Williams was awarded the title in 1975, while that of the first woman happened six years later.

The low numbers of women can also be attributed to women applying for the rank at a later stage of their careers due to the competing demands of home life and bringing up their young families. In fact, most women awarded the rank including Professor Oluyemisi Bamgbose, Mrs. Adedoyin Rhodes-Vivour, among others had already established their impact and attained recognition in diverse fields in the legal profession both internationally and in the domestic arena prior to working towards attaining the formal requirements. Men, on the other hand, tend to apply at an earlier stage of their careers. While the explanation offered by Mrs. Essien is plausible and explains the educational gap between women and men in much of Africa, recent studies and data show a closing of that educational gap.

# SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS (2)

In a publication in the University World News, Africa edition, the number of female students in Nigeria has risen drastically [59] since independence in 1960 and women could soon outnumber their male counterparts in the country's universities according to experts. For instance, in the oldest University in Nigeria, the University of Ibadan, the gender gap has closed significantly in the last 25 years. In 1986-87 the student population was 8,770, with 3,230 being female. However, by 2007-08 the student gender gap had narrowed to 11,387 male and 7,456 female students.

According to Boma Alabi, SAN:

“Of course, as a woman there is gender bias in the profession, and generally. It is a patriarchal society in Nigeria and most parts of the world. That's why they say it's a man's world. But it isn't really, it's a person's world. And that's my view and how I faced those challenges. I refused to be put down, I got those around me in my sphere of influence, and those working with me to understand that equality is not a privilege, it's a right. And we all ought to be treated the same. And therefore, when I found that I wasn't being treated equally, I did not take it lying down. I made sure that I got what was due to me”.



# SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS (3)

Additionally, women in Nigerian law firms [61] have distinguished themselves as partners in top law firms and as founding partners. In ACAS-LAW[62] for instance, 57% of women are partners. In Udo Udoma and Belo-Osagie[63], women constitute 53% of partners and 44% of the senior associates. In Babalakin and Co.[64], although women constitute 13% of partners, women also account for 50% and 55% of senior associates and associates respectively. Thus, the old argument that colonial educational policies explain the current lag in gender educational and professional achievements, cannot continue to be used as a reason for the paucity of women in the legal profession and among the rank of SANs today.

Another reason that has been offered is the impact of culture on women. Women are considered primary caregivers [65], responsible for the home, husband, children, and family members as a whole. This reduces the chances of women distinguishing themselves in the legal profession in order to merit the SAN title, as the constant struggle to balance the domestic and professional duties is time-consuming.

Unlike men, women have to carry the burden of managing the home and family often with little to no support from the spouse, together with building a career. This takes away from the woman the needed time to match the effort of their male counterparts in the profession, thereby lowering the chances of women distinguishing themselves even if they meet the ten-year requirement. The challenges women face are well documented, as Tabeth Masengu reiterates in her article, It's a man's world: barriers to gender transformation in the South African judiciary[66]. The constant challenge for women to juggle their professional and domestic duties strongly account for the reason most women are unable to distinguish themselves within the legal profession to attain the title of SAN.



# PERSONAL CHOICES

Despite the diversity, institutional and socio-cultural challenges that offer some explanations for why so few women SANs, the personal choices of some women not to apply for the title is another attributable factor to the low number of women senior advocates. Funke Adekoya, the fifth woman to be elevated as a SAN also exemplifies how one's personal resolve and resilience can pay off having applied multiple times and nearly given up.

She was eventually awarded the title on her ninth attempt. Women lawyers must seek opportunities and take advantage of their personal skills and abilities, and venture for the title. Women need to look beyond the challenges they face in their quest for inclusion.

Titilola Akinlawon, SAN recounts how she initially didn't desire to be a SAN. However, her decision was informed by a nasty experience regarding a male client insisting on having a male counsel irrespective of him being a SAN, as against having a woman, particularly one who wasn't a SAN.

Akinlawon therefore, found herself handling a case where her junior male colleague had to be made the lead lawyer on the case to meet the client's needs. Describing this as "frustrating", this experience drove her to resolve to reach for the SAN title.

Akinlawon also admits the difficulty in the entire process when she made a choice to work towards being conferred the title. To Akinlawon "**.. it takes a lot of effort and money to get there, for instance, you must have a good law library as one of the conditions for the award**"[68].

Admittedly, the application process is tedious and onerous. Professor Oluyemisi Bamgbose indicates how tough it is to meet the requirements for the award, and urges women not to be deterred. With perseverance, after her unsuccessful first attempt, she succeeded the following year in 2018. Bamgbose encourages all women lawyers to seek opportunities and take advantage of their personal skills and abilities, and venture for the title.

# EXPLAINING THE PAUCITY OF WOMEN SENIOR ADVOCATES

## *Personal choices*

While it is not the contention of this report to blame women for not seeking the title, research is divided on whether women should follow Sheryl Sandberg and “lean in” by articulating existing masculine attributes in order to be considered as self-actualizing. For other women opposed to the idea of women having to pivot to meet established patriarchal masculine standards, what needs to change is not women leaning in, but rather institutions and institutional cultures have to change to be more inclusive of women. For other high profile women lawyers such as Michelle Obama, the concept of women having to “lean in” is detracting from reality and women should not get hung up on following the masculine patterns of leadership and practice.

*“Women who want to become SAN must be intentional about it, and stay focused.”[67]*

TITILOLA AKINLAWON, SAN,



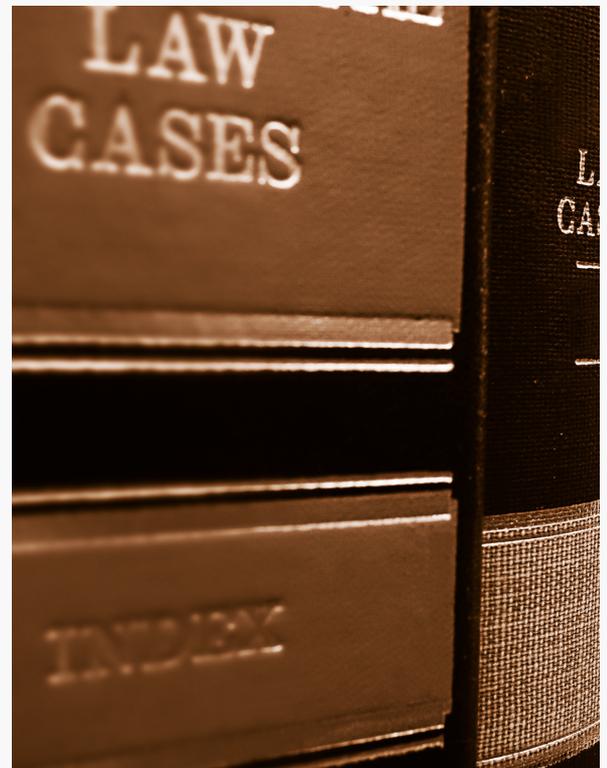
# RECOMMENDATIONS

# THE SELECTION PROCESS

The foregoing analysis brings to bear the gender disproportion in the number of Senior Advocates of Nigeria. It further proves that there remains a lot to be done to achieve gender parity in the award of the senior advocates of Nigeria title. The low number of women members in the Queen's Counsel does not necessarily need to reflect in the Nigerian context.

Efforts such as legal and policy changes, diversity in the selection body, institutional changes, workplace changes, a shift in socio-cultural dynamics, and personal agency of women, among others can go a long way to address the gender disproportion in the award of the title.

The challenges enumerated under the selection process above hinder women from becoming SAN, especially when combined with the other socio-cultural and institutional barriers. There must be wider systemic case management to ensure cases are heard within the shortest possible time, not to the detriment of justice. Lawyers through the Bar association must call for a reform of case management in Nigeria not only to ensure the principle of fair hearing is upheld but a key requirement in the award is made easier to be met. Further, a case need not travel to the supreme court to be a good case. Hence the requirement of submitting cases heard by the Appeals Court and High court that serve as precedence should be sufficient while that of the Supreme Court serves as an addition, especially given the importance of precedence in the common law legal system.





# DIVERSITY IN THE SELECTION BODY

In their study on the selection of women judges to the bench in Nigeria and Zambia, Dawuni and Masengu [69] argued that the body of the selectors, such as the Judicial Service Commission, requires diversity in order to get the optimal outcome of diversity in the people selected. It is imperative for the Legal Practitioners Privileges Committee (LPPC) to be gender-balanced. The body empowered to award the title needs to be made up of a balance between men and women in order to reflect the society, this helps to manage the subjective nature of measuring integrity and good character from the perspectives of both genders. While we acknowledge that gender diversity in the selection body is not a causation of gender diversity in outcomes, studies have shown that the diversity of representation can be achieved through the diversity of thought and experiences of members of the selection body.

In their article, Deborah L. Rhode and Lucy Buford Ricca [70], provide some strategies firms can adopt to ensure diversity within their organizations and institutions. Including the diversity challenge, where all attorneys had to devote forty hours a year to diversity-related efforts, such as recruiting, mentoring, participating in various events, among others.

Other firms and clients partnered on diversity programs, which often increased their appeal. Others also offered internships and secondments for minority law firm attorneys that could enhance their skills and build personal relationships. They admit therefore that implementation of such measures to ensure diversity is quite frustrating and requires sustained commitment. But applauded the fact that an effort in ensuring diversity is in itself progress.

These and other relevant approaches can reflect the number of women members of the LPPC. The majority of the members of the LPPC are the top judicial position holders. The chairman for instance is the Chief Justice. One Justice of the Supreme Court is also required to be a part of the LPPC. The Attorney-General of the Federation, the President of the Court of Appeal, five of the Chief Judges of the States, chosen by the Chief Justice and the Attorney General for a renewable two-year term, and the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court. The rest of its members are five legal practitioners who are senior advocates of Nigeria, also chosen by the Chief Justice and the Attorney General for a renewable two-year term. As such, there is the need for women to hold such judicial positions in order to qualify to sit on the LPPC. If women are unable to attain those top positions the probability of ensuring diversity in the selecting body is low.



# INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES AND A SHIFT IN WORKPLACE PRACTICES (ROLE OF LAW FIRMS)

In Deborah L. Rhode and Lucy Buford Ricca's article, Diversity in the legal profession: perspectives from managing partners and general counsel [71], one general counsel indicated that "Until law firms make certain fundamental changes in their business model, it's going to be hard to make a meaningful statistical change. . . . When you look at women after forty years [of being in the pipeline] and look at leadership levels, law firms don't seem to be the right stewards on these issues. . . . To get beyond [current levels] firms will have to look at how people coach and invest in talent." The essence of firms in ensuring an increase in the number of women senior advocates in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized as most of the requirements to be met includes one's firm. Hence, issues women face in these institutions that hinder their progress ought to be addressed.

For instance, regardless of the backlash, sexual harassment policies at firms and other workplaces need to be instituted to increase the faith of women lawyers in the firms and workplaces and to deter potential harassers from engaging in such acts. There is also the need for these firms and workplaces to realize that the legal profession is now gradually being dominated by women as the University World News, Africa edition reports, there has been a dramatic increase in female undergraduates [72].

Another study in 2012 [73] indicates that women constitute more than 30 percent of employed lawyers in 52 countries. Therefore the core principles of these firms must reflect both feminine and masculine views in order not to sideline women in professional capacities.

Law firms should also develop a system [74] where either the administrative staff is increased to handle administrative and non-legal work, or develop a schedule where both men and women handle non-legal administrative work to enable both genders in the firms to devote the needed time to legal work. This enables women lawyers to focus on legal work in order to handle actual cases which helps them to meet the SAN requirements. More importantly, research shows how women win more cases than men [75], hence, the chances of the firms being well recognized in the legal fraternity is increased. Key institutions and stakeholders in the award of the SAN title also need to acknowledge the peculiar nature of women's career challenges.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



“

*May I respectfully urge that active steps be taken to appreciate the dual roles that career women play with a view to encouraging support in the workplace and eradicating all bias against women where they may exist. For only then can we begin to close the rank in the disparity in gender representation in the Body of Senior Advocates of Nigeria [76].*

Adedoyin Rhodes-Vivour, SAN



# CHOICE AND AGENCY OF WOMEN TO GO FOR SAN

Besides other policy issues and institutional changes that address the low number of women senior advocates, women have to be ready for the challenge. How do women get ready? Women need to ensure they meet the criteria. Succeeding on her ninth attempt, Funke Adekoya nearly gave up on her dream to be a SAN, but her determination and focus fueled her to persevere to become a SAN. She, therefore, exemplifies how one's resolve and resilience pay off. To Titilola Akinlawon, SAN, the legal profession is “*not meant for lazy people, you must be hardworking*” she recollects the late nights she stayed up to complete her papers and presentations for cases. It is a demanding profession and one must constantly acquire knowledge to stay relevant in the profession. Particularly for women, she argues that marrying the profession with family life makes it even more difficult. However, To her “*as demanding as it is, it is attainable*” as such, if you put yourself to it, within the ten-year window of practice, you can meet the requirement of SAN [81].

More importantly, Funke Agbor, SAN, talks about the essence of planning for the award, to her, “you need to plan, all these young men who became SAN at age 39 and 40 had a plan. I didn't plan, which is why my classmates became SANs in 2003 and 2004, and I became a SAN in 2016”[82].

Professor Oluyemisi Bamgbose, the first female academic SAN, recollects how the mere sight of a female lawyer at her father's office influenced her decision to pursue law. To her, “*Apart from the grace of God, an important factor that accounted for my achievements was believing in myself. There was nothing that was taken as a stumbling block— what appeared as a stumbling block I used as a stepping stone to take me to greater heights*” [83]. She however admits how tough it is to meet the requirements for the title of SAN, and therefore cautions women not to be deterred from the challenge. Noting how she succeeded on her second attempt, she believes that “women should not fear failure, instead, they should fear not trying. And they should never give up on something they believe in” [84].

“

*Women should not fear failure, instead, they should fear not trying. And they should never give up on something they believe in”*

Prof. Oluyemisi Bamgbose, SAN



# DELEGATING ROLES AND EMBRACING FAMILY SUPPORT

The African system is generally built on gender roles that work against women. Admittedly, it may take some time to change our socio-cultural dynamics in terms of culture and the role it puts on women. This burden of changing the cultural narrative on women is more on women as they are the ones most affected. Women, therefore, need to take intentional and strategic measures in reducing these cultural roles in order to focus on their careers.

In the interview for this project, Mrs. Funke Adekoya, SAN urges women to take advantage of this support which she refers to as a “social security network”. To her, “career women should embrace the help often offered by extended family in regards to daycare, childcare, and family needs in exchange for educational obligations, which are part of our socio-cultural obligations as Africans, to bring up the next generation” [77].

Adedoyin Rhodes-Vivour, SAN also emphasizes the need for support and encouragement at the home. To her, some women are inhibited in their ability to focus on their careers due to a lack of understanding at home, particularly as law practice is a very demanding career path. She urged all family members to move away from the cultural perception that a woman’s place is solely in the home while emphasizing the proper balancing of a woman’s duties – both work-related and domestic duties.

Efforts by men are equally important in this attempt to change the gender roles imposed by African culture. As the executive director of the Institute for African Women in Law [80] puts it, “**fighting for gender equality without including male allies is like driving a car on two wheels; you will probably make the journey, but at a slower pace, and a heavier burden to yourself. If men are part of the problem, they should be part of the solution.**”

Some men do lend their voices in efforts to change this narrative. As seen in the Institute for African Women in Law’s campaign Men Advocates in Law for Equality (M.A.L.E) Allies initiative, which explores the place of masculinity in law and the role of men in the fight for gender equality in law.

“

*Career women should embrace the help often offered by extended family in regards to daycare, childcare, and family needs in exchange for educational obligations, which are part of our socio-cultural obligations as Africans, to bring up the next generation.*

Funke Adekoya, SAN



## CHOICE AND AGENCY OF WOMEN TO GO FOR SAN (2)

The advocacy for gender inclusion in all sectors of life does not mean women should be favored, women should be awarded the title on merit. According To Adedoyin Rhodes-Vivour SAN, **“gender diversity does not equate to conferring unfair advantages to women”** [85]. Hence women have to be determined and ready to do the work it takes to qualify for the award of the title. She further states how hard work and persistence inadvertently prepared her, and when the time was right, she was awarded the title.

According to Rhodes-Vivour, she endeavors to improve herself every year in whatever she does, and this has helped build her curriculum vitae and professional profile. She further advises women in law [86] to **“set goals, get your priorities straight, and run with it. But run your own race - don’t get entangled in inordinate ambition. In addition, it is important to balance work and family life, and make time for leisure and health activities; “only a healthy person can focus on career goals.”**

Boma Alabi, SAN also indicates that *“you have to constantly keep building up your skills, and understand that there are core learning skills that you can't compromise on, but continue to build up all the time if you wish to be at the top of your game.”*

“

*You have to constantly keep building up your skills, and understand that there are core learning skills that you can't compromise on, but continue to build up all the time if you wish to be at the top of your game.”*

Boma Alabi, SAN



# MENTORSHIP AND GUIDANCE FOR YOUNG WOMEN LAWYERS

The essence of mentoring in the legal field cannot be overemphasized. According to Funke Agbor, SAN

“for women, in particular, I've always thought or rather come to learn that it is important to have role models that you can take soundings from about every stage of your professional life. If they are women, they would have probably gone through the same thing you are going through and have walked through it and therefore they might have some nuggets of wisdom that they could share with you in terms of taking the next step forward in your career if you're interested in growing your career” [88].

The Institute for African Women in Law promotes mentoring through many programs including its champion role models mentoring program. As indicated by Mrs. Adedoyin Rhodes-Vivour, SAN, most women SAN apply for the title later in their careers and would have made an impact and attained recognition in diverse fields of the legal profession by then. Perhaps if these women had some form of guidance from earlier senior advocates, they could have applied for the award sooner, as one of the requirements to be met is to distinguish themselves in the legal profession, having practiced for ten years.

Hence, although not a duty, women SAN could make it an obligation to look out for young female lawyers trying to get on the ladder. To Funke Agbor, “One thing I will say is, even for those of us considered as successful, we have to find ourselves mentees as well, just as a mentee should find a mentor.

Mentors who find themselves mentees help themselves get around all of these so-called obstacles [89].” According to Boma Alabi, SAN, “one of the reasons I aspired to be a SAN was to be able to pull a few more women up the ladder [90].” She has therefore embarked on an ongoing project where women benefit from her experiences. She indicates that in the next two to a maximum of five years, there will be at least three other women who would be elevated to silk. Young women lawyers, on the other hand, should actively seek out women SAN and other top women in law for mentoring. These forms of mentoring and guidance can help more women to apply for the SAN title much earlier in their careers to increase the number of women senior advocates of Nigeria.

““ For women, in particular, I've always thought or rather come to learn that it is important to have role models that you can take soundings from about every stage of your professional life. If they are women, they would have probably gone through the same thing you are going through and have walked through it and therefore they might have some nuggets of wisdom that they could share with you in terms of taking the next step forward in your career if you're interested in growing your career.

Funke Agbor, SAN

# CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report has been to analyze the current representation of women as Senior Advocates of Nigeria. The report presented qualitative and quantitative data to show why women are underrepresented as compared to men. Addressing these challenges by considering the above recommendations will not only lead to a more gender-balanced number of Senior Advocate of Nigeria but also encourage the next generation of women lawyers that becoming a Senior Advocate of Nigeria is not far-fetched and with hard work and dedication, women are also just as capable as men in becoming a senior advocate of Nigeria.

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# APPENDIX

## LIST OF WOMEN SAN (2021)

N/O	NAME	YEAR AWARDED
1	Chief Folake Solanke	1981
2	Chief Phoebe C. Ajayi-Obe *	1989
3	Otumba C. O. Ajayi	1995
4	Abimbola Williams	1998
5	Funke Adekoya	2001
6	Chief Anayo Offiah	2003
7	Miannaya Aja Essien	2007
8	Olabisi Oluyemi Soyobo	2008
9	Sylvia E. Shinaba*	2009
10	Nella Andem-Ewa	2009
11	Dorothy Udeme-Ufot	2009
12	Obiozo Agatha Mbali	2010
13	Anthonia Titilola Akinlawon	2010
14	Chief Connie-Jean Aremu	2012
15	Joy Okungbowa Adesina	2012
16	Olufunke Abayode	2013
17	Chief Olufunmilayo V. Awomolo	2013
18	Abimbola Akeredolu	2015
19	Olufunke Abimbola Agbor	2016
20	Dr. Valerie-Janette Ogonna Azinge	2016
21	Prof. Oluyemisi Adefunke Bamgbose	2018
22	Adedoyin Oyinkan Rhodes-Vivour	2019
23	Safiya Umar Badamasi	2019
24	Boma Florence A. Alabi	2020
25	Jean Chiazor Anishere	2020
26	Bashorun Oluwatoyin Ajoke	2020
27	Funmilayo Adunni Quadri	2020
28	Professor Oluyinka Osayame Omoroghe	2021
29	Prof. Josephine Aladi Achor Agbonika	2021



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Report prepared by:

J. Jarpa Dawuni, PhD. and Rahma Abdul-Rahman