The Nigerian State, Poverty and the Commodification of Women: Insights from Benin City

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Abstract

With the attainment of independence in 1960, the Nigerian State was faced with serious challenges including the task of nation building, the development of infrastructure, eradication of poverty and the general welfare of the people. However, these rising expectations soon gave way to rising frustrations. The attendant bickerings and internecine altercations among other contending issues within the ruling elites led to the collapse of the First Republic. Ever since, the Nigerian State has been grappling with the problem of delivering essential services to the people. In the wake of these crises the military regime of General Ibrahim Babaginda embarked on the Structural Adjustment Programme in 1986 to bring efficiency to the economy which was in a complete state of decay. However, the attendant adjustment which was a blue print from the IMF and World Bank engendered numerous problems such as rationalization of workers, depreciation of the national currency and serious unemployment. This situation resulted in migratory movement both licit and illicit. While the educated and professionals migrated to Europe and America in search of greener pastures the uneducated and unskilled took advantage of opportunities offered by trafficking syndicates to engage in commercial sex work in Europe. The above factors in tandem with the structural marginalization of women in the context of Benin City are the genesis of the trafficking in women. Using an eclectic theoretical approach the paper takes a critical look at the Benin City scenario while proffering solutions to curb the menace of trafficking in young women.

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