



# Introducing Students to the Challenges and Triumphs of Nigerian Government and Politics

*by Rebecca Small, Oakton High School, Fairfax County, Virginia*



I teach high school seniors “Advanced Placement Comparative Government & Politics” as part of a senior seminar with AP Literature at Oakton High School in Fairfax County, Virginia. Nigeria is one of six core case study countries for the AP Comparative Government course. I’m always looking for relevant materials that I can use for the class. So when I discovered all of the valuable curriculum resources available on the Peace Corps Nigeria Alumni Foundation’s (PCNAF) website, I could not have been more excited to start sharing them with my students.

The resources I found on PCNAF’s website have enriched the topics we cover in our senior seminar. For the government component, we study how Nigeria fits into the global context of developing countries. Specifically, students learn about the impact of colonization and military rule, and about the relatively successful current government structure. The students were particularly fascinated with the challenge of poverty alleviation in a country with rich natural resources and ethnic and religious diversity. We examined several public policy challenges, including the burdens of foreign debt and women’s rights. I used resources from PCNAF’s website that were an asset to these topics.

For example, in connection with our study of development, I showed the students a video about an innovative program sponsored by UNICEF. The video is called “Girls Education Project Gets Nigerian Girls Back to School”. My students expressed awe at

the efforts of UNICEF to educate young girls and dismay that children as young as 10 years old were taking on the role of care taker for their families.

While we were studying Nigeria the Presidential and legislative elections were underway in the country and we were able to monitor events as they unfolded. The students accessed news stories from PCNAF's website on the Presidential election. One of the news items focused on Sara Jubril, the only female candidate to challenge the front runners in the Presidential race. Many of the students included comments about Sara Jubril as part of their weekly blog assignment. Here's what two of the students had to say:

"It was fascinating to know that Jubril is one of the only prominent women participating in Nigerian politics, and that it has taken her over a decade for her to establish credibility."

*- Rachel Schwartz, Oakton High School*

"I learned that women do run for positions in politics in Nigeria, but they are not receiving many votes primarily because of the traditional roles and expectations of women. Sarah Jubril, however, did not let this stop her."

*- Sophia Sellars, Oakton High School*

For the AP Literature component of the course, students were assigned to read the award winning *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's historical fiction about the Biafra secessionist movement that resulted in war and the deaths of approximately one million people. Adichie's novel enhanced our students understanding of the Biafra war through the eyes of ordinary people caught in the country's struggle. Later the students will engage in a Socratic seminar and use the resources on PCNAF's website, along with the novel, to analyze challenges and potential solutions to political crisis in Nigeria. We can't thank PCNAF enough for helping to enrich the students' study of the challenges and triumphs of Nigerian government and politics.

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