A Social Entrepreneurial Model from Nigeria

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Abstract: Dees (1998) defines entrepreneurship as characteristic of people who adopt a mission to create and sustain social value; recognize and relentlessly pursue new opportunities to serve that mission; continuously innovate, adapt, and learn; act boldly and beyond their resources; and exhibit a high sense of accountability. He sees it as a solution to social issues left unresolved by government and philanthropists.

Given the success of the social work carried out by Nike Davies Okundaye, a female Nigerian artist and entrepreneur, this paper investigates how her brand of social entrepreneurship measures up beside the extant literature, and whether it is replicable, especially in developing countries. If it is a good model, then it should be emulated and funding.

The approach used is phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), using secondary data about Nike's work and parameters synthesized by Dees (1998) and Light (2005) seven years apart after deep analyses of the work of earlier scholars.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship; social change; value creation; talent

The Social Entrepreneurial World

Having incorporated the extant definitions and descriptions of social entrepreneurship, Dees (1998) defines it as characteristic of people who adopt a mission to create and sustain social value (as opposed to just private value); who recognize and relentlessly pursue new opportunities to serve that mission; who continuously innovate, adapt, and learn; who act boldly and beyond the resources they possess; and who exhibit a high sense of accountability for their results to the society.

He also highlights the fact that social entrepreneurs do have a role to play in contributing to development globally, given that philanthropists and governments to whom this role has traditionally been ascribed have proven unable to execute the commission entrusted to them adequately. In Nigeria, as in many other developing nations, this is very true. Social ills abound and include lack of infrastructure; below optimal levels of literacy and education; problems with governance and accountability; leadership challenges; high unemployment indices; and a very high level of corruption; just to mention a few. Even more than in the first

world countries, the developing economies are in need of social entrepreneurs to contribute to healing the wounds from lack of good government structures.

Having observed the unprecedented success of the social work carried out by Nike Davies Okundaye, a female Nigerian artist and entrepreneur, I wanted to investigate how her brand of social entrepreneurship measures up beside the extant literature, and whether it is replicable. This is the purport of this paper.

My objective in undertaking its writing is to better understand Nike's work, to make it better known as what it is, and to highlight whatever is unique in her model. I would also like to see if it is replicable in other places in these times, especially in developing countries, and if so, recommend it as worthy of emulation to prospective social entrepreneurs in these places and to people who can fund them.

Definitions of Social Entrepreneurship

Schumpeter (1983) proposed an understanding of the social entrepreneur as an engine of creative destruction whereby a driving market force compels him or her to bring new value to the system and thereby destroy what existed previously. It is in this way that the advent of computers destroyed the existing world of typewriters, and the advent of electronic mail and other forms of data transfer and communication have nigh annihilated the previous world of telegrams and postal services. There are hardly any phone booths seen in Nigeria any longer. Yet, not so long ago, they were new and exciting because they were bringing telephony to a larger number of people, since majority could not afford to have a telephone installed in their homes, or where it was installed, it almost always did not function. Now, when a university student needs to have his or her sandal repaired by the shoemaker, a phone call can be placed from the comfort of his or her room to discuss it, thanks to the era of gsm.

According to Mair, Robinson and Hockarts (2006), social entrepreneurship is value creation. The convenience of not having to walk down the street to check whether the shoemaker is there, and to walk back again having wasted time and energy when he turns out not to be there, is value added to the caller by the possession of a gsm phone. However, not all entrepreneurs who fit into the category of value creators are social entrepreneurs. Muhammad Yunus, the founder of the Grameen Bank, distinguished cases in which the value created is captured back by the entrepreneur and those in which the entrepreneur forgoes part of the value remuneration and recommends that about one percent could be the return on investment envisaged by people and or organizations who come together to set up a social undertaking. He expects that the rest of the profits would be ploughed back into the undertaking in order to guarantee its survival and growth. Once an entrepreneur gets much more than his or her costs back as private gain, then the undertaking may cease to be one of social entrepreneurship. As though to underscore this idea, Farrugia (2007) warns of the blurring of boundaries between community undertakings (social entrepreneurships) and industrial undertakings (undertakings for private gain).

Socioeconomic freedom is one of the results of social entrepreneurship as characterized by Bjornskov and Foss (2008), and Sen (1997). Building on the ideas of Say, Schumpeter, Drucker and Stevenson as to what an entrepreneur is, Dees (1998) further developed the idea of a social entrepreneur and also came up with the idea of a social entrepreneurship initiative as a hybrid organization, partly for-profit and partly not-for-profit. Ten years later, Townsend and Hart (2008) further developed these ideas. Tracey and Phillips, also emphasizing the hybrid model and the need to be accountable, to watch the resulting double bottom line and to maintain their identity, suggest techniques to educate social entrepreneurs to successfully navigate the oft stormy waters generated by their unique challenges.

Choi and Gray (2008) recommended that the entrepreneur must look for the most effective methods to do his work, though this is in fact often found without looking, as it were unexpectedly. There is a need to understand the process in order to replicate it. This also the view of Mair et al (2006), Nicholls (2006), Ziegler (2009) and Perrin (2006).

In a brilliant exposé of work done in this field so far, in the executive summary of the first edition Journal of Ethics and Entrepreneurship, Harris, Sapienza and Bowie (2011) pointed out some areas for further research. One of those mentioned was the need to study how to devise and implement bottom of the pyramid (BOP) models. It appears to me that one good way is to look at models that work and establish their replicability by auditing them and codifying them both in their general and unique characteristics.

The work of social entrepreneurs benefits the world in many ways, especially their home countries. Social entrepreneurship aids the construction of a "good society", (Brenker, 2002). It helps to distribute wealth and create opportunities for the less privileged. It helps to engage giving practical reality to many noble ideals – helping the poor, homeless, physically, psychologically or mentally challenged people, etc. Edwards and Sen (2000) emphasize the need for individuals to be the prime movers behind social change, basing their observations on historical experience of how social change happens.

It also enhances the civic involvement of all those who participate in it and often of those who benefit from it. When someone has helped others free of charge, he sets off a ripple effect in those who benefit from that help. A number of them become disposed to help others in their turn. In this way it builds up social capital for the community. People feel kindly towards other people and towards the state when they have experienced or come close to someone who has experienced the 'giving ethos' of a social entrepreneur.

Looking at Nike's work, which on the surface of it seems to be flourishing and emancipating many people, my *apriori* impressions are that:

- 1. It is indeed a form of social entrepreneurship and it works.
- 2. It is replicable.

Methodology

The approach taken in this paper is that of phenomenology, looking at experience in order to build up a description of what is observed and try to understand its essence (Moustakas, 1994). Not all realities can be understood with a phenomenological approach that has no predetermined procedures (van Manen, 1990), but in the present case, this methodological perspective seemed to be the most appropriate way to approach it. Hence, the phenomenon of Nike was observed independently of any preconceived framework but seeking to get to know the underlying reality (Groenewald, 2004). I have visited her gallery and her school briefly. They exist and they work. To understand how it works, the paper looks at secondary data, specifically studies conducted by others about Nike's work. She has granted a number of interviews and thus there was no special need to ask her more questions in person. In particular, I referred to the PhD work-in-progress of Henrietta Onwuegbuzie, who has done a deep study of Nike's work in the course of doing a dissertation on indigenous knowledgeⁱ and has therefore held many interviews with Nike. I also took information from a video of an interview with a journalist. With more time available, it would have been interesting to journey to her nearest workshop, in Oshogbo, one of the cities of Western Nigeria, in order to look at the records of the school – and perhaps hold interviews with her

students in order to more deeply grasp how this phenomenon works from their viewpoint. However, since one of the limitations of phenomenology precisely tends to be an overabundance of data which could complicate explicitation (Groenewald, 2004), it was also advisable to work with a manageable quantity.

Once the phenomenon has been described on its own, it is then circumscribed through an attempt to fit it into a selection of the viewpoints of two social entrepreneurship experts who have taken into cognisance the fit for the developing world context. Dees studied both the original and current theories of entrepreneurship and brought them together in analysing what is social entrepreneurship; while Light made an attempt to broaden the field of social entrepreneurship and make it as inclusive as possible of all kinds of social entrepreneurs. It is in the process of this exercise that I expect to also find pointers to the replicability of Nike's model.

The two studied the other scholars in the field in depth, seven years apart, and so give a very good picture of what have been the different views on social entrepreneurship over the years and where all these views converge. Besides, the two of them espouse seemingly contradictory views of social entrepreneurs: Dees regards them as a rare breed, while Light suggests that they may have been mistakenly conceived as being "rare exceptions to the rule" because of formal definitional constraints. Hence if the two of them converge in giving us characteristics that fit the Nike phenomenon into the social entrepreneurial mould, then we can indeed conclude that it belongs there.

Nike's Model of Social Entrepreneurship

Nike learnt her art at her mother's kneesⁱⁱ and perfected it in the famous Oshogbo school. She stood out in several ways in her journey: she realized her professional identity as a female artist quite early and succeeded in catching the attention of art connoisseurs who have made her successful with their patronage. She works mostly with indigo dye to create *adire*, a traditional painted cloth typical of the Yoruba cultural heritage. She creates the patterns for clothing uses and also creates paintings and a variety of artworks that have made her internationally famous. She has held workshops and exhibitions all over the world, for example in Belgium, Germany, Italy Japan and USA.

Her business has been very profitable, especially given that she started from a very poor background herself, with the experience of staying some days under a tree hoping for a fruit to fall in order to have a meal. She lost her mother and grandmother very early and her childhood was from that point on characterised by great suffering. But Nike, apart from being driven by natural creativity expected of an artist of her renown, is in addition driven by a desire to touch lives and to empower people. One of her first successes in this area was to give her fourteen co-wivesⁱⁱⁱ a profession. She taught them to make their living through tie-dyeing and in this way, liberated them financially and enhanced their dignity and self-worth. Because of having suffered herself, Nike has a high sensitivity to others' difficulties and started very early helping the people around her. She saved money from her early sales of her work to buy land and build a house and a workshop to train people. She separated from her husband^{iv} and began to train poor people free of charge in different media: textiles, beads, carpentry, a dance troupe, metalwork. The training outfit expanded gradually and now she has three, in Oshogbo, Kogi, and Abuja, and is planning to start a fourth one soon in Lagos, in the Yaba area where it will be close to the women who need it.

Nike has trained about a thousand people since the time she has opened her first workshop. She houses and feeds many of her protégés since they often cannot afford to support

themselves, especially when they come to her from other towns. Her generosity has especially benefitted women, and she faced a lot of opposition from men who thought she was making women insubordinate by giving them financial freedom from their husbands. Although in Nigeria now, many women are educated and professionals in their own right, there are still a number of traditional areas, villages and small towns, where most of the women have no education and may not have the skills to make a profession for themselves.

When a new 'student' arrives to the school, he or she is taken round all the different segments of the workshop to find out which of them he or she has an innate affinity for. If someone is unable to fit into any professional line - beadwork, carpentry, the dance troupe, textile, metalwork, etc. - the person is given a job as an administrator and so still finds a place within the set-up. This shows how determined Nike is not to turn back anyone who reaches out to her for help. When the 'students' are declared to have attained the skills and graduate, a good number of them use the workshops as their studios, since they cannot afford a place of their own. They come back to execute orders from their clients on Nike's tables and in Nike's yards. For all of them, both students, and graduates, Nike exhibits their work in a wonderful four-storey gallery she constructed in Lagos, with financial backing from some Nigerian banks. The gallery opens the market to the work of these people who might otherwise have found it difficult to get good buyers for their work, since many of them come from places where the people around are concerned with survival and not with luxury items like works of art. Some graduates also stay back to help teach new students.

Dees' Presentation of the Contributions to the Field

In order to establish whether my *apriori* intuitions are supported by fact in Nike's case, it would seem good to first detail the characteristics the experts in social entrepreneurship expect to find in a social entrepreneurial undertaking, and then measure Nike's work by some of them. Thus I have detailed below the characteristics highlighted from the work of past and current scholars, eight by Dees and seven by Light, in the effort to identify social entrepreneurs.

For Dees, social entrepreneurs are first and foremost entrepreneurs, a sub-set of the wider circle. In addition, they have a clear and overriding social mission and face some challenges unique to them. Thus, Dees' social entrepreneur has the following eight characteristics:

Say (1803; 1834): New and better ways of doing things: Nike's is a new way of educating artisans, and it seems a better way since she is providing for those who cannot afford to develop their talent or to pay to be apprenticed formally to a master artist to teach them.

Say (1803; 1834): "Shifting economic resources out of an area of lower into an area of higher productivity and greater yield": In Nike's case, she is shifting human resources and art materials in unique ways in this direction.

Schumpeter (1934, 1983): Moving the economy forward: By transforming people who had hitherto been unproductive into productive members of the society, Nike is moving the economy forward.

Schumpeter (1934, 1983): Exploiting an untried technological possibility for producing a new commodity or producing an old one in a new way: While I shrink from applying the word commodity here, the sense behind this criterion applies to Nike. She has found a new way of generating an abundance of creativity, talent and artwork, and the market for it.

Drucker (1985): Mind-set that sees opportunities rather than the problems created by change: all through her life, Nike has undergone changes that have inspired her to see opportunities to help other people, starting from her helping her co-wives rather than see them as competition.

Stevenson (2000): Mobilize resources of others to achieve their entrepreneurial objectives: When Nike had to take loans to build her schools and the gallery to show and sell the works of her protégées, she did not hesitate. If she had relied on her resources alone, she would not have been able to achieve what she has.

Dees (1998): A social mission: This must be explicit and central. Nike's life has been built around her mission to help others in need. She spends herself to ensure the achievement of her mission and has even borrowed money in the same endeavour. She is driven by her determination to help people develop their talent in a way that makes them financially self-supporting. The sustainability of her model is indicated by the way it has expanded and actually helped and continues to help so many.

Dees (1998): Unique challenges: Nike has overcome the initial opposition to her work with raising the financial status of women who were housewives, but has faced numerous financial challenges herself in expanding her work. She has had help from overseas grants at times, and she continues to struggle to pay back the interest on the loans that built the mega-gallery in Lagos.

Light's Presentation of the Contributions to the Field

Young (1986): Breaking new ground; innovating: Nike is one of the very few people in Nigeria involved in this type of social project on this scale.

Waddock and Post (1991): Changes in the public sector agenda and perception of social changes: Nike's daring to invest so much to help the poor and provide them professional skills is definitely a challenge to the public sector to do more. Her commitment has elicited the same in others who help her whether physically or economically to achieve the aims of her projects.

Thompson, Alvy and Lees (2001): Gathering resources to satisfy an unmet social need in a greatly impactful way once the opportunity is seen: Nike has done this and made a difference to many people, about a thousand whose lives would have been different without her help.

Thompson (2002): More concern with helping than with profit: This fits the case of Nike beautifully.

Frumkin (2002): Self supporting organizations: In Nike's case, though to some extent self supporting, her enterprise could not have grown as it has without the support of loans and grants.

Alvord, Brown and Letts (2004): Agents for social transformation: Nike saw some flaws in the structure of society around her and in the fortunes of people who were poor and seemed to have no way of improving their lot in life. She decided to make a change and set out to do this by developing their innate abilities and talents. It is in this way that her work was able to transcend each individual's unique way of being and help a diverse variety of people in very different ways. Nike's being able to locate her workshops in different cities is an indication of her ability to "bridge diverse stakeholder communities".

Barendsen and Gardner (2004): a new type of leader. Nike's belief system which led her to venture into her social work did indeed originate from her compelling personal history. Her difficult childhood left on her a mark that disposed her to perceiving suffering in others and wanting to alleviate it in the way she knew how to: by provoking their creativity and giving them the means to draw themselves out of poverty.

Analysis and Discussion

The parameters I have selected to use to assess Nike's social entrepreneurial undertaking are those synthesized by Dees (1998) and Light (2005) after their analyses of the work of the scholars previous to them. The reason is that these two summarize the other scholars in the field very well and are conveniently seven years apart so as to cover the whole gamut of studies into social entrepreneurship.

Under the Dees' social entrepreneurship searchlight, we can see Nike fitting into most if not all of six parameters set out:

Change agent: Nike acted as a reformer of the social order around her, by giving women a chance to earn and to feed their children without being totally reliant on her husbands, especially in cases like hers where her husband really could not care less about whether the children were fed or not. She also contributes to filling the gaps in the educational system, which had not enough openings to cater for the artisans that Nike took up. In this way, she has touched many lives and changed their direction for the better.

Creating and sustaining social value: her social mission is fundamental to her. She has disregarded and continues to disregard her private benefit in order to invest her own private gain into achieving her social purpose.

Recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities: Nike puts in whatever it takes to make her vision work. The very structure of her workshops supports that, for example, the way she has reserved the role of administrators for those who do not exhibit talent in any of the fields of art, so that they also come out with a profession after they have gone through her oases. She also bears the risk of the financing arrangements she has agreed with the banks, though the gallery helps not only her private gain from her own artwork but also furthers the possibilities of exposure of their work which her artist 'children' so dearly need.

Continuous innovation, adaptation and learning: Her workshops have come a long way from her beginnings. She went to the US to learn some techniques and incorporated that into her own work and her teaching. She has an attitude that constantly opens her up to learning new things and new ways of doing them, and therefore new ways of helping those that depend on her.

Boldness, given limitations of resources: She has become extremely savvy in getting the resources needed for her work. Overseas grants and loans from internal sources have helped her to scale up what started out as a small outfit.

Accountability: She is closely connected to all the communities in which she works and finds a way to support their values. In her own hometown in Ogidi, she acted in direct response to their need. Her other workshops are in Oshogbo and Abuja, and now she is responding to the need in the more slum-like areas of Lagos. Her assessment of her output is in terms of the numbers of lives that she has touched and changed.

Light's synthesis of eight distinguishing marks of the social entrepreneur, he calls them basic assumptions, are reflected in Nike's profile as shown in Table 1 below. She fits into his definition of a social entrepreneur as an individual seeking sustainable and major social change through pattern-breaking ideas. In her case, she sought, and seeks still, to empower poor people by developing their innate talents into economically rewarding professional skills. In this way she contributes to the educational sector and to the generation of new SMEs. The structures she uses are her free training workshops and as far as resources allow, she takes in more students and has been able to expand to three locations. She adapts to the different situations that emerge in the course of her work and overcomes the obstacles as they present.

Table 1: Light's Social Entrepreneurial Characteristics

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Light's assumptions	Nike's profile
Light 5 dissumptions	Trike 3 profile

Individual or group	An individual helped by others' collaboration
Seeking sustainable and major social change	Seeking to empower poor people
Through pattern-breaking idea(s)	Through helping them to develop professional crafts and skills
Not limited to any sector	Thereby contributing to education and to developing SMEs
Using whatever structure is effective	Through free training workshops
On a large or small scale	Scaling up as resources allow
Within their changing circumstances	Adapting to the needs that show up
Facing and hopefully overcoming barriers to	And overcoming hostility from society and
success	fund-raising problems

In conclusion, we can see that Nike's work does fit into the categories of social entrepreneurship. At the same time, it is also important to point out what is unique about Nike's work.

Uniqueness of the Model

Her model tends to redistribute income in a very innocuous way. One of the problems in developing countries is the great and ever-widening gulf between the rich and the poor. What makes this particularly striking is not just the divide, which is perhaps after all only to be expected in any human space that is oriented towards capitalism, but the lack of infrastructural amenities and government accountability. Someone who has access to good roads, healthcare, power and water, really may not care whether his neighbour has a house ten times the size of his. However, when the social amenities continue to be lacking, the levels of frustration in the society are high.

With Nike's model, poor people are taught a craft that appeals to the tastes and pockets of the rich. Only a relatively wealthy person can spend on art. The poor man needs first to feed, shelter and cloth himself. Thus, the beneficiaries of Nike's social entrepreneurship action have a market that can pay for their work, and the buyers have talented artists providing a grand variety of pleasing works of art. It is an arrangement with a permanent win-win structure.

Also unique to Nike's work is the way it gives without over-patronising the recipients. Since the artists' progress is partly due to the teacher and the provider of materials and other training resources, and partly due to the talent latent in his or her person, the dignity imparted by this work is deep and long-lasting. Hence, despite the fact that the beneficiaries get free schooling, housing and feeding while they are at Nike's school, they learn happily and the atmosphere is one of warmth and family. While they are there, everyone gives a hand in whatever needs to be done. Everything is free but there is little if any incidence of a free-riding mentality. Very often some of them stay back to help in teaching new aspirants. And when they have left her, she continues helping them to display and sell their works in her massive gallery in the Lekki area of Lagos.

Creative construction: Nike's type of social entrepreneurship differs from those described by Schumpeter in that it does come into the middle of chaos to create value but does this without destroying anything. The old order is not in any way threatened. What these artists produce is at the moment a luxury good and the market for it is very large.

A Replicable Model

The advantages of social entrepreneurship work being replicable are many, given its importance for a country as described above. If it is replicable, it can be shown to be relevant to development more clearly and concisely. Thus it would be possible to recommend that it should not exist as a special instance to be looked at from afar. Rather it should be copied by intending practitioners of social entrepreneurship in their bid to make a difference to the world around them in their own different ways.

With regard specifically to the replicability of Nike's work, it seems to me that it is possible for others to go the Nike way. And it is especially advisable for developing countries to foster this type of social entrepreneurship and for them to find support from social investors. It is relatively low cost, and very effective in many ways:

Educational sector: The formal educational sector in Nigeria is currently in bad shape (too many people for the capacity of the universities and lack of attractiveness, and indeed effectiveness, of the technical educational institutions) and it is very useful to have alternative educational systems that empower people to be economically independent.

Labour market: Given the high levels of unemployment in the country which also leads to increase in the level of criminal activity, any initiative that leads to skill building and therefore job provision is very welcome.

Economic emancipation: People helped through Nike's workshops and gallery can now earn a living and contribute to the economy where they would have otherwise been a drag on it.

Creativity: The creativity of the people is stirred, developed and polished. This is of itself a great gift to bestow on a fellow human being and on the nation that is thus enriched.

Dignity and self-worth of the beneficiaries: The people are developing talents latent within them and therefore become more self-confident and find it easier to develop a balanced personality and to engage with their peers on an equal footing.

Social engagement: the people taken up by Nike are a variety/mix of individuals who experience something special when under her tutelage. They are engaged socially and build up a network of relationships that are very beneficial to them both in the short-run and in the long-run. In one extreme case, when she worked with the Italian government to repatriate prostitutes, she took on the task of rehabilitating these people and giving them the means to support themselves financially by developing a skill.

Civic responsibility: The people also come out with more affinity for social issues and more sympathy for those who do not have, and so they are more likely to in turn be socially-entrepreneurial. Nike is producing people who can be social change agents like herself, witness the fact that some of them already stay on with her to help in training newcomers.

Patriotism: Since Nike's artists are almost always Nigerian artists, their work showcases Nigerian art, and they get to feel proud of their country and to want to contribute to its development.

Tourist income to the country: visitors come to Nigeria and stay in Nike's guest houses to experience the beauty of her art and be steeped in the traditional lore and culture of western Nigeria. She receives guests in three locations: Lagos, Ogidi and Oshogbo.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nike is indeed a social entrepreneur. What is more, her model can be replicated in different craft and skill industries in Nigeria. For example, welders in Nigeria are almost all foreigners. And this in an oil and gas country where there is a need for these professionals. There is need for a school of welding where the skill can be transmitted to others, and as a social entrepreneurship outfit, it would contribute to poverty alleviation in no mean way. The

oil and gas industry presently pays very good salaries to all the people they import to carry out this function. Other craft and skill industries include the fashion and hairdressing industries, theatre arts industry and the mechanical repairs industry.

It would be good for governments and private philanthropists in developing countries to support similar social entrepreneurial ventures because of the incalculable good they do to the country, especially because her approach involves a genuine bottom of the pyramid model reaching out to the masses that need economic emancipation.

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Biographical Notes

Kemi Ogunyemi holds a degree in Law from the University of Ibadan, an LLM from the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, and an MBA from the Lagos Business School, Pan-African University, Nigeria. She teaches Business Ethics and Anthropology at the Lagos Business School, while doing her PhD in Management at the School. Her consulting and research interests include personal ethos, work-life ethic, social responsibility, sustainability and governance.

ⁱ Onwuegbuzie, Henrietta, 2011. Unpublished dissertation work on indigenous knowledge in entrepreneurship

[&]quot;Her mother and aunts were traditional cloth weavers and dyers in Ogidi, in the Western part of Nigeria

iii Nike was the first of fifteen wives of Twins Seven Seven, a renowned Oshogbo artist

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 iv Two of her co-wives left with her and began to also produce their own artwork and exhibit with her as a group of three.