



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



# ***FUNMILAYO RANSOME-KUTI***

## ***AND THE WOMEN'S UNION OF ABEOKUTA***

UNESCO Series on Women in African History





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Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

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Editorial and artistic direction: Edouard Joubeaud

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Cover illustration: Alaba Onajin  
Layout: Muyang Li

UNESCO wishes to thank Monike Ransome-Kuti and her family for having provided some rare photographs of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and authorizing UNESCO to use them in this publication.





# FUNMILAYO RANSOME-KUTI

## AND THE WOMEN'S UNION OF ABEOKUTA

UNESCO Series on Women in African History  
Editorial and artistic direction: Edouard Joubeaud

Comic strip

Illustrations: Alaba Onajin

Script and text: Obioma Ofoego

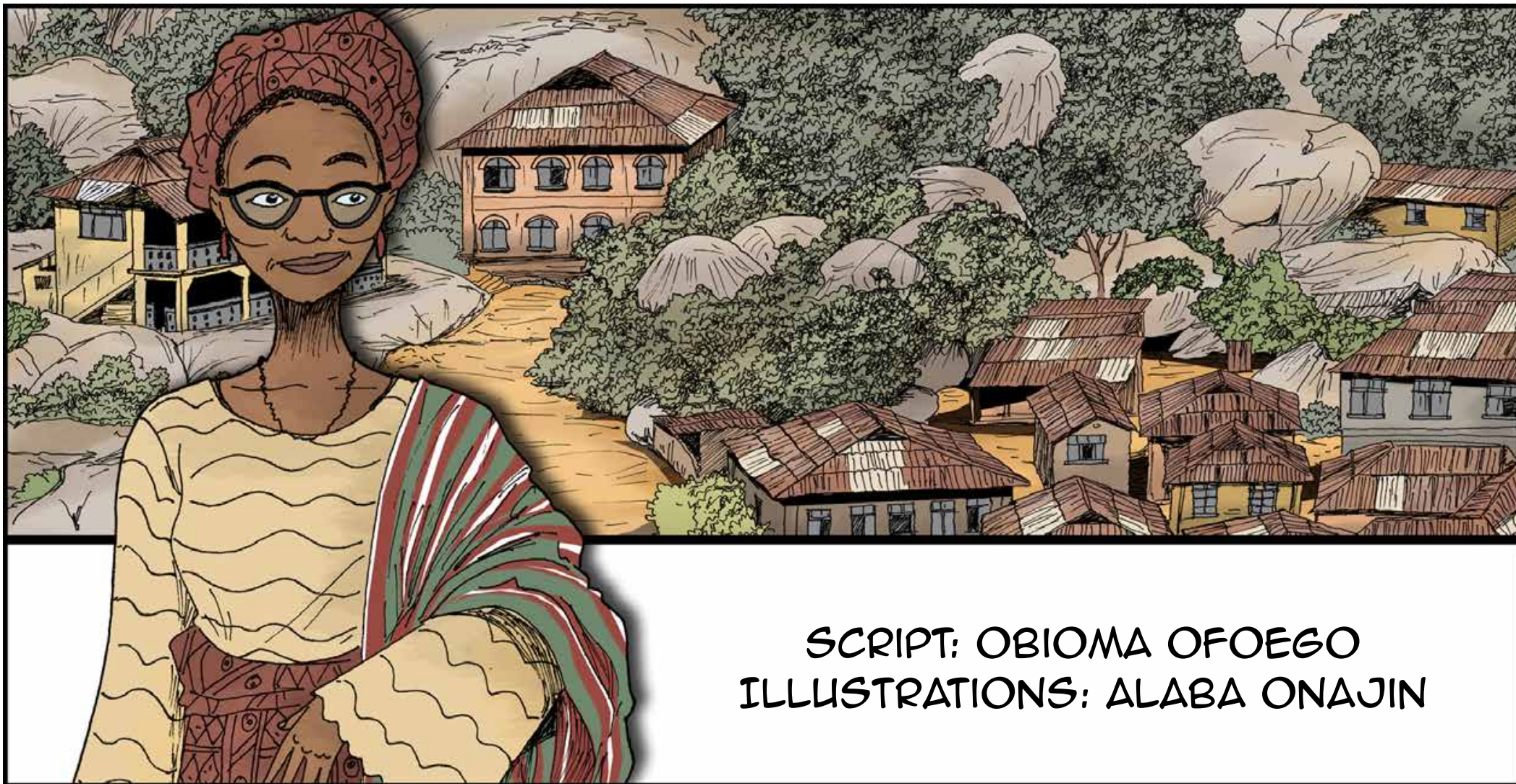
# FUNMILAYO RANSOME-KUTI AND THE WOMEN'S UNION OF ABEOKUTA

## Foreword

The following comic strip is an interpretation of certain periods of the life of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. The illustrations are based on historical and iconographic research on Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and mid-twentieth century Nigeria. They do not claim to be an exact representation of the events, people, architecture, hairstyles, or clothing of the period.







**SCRIPT: OBIOMA OFOEGO**  
**ILLUSTRATIONS: ALABA ONAJIN**



ABEOKUTA, NIGERIA, THE MID-1944.

ABEOKUTA  
LADIES' CLUB

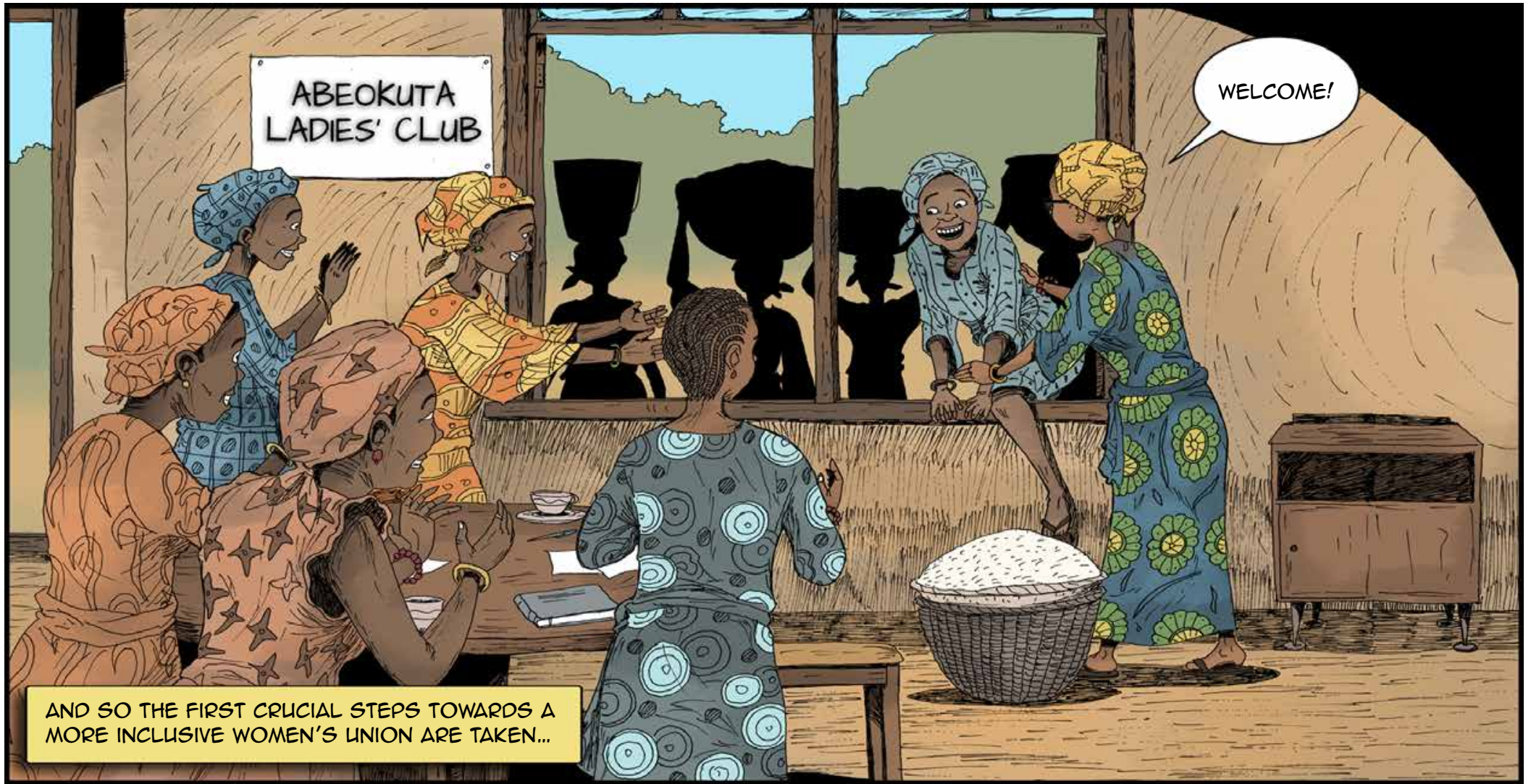




HMMM. ALL THIS MILD TALK OF SEWING AND ETIQUETTE IS SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH. WHAT ABOUT LITERACY? OR WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION? AND WE SHOULD START BY INVOLVING THOSE WHO MATTER THE MOST: THE MARKET WOMEN!



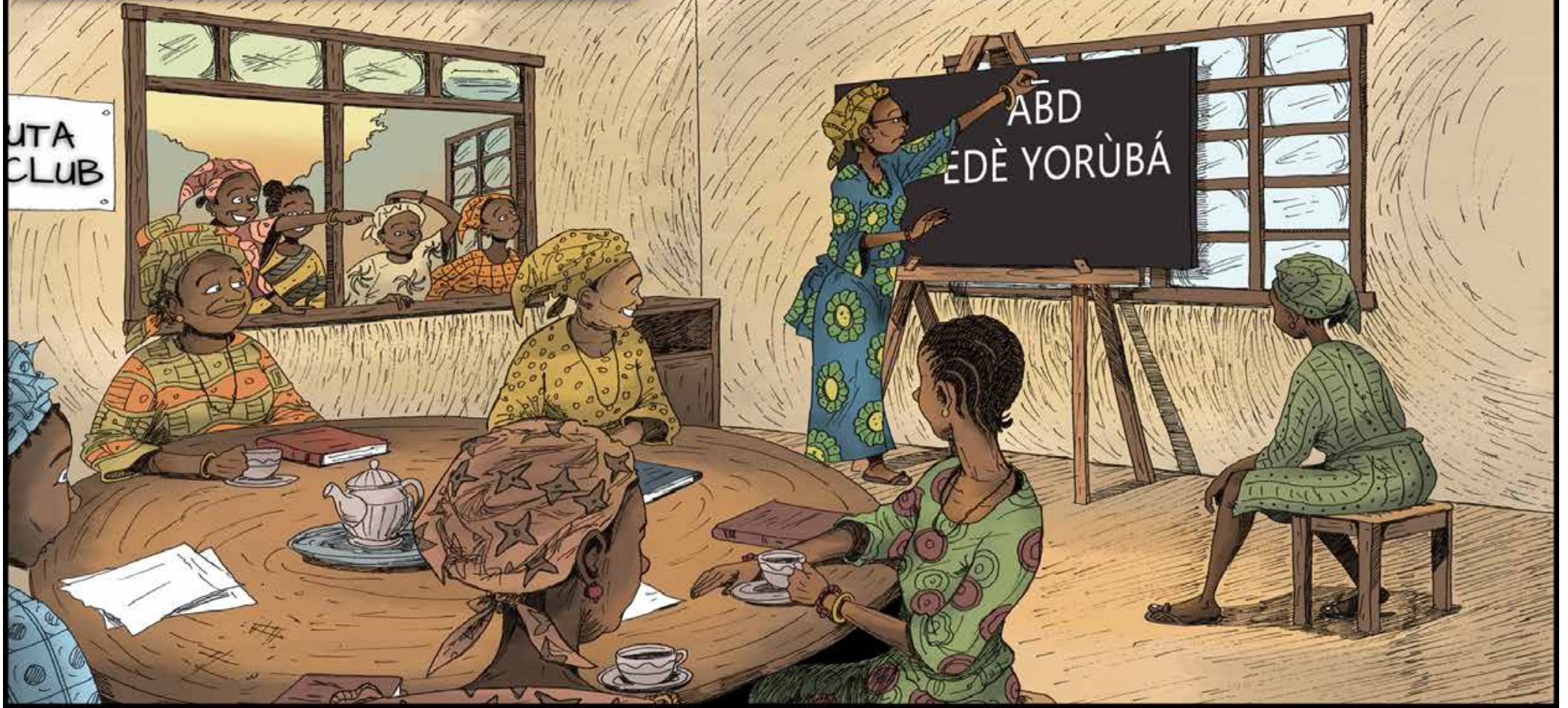




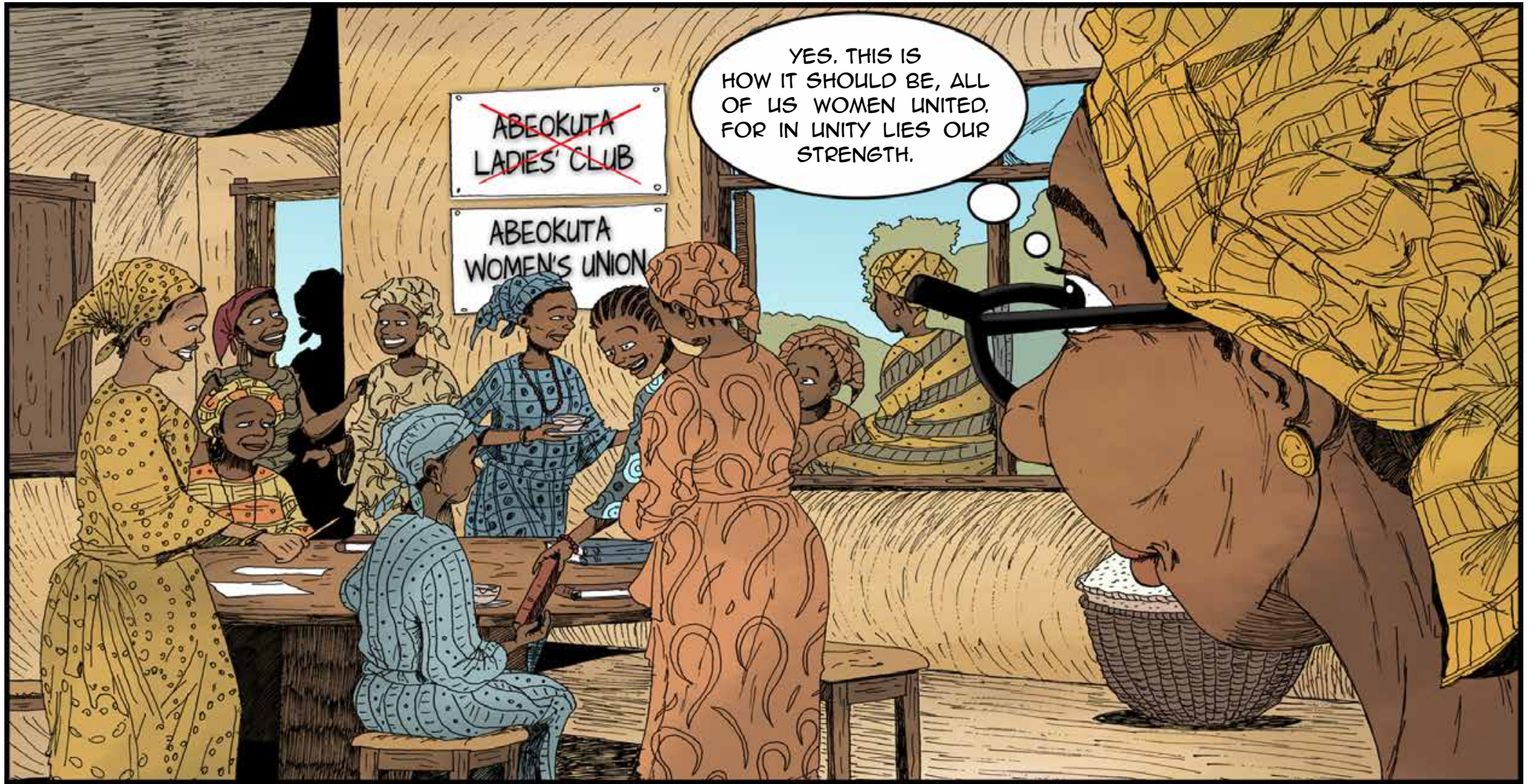
AND SO THE FIRST CRUCIAL STEPS TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE WOMEN'S UNION ARE TAKEN...



WITH FUNMILAYO RANSOME-KUTI LEADING THE WAY.

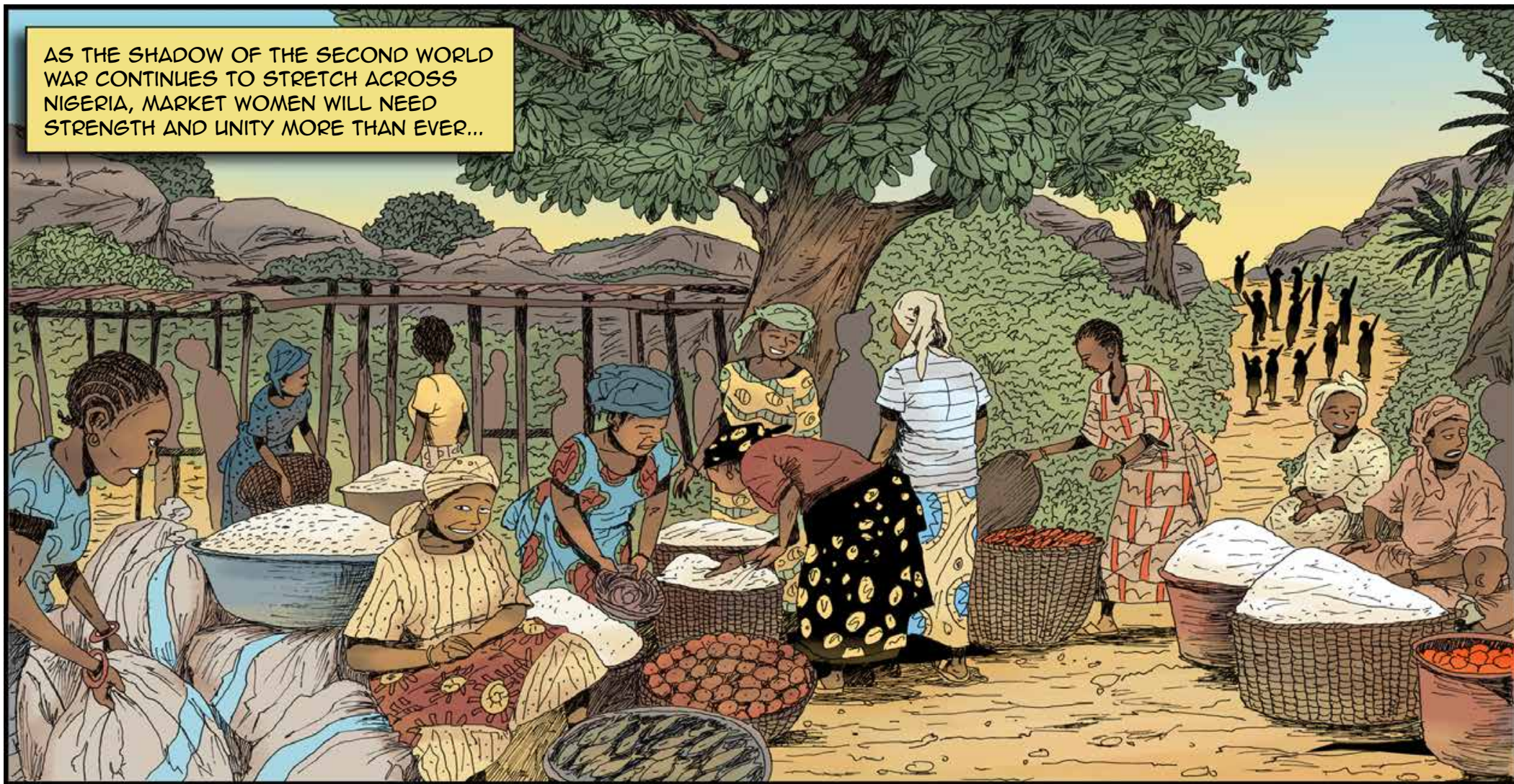








AS THE SHADOW OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR CONTINUES TO STRETCH ACROSS NIGERIA, MARKET WOMEN WILL NEED STRENGTH AND UNITY MORE THAN EVER...







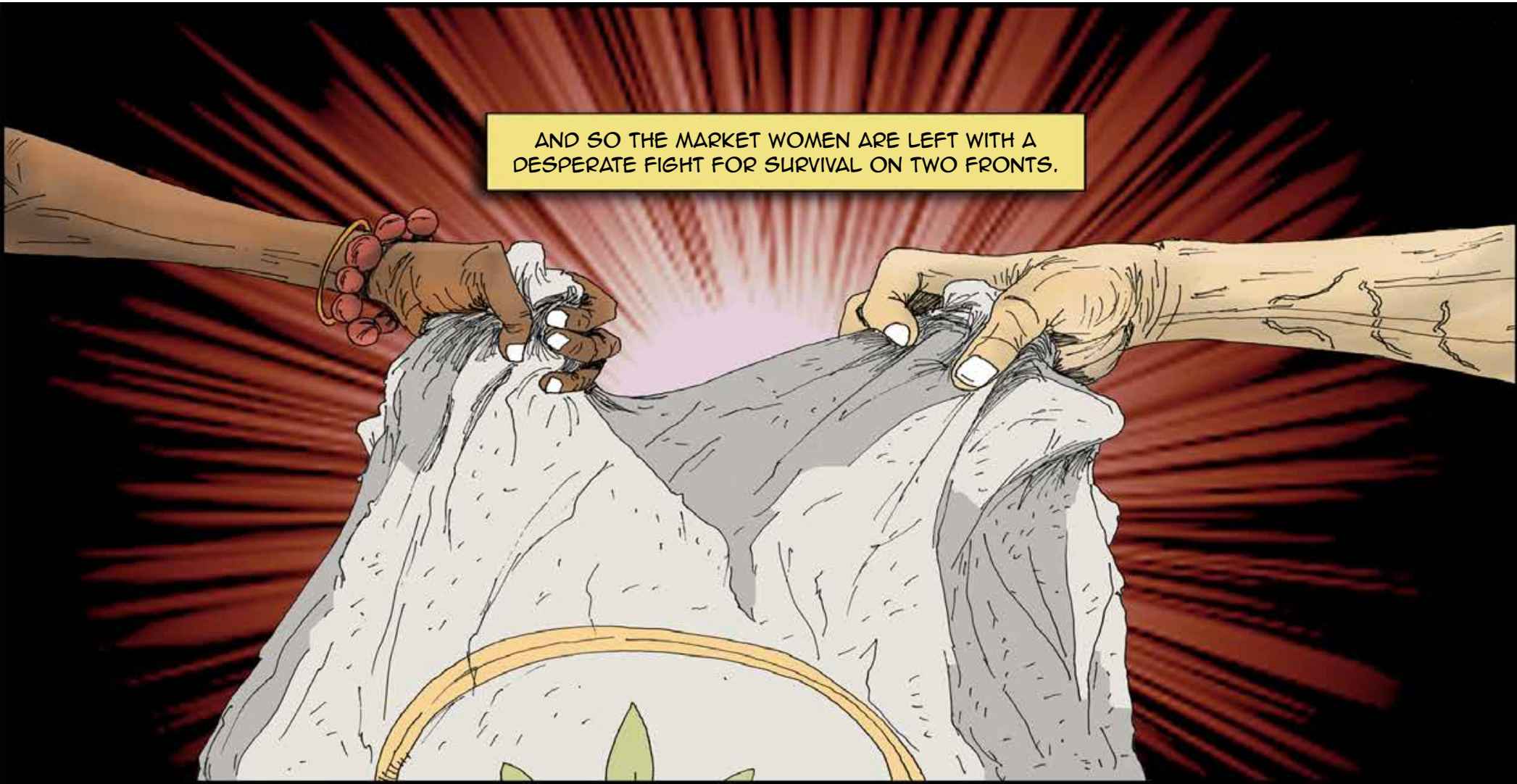
THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR EFFORT. THE BRITISH AND THE WORLD OWE YOU A DEBT OF GRATITUDE.

AND YOU PEOPLE?! WHAT IS YOUR EXCUSE? UNDER WHOSE AUTHORITY ARE YOU CONFISCATING THOSE GOODS? IN WHOSE NAME?

DOES YOUR GRATITUDE FILL OUR STOMACHS, OR THOSE OF OUR CHILDREN? I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TURN A PROFIT IF I SELL AT SUCH PRICES...

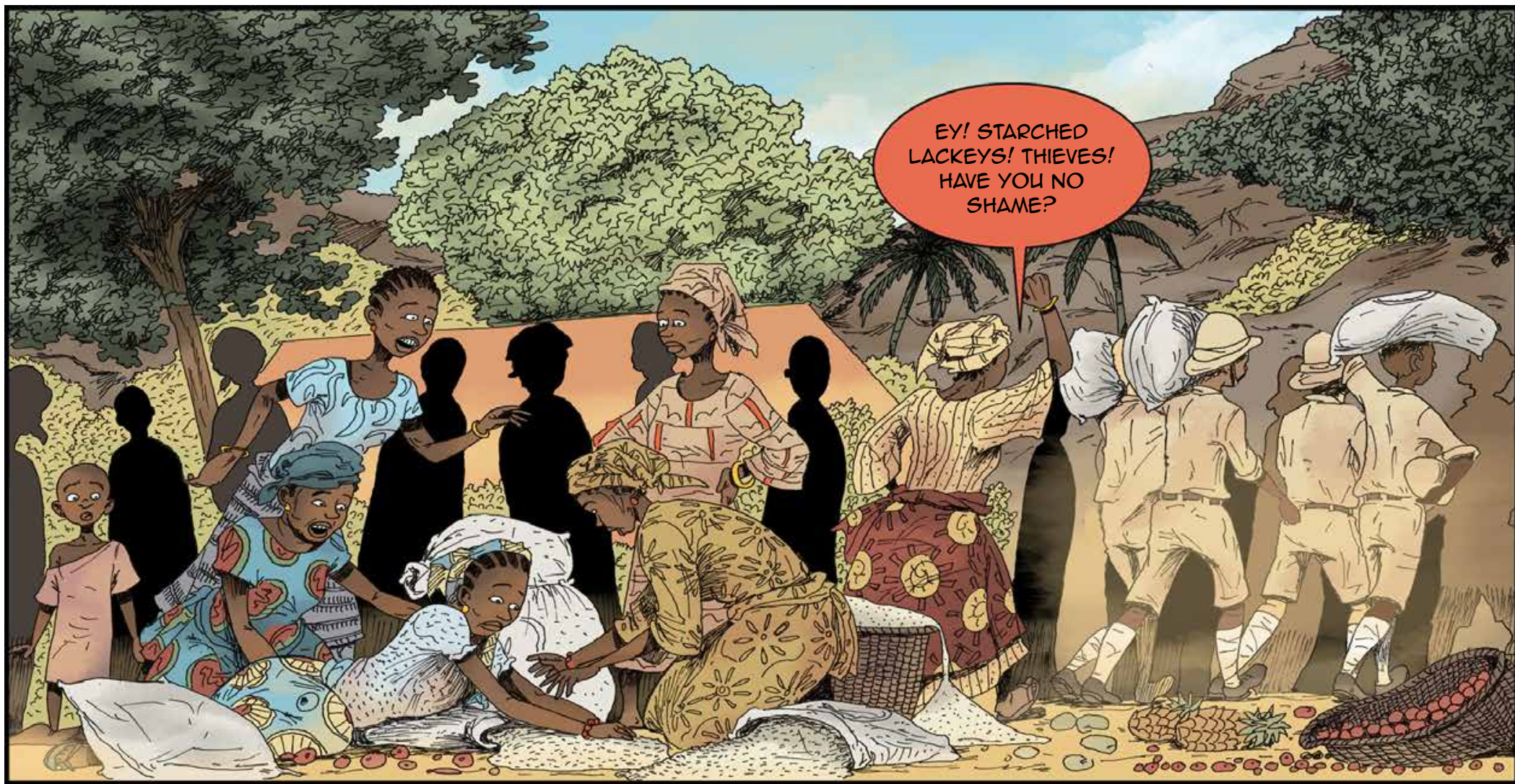
FOR LOCAL WOMEN TRADERS ARE SOON CAUGHT BETWEEN THE CLAIMS OF TWO POWERFUL GROUPS: THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION, WHICH HAS IMPOSED FOOD-QUOTAS AND PRICE-CONTROLS TO OFFSET FOOD SHORTAGES FOR THE ARMY; AND NATIVE AUTHORITY POLICEMEN, WHO ARE NOT SHY OF EXPLOITING THE POWERS THEY HAVE ACQUIRED UNDER THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION...





AND SO THE MARKET WOMEN ARE LEFT WITH A  
DESPERATE FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL ON TWO FRONTS.







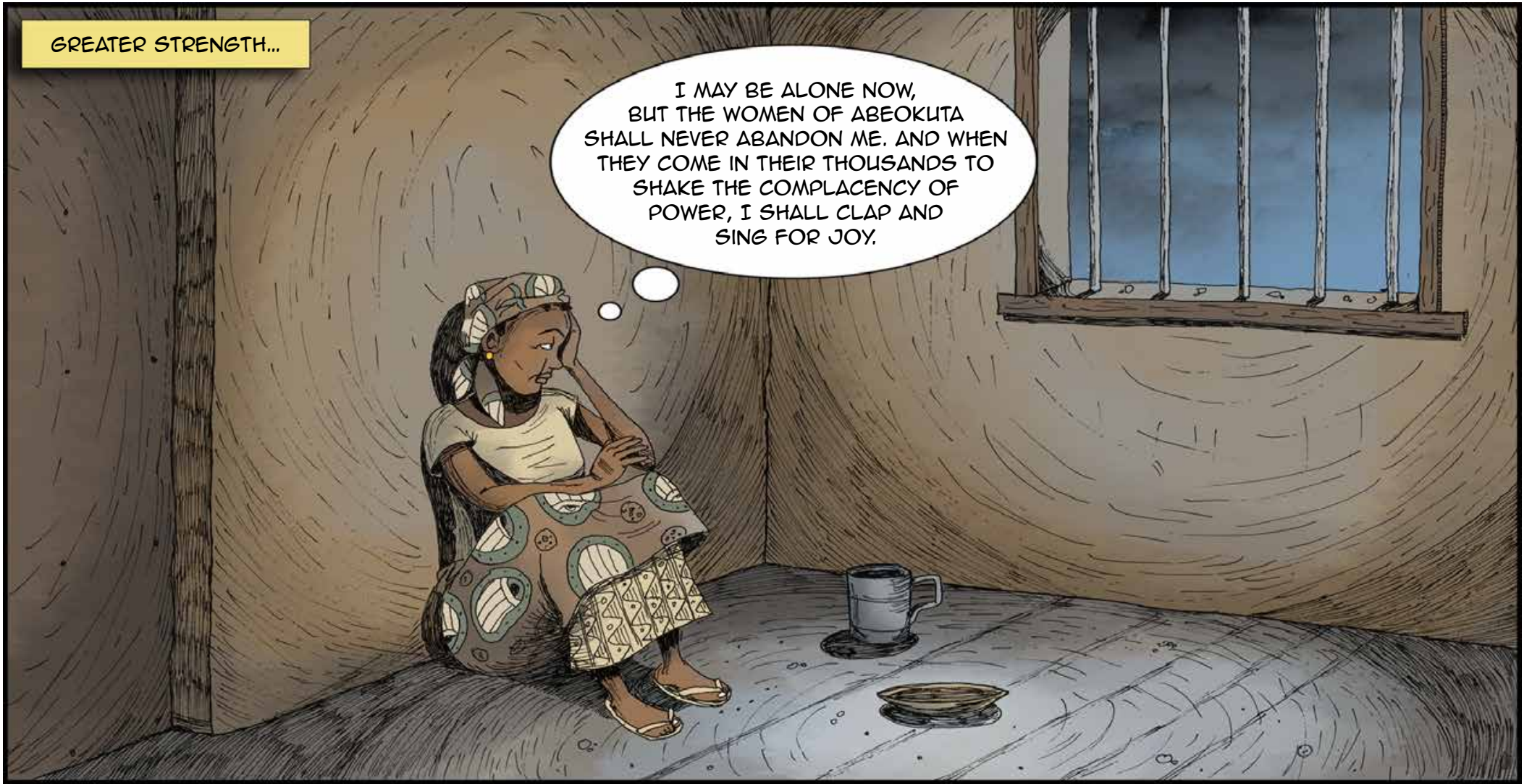
NEITHER THE PRICE-CONTROLS NOR THE CONFISCATIONS SEEM TO BROOK ANY RESISTANCE. BUT WITH NEW-FOUND ORGANIZATION UNDER THE WOMEN'S UNION AND FUNMILAYO RANSOME-KUTI, THERE COMES GREATER UNITY...





GREATER STRENGTH...

I MAY BE ALONE NOW,  
BUT THE WOMEN OF ABEOKUTA  
SHALL NEVER ABANDON ME. AND WHEN  
THEY COME IN THEIR THOUSANDS TO  
SHAKE THE COMPLACENCY OF  
POWER, I SHALL CLAP AND  
SING FOR JOY.





AND SO IT IS THAT ONE FINE DAY...









AND SO THE WOMEN'S UNION BEGINS TO SEE JUST WHAT IT CAN ACHIEVE THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION!







# ACTIVISM OF FUNMILAYO RANSOME-KUTI AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOVEMENT



FUNMILAYO RANSOME-KUTI WORKS TIRELESSLY TO SUPPORT ANY CAUSE FOR JUSTICE. FROM PROTESTS AGAINST THE RICHARDS CONSTITUTION IN LONDON, TO ACTIVISM FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS THROUGHOUT NIGERIA...





FROM TEACHING WORKING WOMEN IN RUN-DOWN FACTORIES, TO THE BUILDING OF A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NETWORK...





...SHE ACTS WITH FIRE AND TRUTH, AND  
WOMEN ALL OVER RESPOND TO HER CALL.

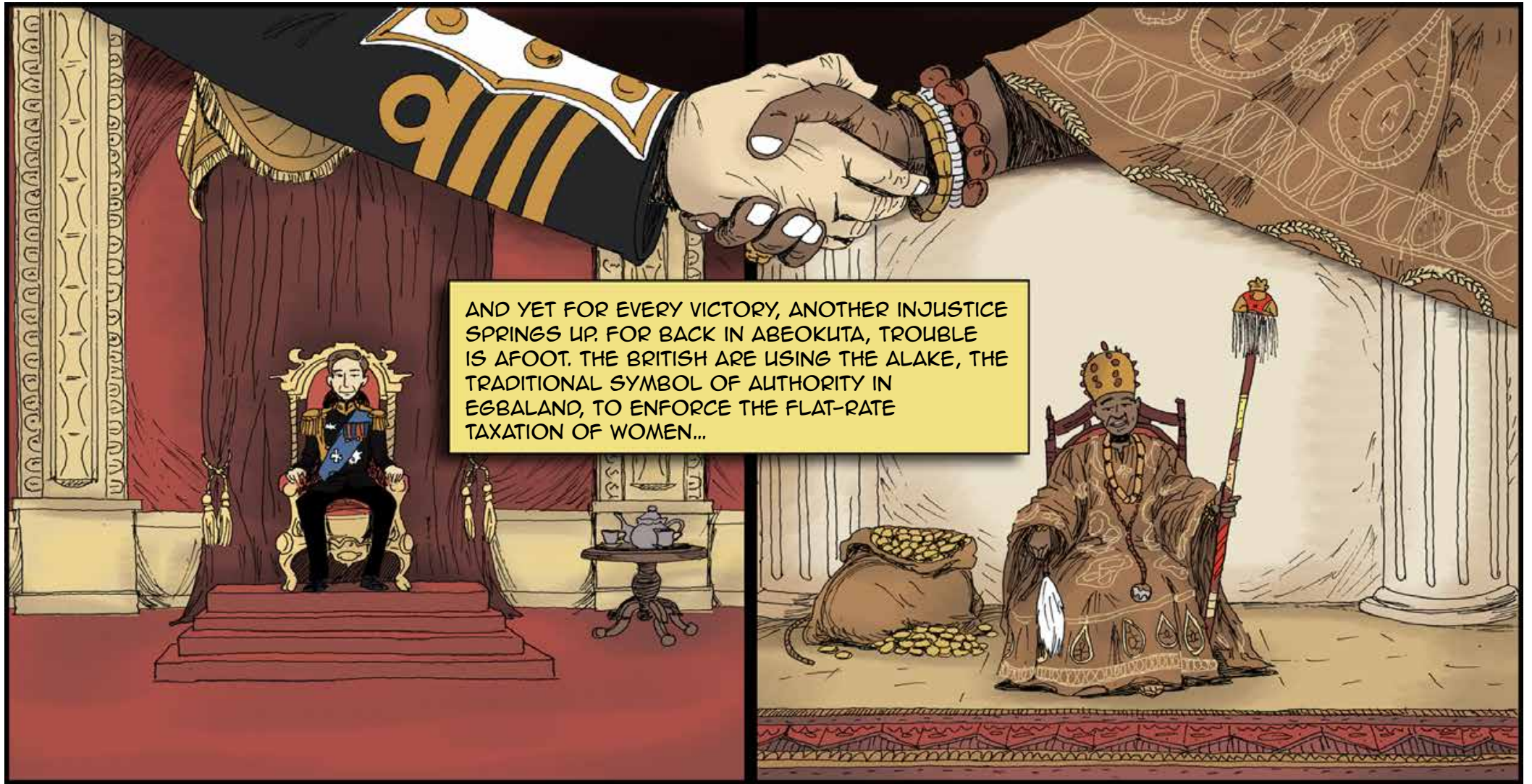






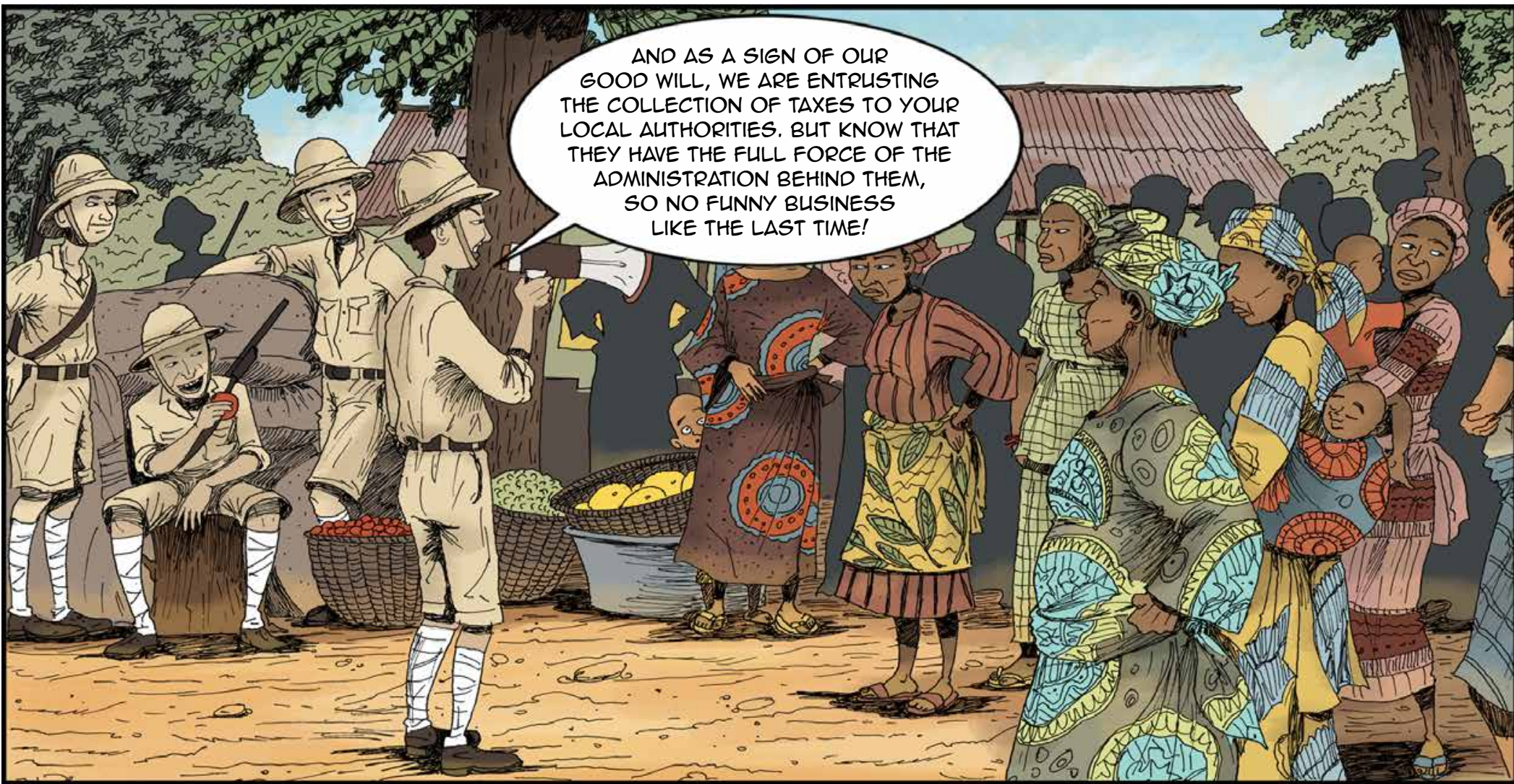
# THE FLAT TAX ON WOMEN AND THE ABDICATION OF THE ALAKE



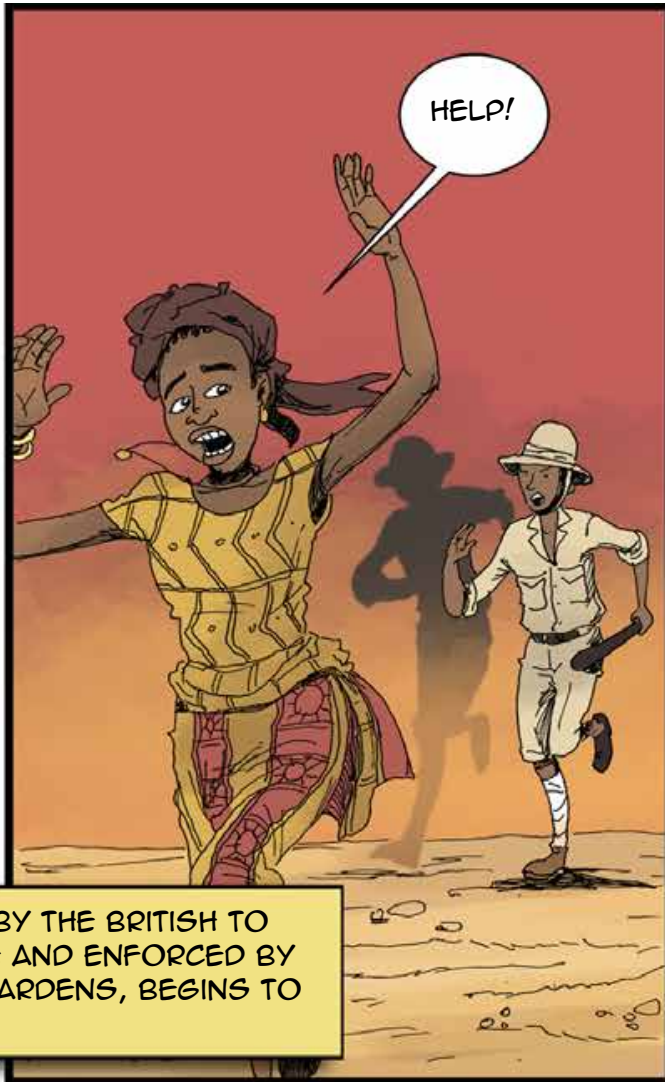


AND YET FOR EVERY VICTORY, ANOTHER INJUSTICE SPRINGS UP. FOR BACK IN ABEOKUTA, TROUBLE IS AFOOT. THE BRITISH ARE USING THE ALAKE, THE TRADITIONAL SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY IN EGBALAND, TO ENFORCE THE FLAT-RATE TAXATION OF WOMEN...



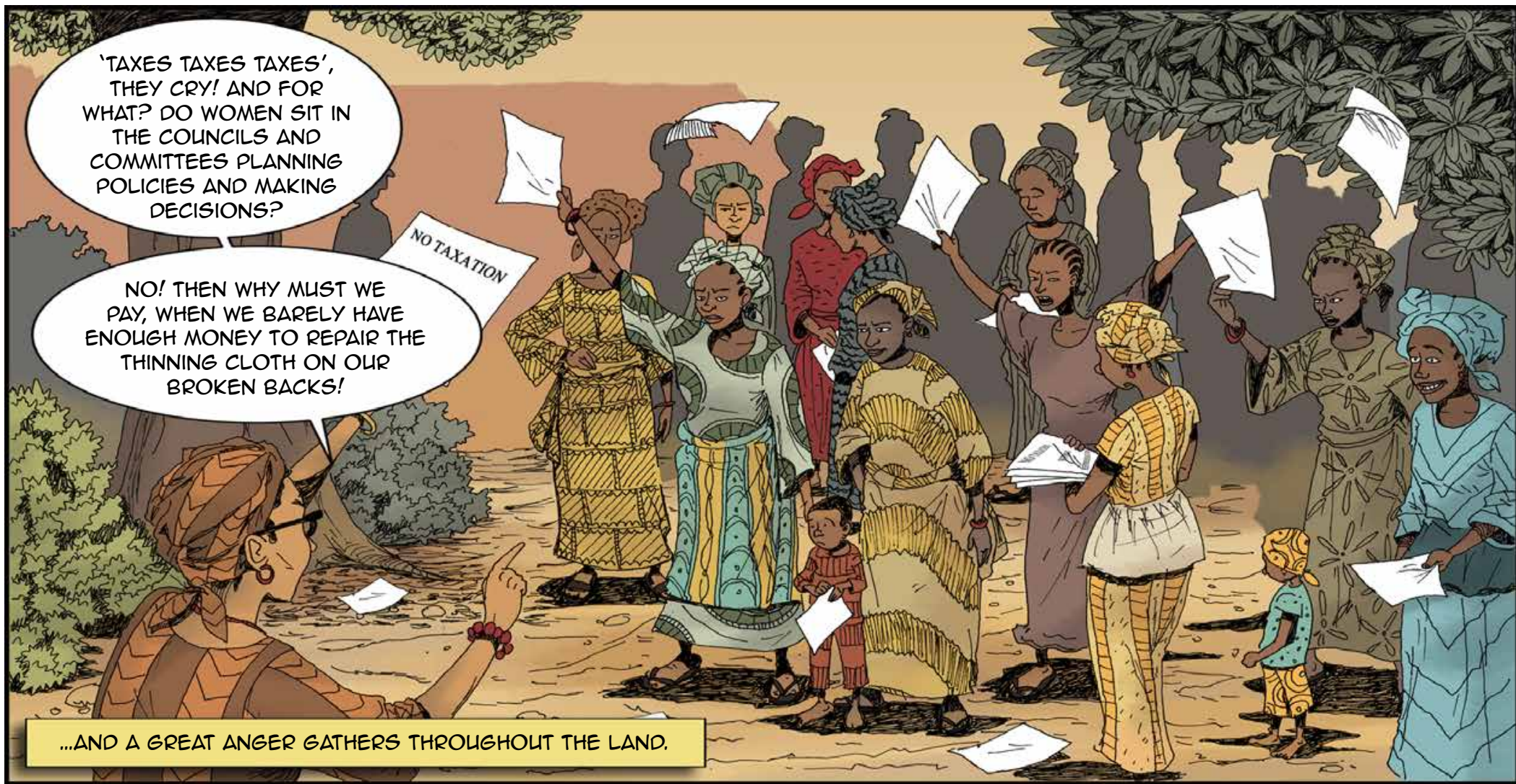






AND SO THE NEW FLAT-TAX, INTRODUCED BY THE BRITISH TO RAISE REVENUE FOR THE COLONIAL STATE AND ENFORCED BY OFTEN UNSCRUPULOUS LOCAL MARKET WARDENS, BEGINS TO HIT WOMEN HARD...





'TAXES TAXES TAXES',  
THEY CRY! AND FOR  
WHAT? DO WOMEN SIT IN  
THE COUNCILS AND  
COMMITTEES PLANNING  
POLICIES AND MAKING  
DECISIONS?

NO! THEN WHY MUST WE  
PAY, WHEN WE BARELY HAVE  
ENOUGH MONEY TO REPAIR THE  
THINNING CLOTH ON OUR  
BROKEN BACKS!

NO TAXATION

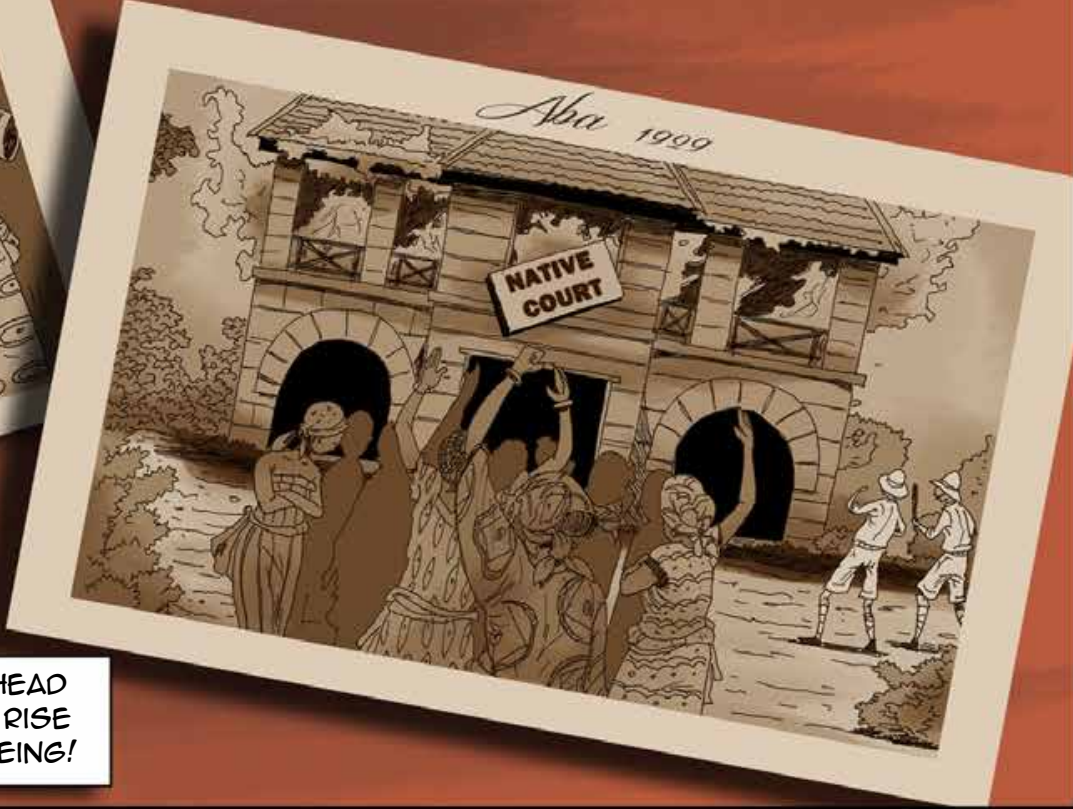
...AND A GREAT ANGER GATHERS THROUGHOUT THE LAND.



CAST YOUR MINDS BACK. DID OUR FELLOW WOMEN CITIZENS IN ABA NOT SHOW THAT FROM THE STRENGTH OF WOMEN A MIGHTY RIVER FLOWS?



DID THEY NOT BRAND THE COLONIALIST'S FOREHEAD WITH THE PROUD MARK OF DEFIANCE? O LET US RISE UP, AND SHAKE THEM TO THE ROOTS OF THEIR BEING!

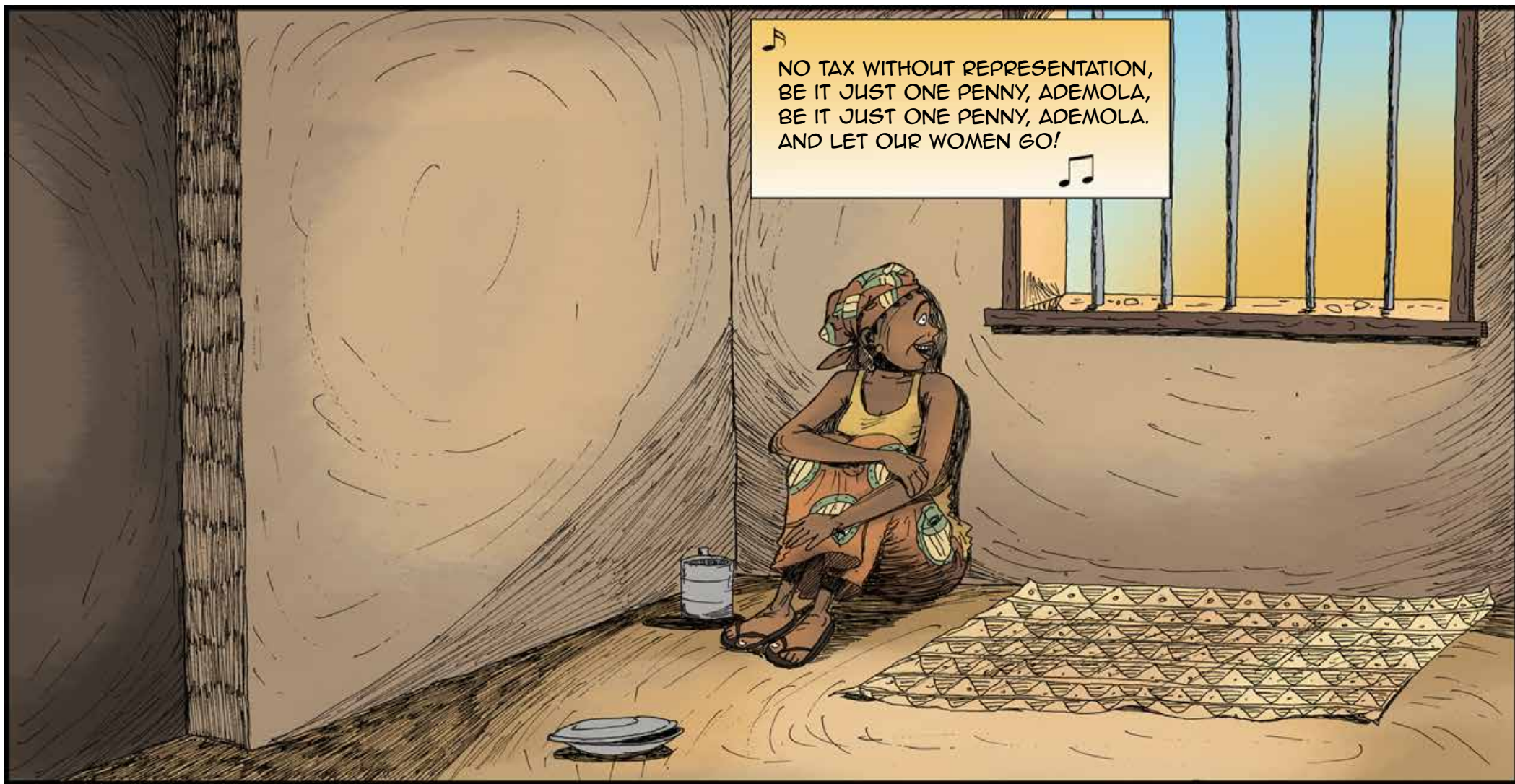




THE NEXT DAY...



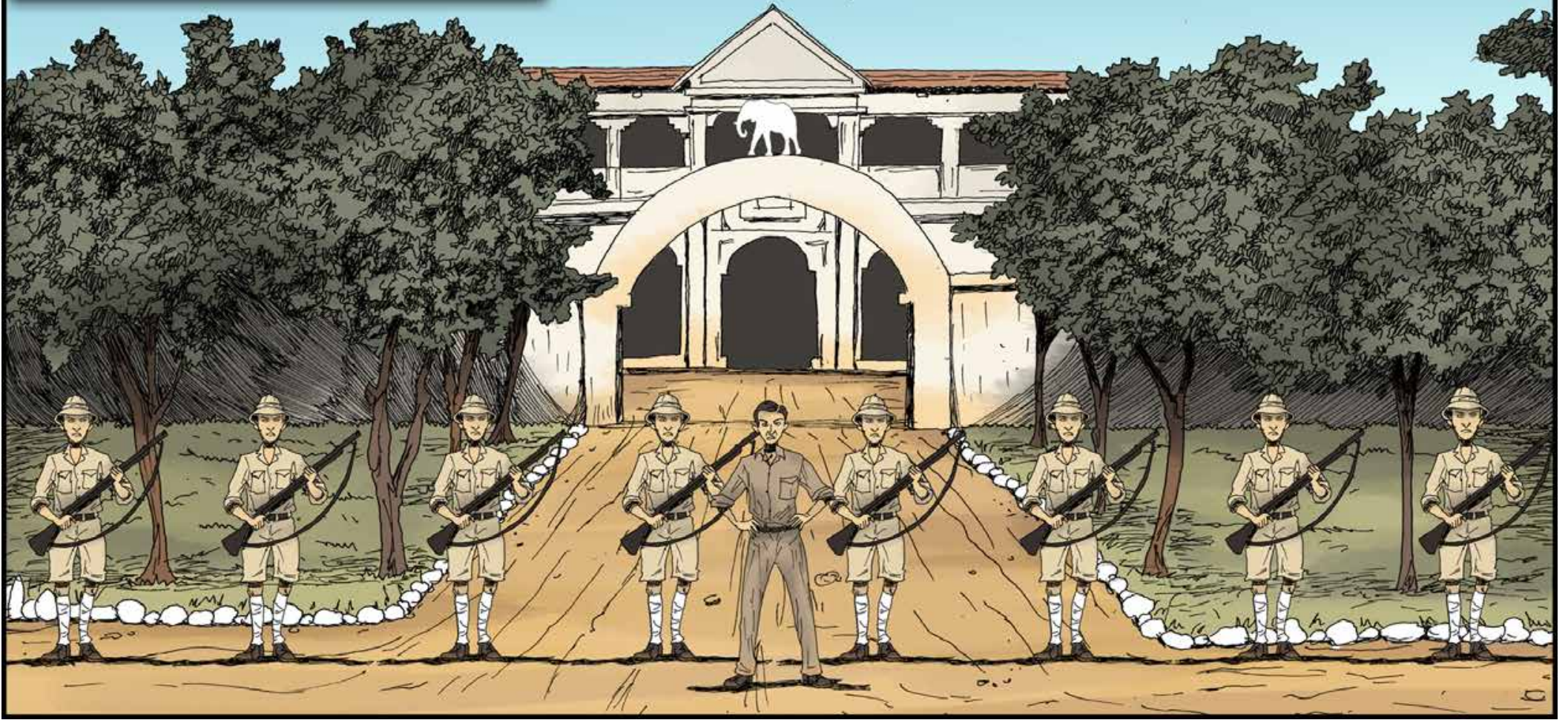




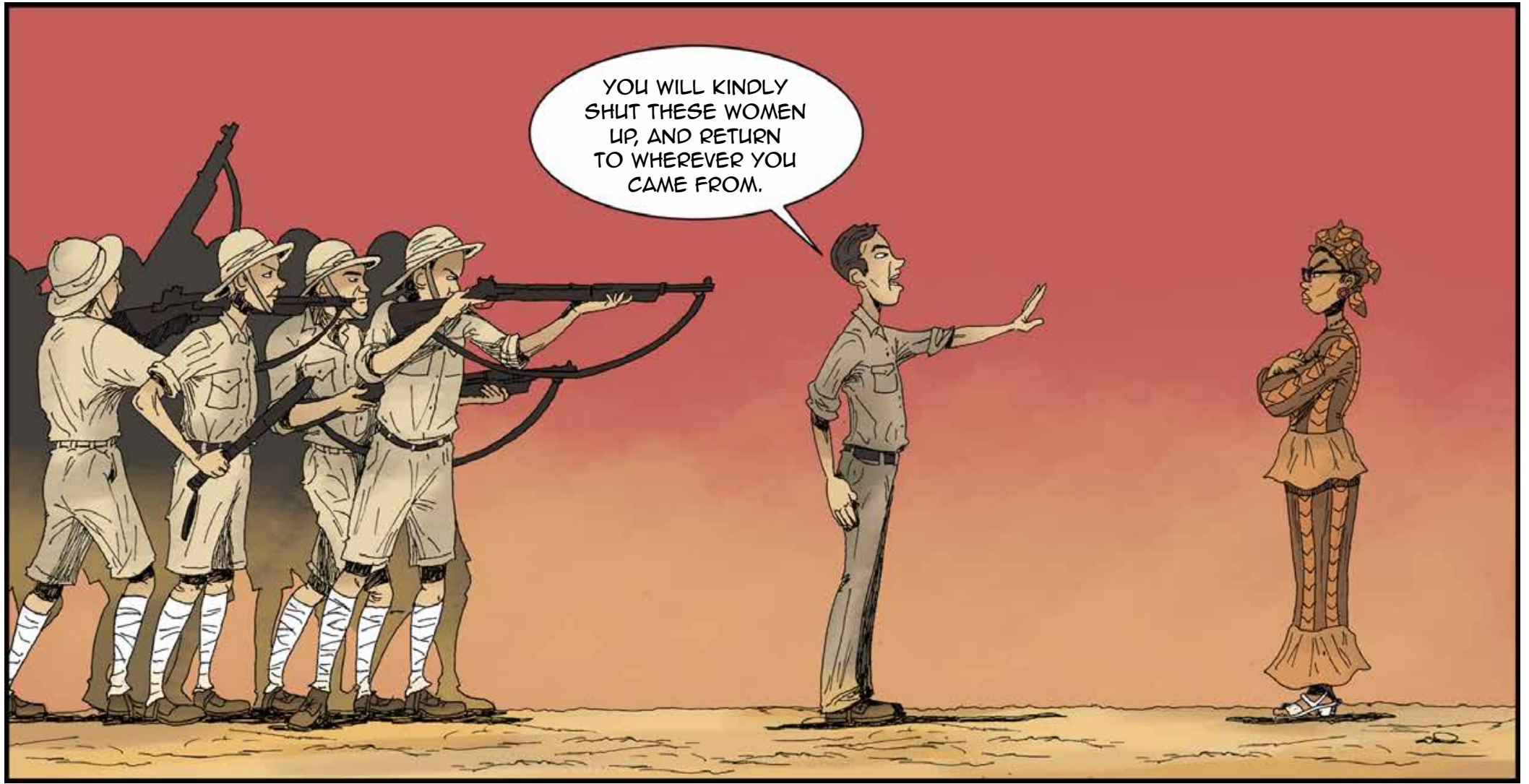
♪  
NO TAX WITHOUT REPRESENTATION,  
BE IT JUST ONE PENNY, ADEMOLA,  
BE IT JUST ONE PENNY, ADEMOLA.  
AND LET OUR WOMEN GO!  
♪



THE DISTRICT OFFICER LOOKS UNRUFFLED...









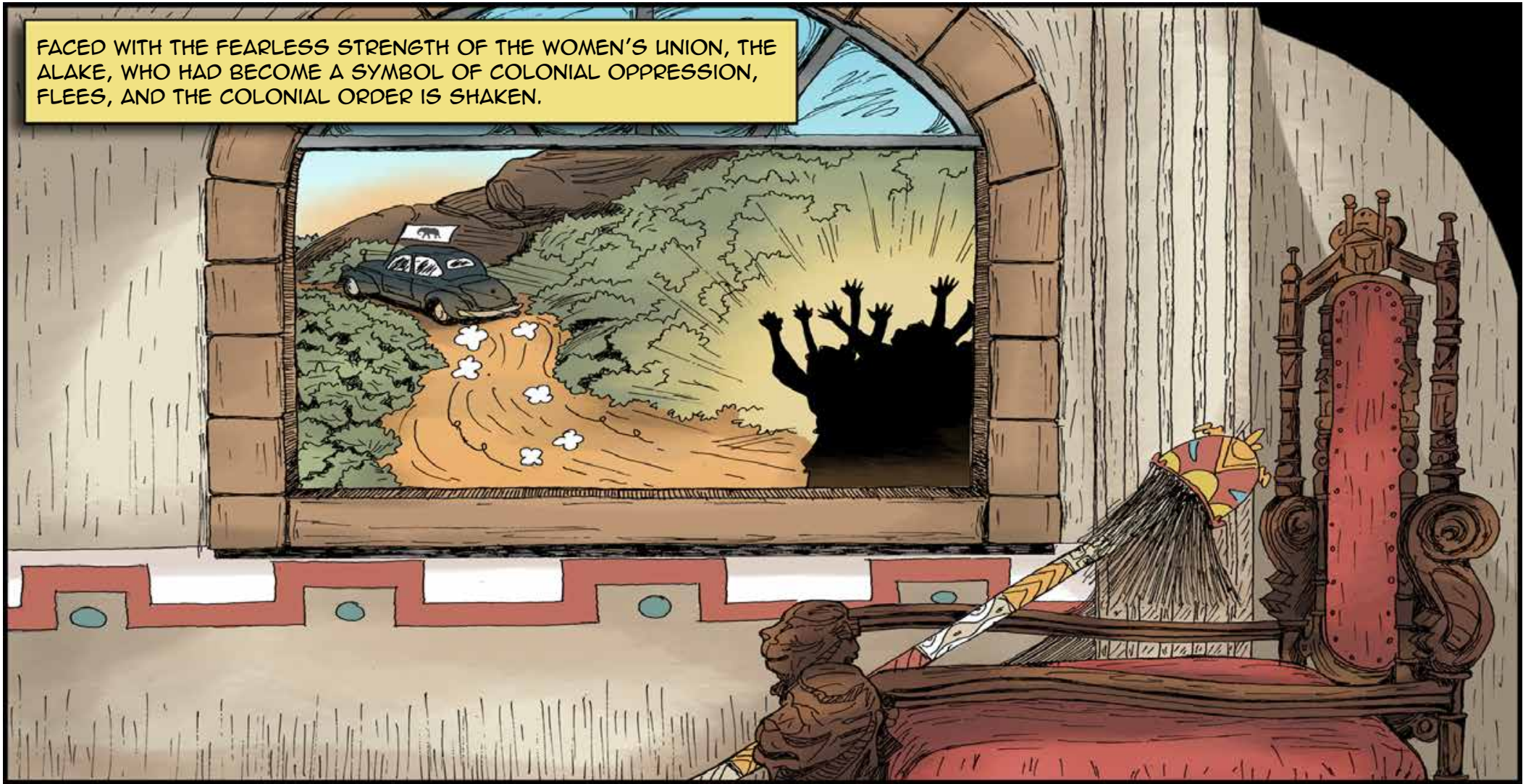
BUT HE DOES NOT KNOW  
WHAT HE IS UP AGAINST...

YOU MAY HAVE  
BEEN BORN, YOU WERE  
NOT BRED. WOULD YOU  
SPEAK TO YOUR MOTHER  
LIKE THAT?





FACED WITH THE FEARLESS STRENGTH OF THE WOMEN'S UNION, THE ALAKE, WHO HAD BECOME A SYMBOL OF COLONIAL OPPRESSION, FLEES, AND THE COLONIAL ORDER IS SHAKEN.





NIGERIA

AFRICA

WORLD



UNDER THE INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF FUNMILAYO RANSOME-KUTI, THE ABEOKUTA WOMEN'S UNION BECAME A MODEL ORGANIZATION FOR THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN NIGERIA... AFRICA... AND ACROSS THE WORLD.





Visit and share the UNESCO website on Women Figures in African History: [www.unesco.org/womenin africa](http://www.unesco.org/womenin africa)







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### **Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti**

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti (1900–1978) was a leading activist during Nigerian women’s anti-colonial struggles. She founded the Abeokuta Women’s Union, one of the most impressive women’s organizations of the twentieth century (with a membership estimated to have reached up to 20,000 women), which fought to protect and further the rights of women.

### **Women in African History**

Through various pedagogical resources and the use of Information and Communication technologies (ICTs), UNESCO seeks to highlight the legacy of a selection of key women figures of African history and its diaspora. This project demonstrates that African women have always distinguished themselves in the history of their continent in areas as diverse as politics (Gisèle Rabesahala), diplomacy and resistance against colonization (Njinga Mbandi), the defense of women’s rights (Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti), and environmental protection (Wangari Maathai).

This list of 20 women represents only a small part of the contribution of African women, known and unknown, to the history of their countries, Africa and all mankind.

**For additional resources, please visit the website [www.unesco.org/womenin africa](http://www.unesco.org/womenin africa)**

**The UNESCO project *Women in African History* was realized with the financial contribution of the Republic of Bulgaria.**



Republic of Bulgaria