

THIS IS A WOMAN!

Ladies and gentlemen, friends and family from far and wide, while I have urged each man to enjoy his life, for none can issue a proxy to another to enjoy on his or her behalf, this 15 November, I am most persuaded that none can really enjoy on behalf of another. How I wish I was with you! But how man go do? Well you are all here to celebrate Etonde, and I duff my hat to you for doing a great thing. You are here for all of us who know and love a lady with sterling qualities. Dear Egbe, from the foot of Mt Kilimanjaro, your brother is saying: Happy birthday!

I am honored to say that in 1972, I enrolled at the Primary School by the Yaounde Municipal Lake. And before long I noticed this smart, plump and nubile girl in my class. Unlike some who were a bit interested in the lad who came fresh from Buea, she was as stern as her mum who happened to be our Sunday school teacher. For anyone with some common sense, there was no need for a WILD DOG sign to say "Stay clear!"

In 1976, she went to Saker Baptist College, which I salute as famous, while I went to CPC Bali, which I dare not call notorious, cela dit en passant, n'est-ce pas Cravates? In 1981, we met again in CCAST Bambili, and proceeded from there to the only university in Cameroon back in the day. When she beat the boys in class, we took it in stride for this was no surprise; we knew the stuff she was made of. At the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, if the women preferred me as the Women's Day MC, it was because they knew I had developed respect for tough girls back in primary school. Thanks to girls like Egbe Mbiwan and Doris Forlemu inter alia, I am a better man. If it were only for that alone, on behalf of all the women who suffer discrimination from inferiority complex ridden men who are a travesty to manhood, today I say it is a good thing you were born: Happy Birthday Etonde!

But there is more. For those of us who are senior citizens.....yes....let the young people listen...until you join the club, even if it is very soon...you listen. Yes. There is more because I remember Etonde begging me to forsake going to dance at Spot Bar, just so that I may improve my class performance. Only genuine and germane love could have prompted her to do that. Madam, for getting me do, what my father failed to do, even with the help of his alligator skin belt, I salute you. Any wonder that today, thanks to a smart head, perched on a beautiful body you are touching the world with a rich and enriching heart? Is that not what we have in your baby: the glorious Saker Pride?

On this day when you celebrate a major milestone, I salute the memory of your parents who brought you up in the fear of God that enables you to make a contribution to humankind, as you water and refresh a weary world from your study in Charlotte. I am so touched I cannot but paraphrase Shakespeare that we studied together, and who through the mouth of Mark Anthony expressed admiration for Brutus after the Battle of Lupercal, by saying:

*“Her life is so gentle, and the elements
So mixed in her that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, “This is a woman!”*

Yes, Maria Angelou penned the beautiful poem: The Phenomenal woman
For us, we thank God for Madam Monjimbo, the one and only Etonde Mbiwan!

This time, on this memorable day, as it is, I have said it.
Next time, maybe on your wedding anniversary, I will sing it.
Until then, know that I love you, God bless you.

**Aatsa Atogho,
15 November, 2014, Limuru, Kenya.**

