

FIDA RIVERS

EMPOWER



MAGAZINE

FIDA RIVERS

@**35**

CELEBRATES A
QUINTESSENTIAL
JURIST AND
MENTOR

SPECIAL EDITION

IN HONOUR OF

**HON. JUSTICE MARY
U. PETER-ODILI, JSC**

RETIRING JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT



FIDARIVERS 7TH EDITION

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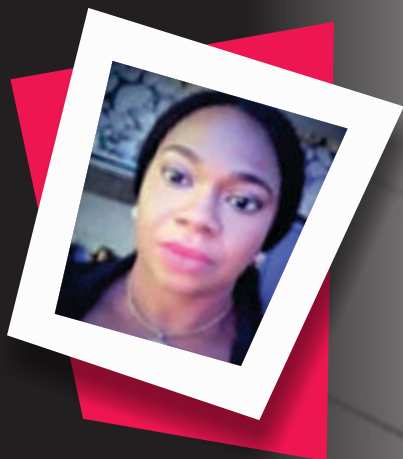
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EDITOR'S NOTE

CELEBRATING A JURIST AND MENTOR

Hello readers, welcome to the 2022 edition of our exciting and intriguing Empower Magazine. The theme for this year is FIDA Rivers: 35 Years of Championing the Rights of Women and Children and promises to be extremely interesting and insightful. This year's celebration marks FIDA Rivers at 35 as well as doubles as the celebration of an Icon, a Jurist and Mentor, Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Odili, JSC.

This 7th edition of the Empower Magazine is in honour of Hon Justice Mary Ukaego peter-Odili, JSC who is a member of the FIDA Nigeria Board of Trustees. She has served this nation successfully and is meritoriously retiring from the Supreme Court of Nigeria, the highest bench, exactly 35 years after FIDA Nigeria came into existence in Rivers State and this is no small feat.

Michelle Obama once said and I quote "there is no limit to what we as women can accomplish" indeed there is no force more powerful than a woman who is determined to rise. Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili has proved this to be true having risen to the most superior level at the bench by hard work and consistency.

Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili has successfully attained the position to which only a few women have risen. She is a mentor and great support for women in the Legal Profession. A distinguished pacesetter female Jurist who brought to the fore at the bench, her wealth of knowledge into play in the discharge of her duties as a supreme court Judge with many credible and sound judgments.

its activities as well as the successes recorded in the past years.

This edition features educative articles, and other entertaining columns, also, in this edition are goodwill and congratulatory messages to FIDA Rivers as well as the celebrant, Honourable Justice

Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili, JSC as she gracefully and meritoriously retires from the bench.

To all members of FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State branch, 35years is still a youthful age and more is required of us in our fight for protecting, promoting and preserving the rights of women and children, as we strive to see a just and equitable society where women are recognised and given their rightful place.

Special thanks to all members of the Editorial Board for their tireless efforts in putting this beautiful piece together within a very short time. I also deeply appreciate our seniors and elders of this Noble organisation who have always had our backs and given us the needed support we require in carrying out the Objectives of this Organisation and also seeing to the success of the publication of this Magazine.

Congratulations to all FIDANS!

Mrs. Sophia I.J. Afolayan

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It gives me great pleasure to write this note in commemoration of the 35 years of existence of FIDA RIVERS and honour of our inaugural Chairperson, the Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Odili (JSC).

FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch's thirty-five years of being in existence is a time to reminisce on how we have championed the rights of women and children in the State, it's a time to reminisce on the goals set, to reset missed goals, to count our successes and our blessings and to thank everyone who has joined hands with us to achieve the heights we have attained so far and to encourage everyone to join us to greater achievements.

For thirty-five years, the Branch has been at the forefront of promoting, protecting and preserving the rights of women and children in the State, it has championed protective legislation for women and children, the Branch has preached the Gospel of gender parity and has helped women find their voice and this, in turn, has helped to break the culture of silence. FIDA Rivers has become a household name and a dependable source of hope for children, women, families and society at large.

These have been made possible through our advocacy, free legal representation, alternate dispute resolutions, community outreaches, publications and public enlightenment programs.

The story of the FIDA Nigeria Rivers State Branch will not be complete without her inaugural members, our founding mothers, women who gave voice to the less privileged, did public enlightenment on human rights, were builders of grassroots democracy, facilitated community development, mobilized for gender equality and were the bedrock on which the Branch stands now.

This edition of the Empower Magazine is in honour of one of our founding mothers, the inaugural Chairperson of FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch, a former Patron of the Branch, a Trustee of FIDA Nigeria and a Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, His Lordship, Hon. Justice Mary Ukaego Peter- Odili as she meritoriously bows out of office. Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili has been a catalyst and vanguard for the sustained growth of FIDA Rivers, from when she piloted the affairs of the Branch as her first Chairperson from the 16th day of May 1987 and ensured its growth as opportunities presented themselves. She served as the Patron of the Branch when her husband Sir Dr Peter Odili was the Executive Governor of Rivers State from 1999 to 2007. She is presently a member of the Board of Trustees of FIDA Nigeria.

We wish His Lordship a happy retirement and pray that God will continue to guide, protect and grant her grace to excel in her future endeavours.

We use this opportunity to thank our Patrons, Judges, Magistrates, Past Chairpersons and Executive Members, Elders, our National Officers and all FIDA Rivers members for their continued support to ensure we continue to champion the rights and welfare of women and children.

We thank our partners, which include the Rivers State Government, Rivers State Judiciary, Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, the law enforcement agencies, the media and many more who have in all circumstances stood by us in ensuring that women and children enjoy a violence-free life in Rivers State for the past thirty-five years. Through the experience gained in the past thirty-five years, FIDA Rivers will continue to champion the rights and welfare of women and children.

Thank You and God bless.

Mrs Adata Bio-Briggs

FROM THE COUNTRY VICE PRESIDENT, FIDA NIGERIA

Mrs Amina S. Agbaje

It gives me great pleasure to write this goodwill message to you on the 35th-anniversary celebration of FIDA in Rivers State.

On behalf of FIDA NIGERIA, let me specially congratulate you for attaining this great feat.

As one of our most vibrant Branches, let me express FIDA NIGERIA'S deepest gratitude to you for all the work that Women LAWYERS in your Branch has put in the fight for the protection, promotion and defence of women and children in your Branch and indeed Nigeria.

The vibrancy, commitment, hard work and passion that your Branch has brought to the table are part of what's responsible for our current level of success as FIDA NIGERIA.

Your Branch has produced leaders of FIDA and indeed Nigeria.

Let me appreciate your Branch once again for the credible leadership that FIDA NIGERIA enjoyed under our dearest Hon. Justice Thompson and Hon. Inime Aguma. They rendered purposeful leadership they served as FIDA NIGERIA COUNTRY VICE PRESIDENTS from 2003-2006 and 2015-2019 respectively.

Their names are written in gold in our records. History will certainly be very kind to them for their selflessness in service.

A special place is reserved for FIDA Rivers' first and inaugural Chairperson, my lord, Hon. Justice Mary Peter Odili has risen to the pinnacle of her career. On behalf of FIDA NIGERIA, I wish to thank her for her foresight and indeed her service to our Nation. She is certainly a FIDA AMAZON. We are proud of her.

Generations will continue to call her blessed!

As she prepares for her retirement, I wish her long life, good health and strength.

Let me commend the elders, leaders and the entire membership of your Branch for your commitment and for keeping the fire burning.

Unlike ever before, Nigerian Women and children are in desperate need of our services. Sexual and gender-based Violence is still ravaging most of our communities. Let me, therefore, urge you to use this celebration to take stock of where you have been, where you are and where you are going.

Also, use the celebration to renew your commitment to the realisation of FIDA NIGERIA VISION AND MISSION.

With renewed commitment, dedication and passion, we are all assured of winning this battle for Nigerian women and children.

Let me thank most sincerely the Government and good people of Rivers State for all the support and encouragement that FIDA Rivers and indeed FIDA Nigeria have enjoyed from them. I must express special appreciation to His

Excellency, Governor Nyesom

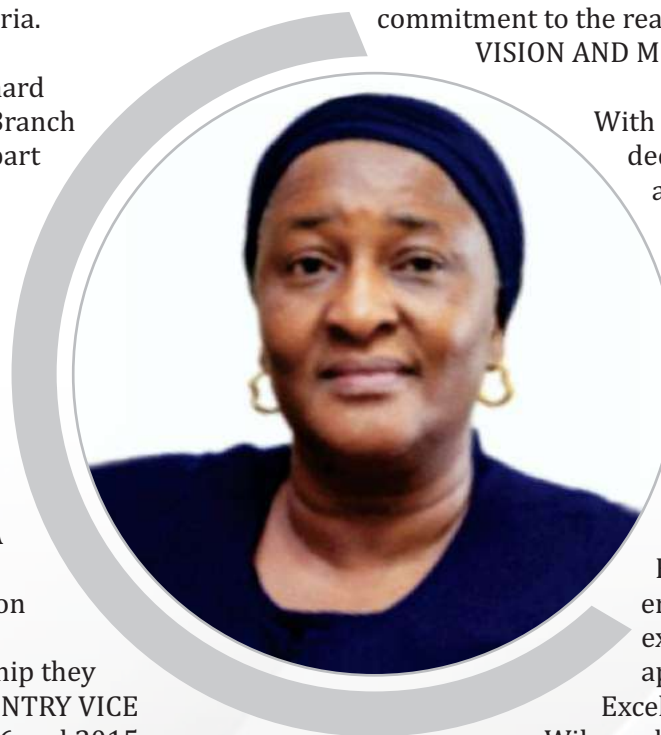
Wike and his dear wife my lord

Hon. Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike for finding our Former Country Vice President, Hon. Inime Aguma worthy of appointment in his Cabinet to serve as Commissioner in charge of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. I consider this a vote of confidence in FIDA Nigeria. Thank you so much, Sir and God bless your administration.

Once again, Congratulations FIDA RIVERS!
I wish you a memorable anniversary celebration.

Long live FIDA RIVERS!
Long live FIDA NIGERIA!

Dated this 12th day of April 2022



FIDA RIVERS:

35 YEARS OF CHAMPIONING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

BACKGROUND:

The acronym 'FIDA' is derived from the Spanish words "FEDERACION INTERNACIONAL DE ABOGADAS", whose English translation is "International Federation of Women Lawyers." FIDA was founded on 4th August 1944 in Mexico City by a group of women lawyers from Cuba, El-Salvador, Mexico, Puerto Rico and the USA.

In 1964 Ambassador Aduke Alakija established FIDA Nigeria as a branch of FIDA International. FIDA Nigeria is not for profit, a non-political, voluntary association of women called to the practice of law in Nigeria. FIDA Nigeria's primary role is to protect, promote and preserve the rights of women and children in Nigeria. Its core values are transparency, accountability, teamwork, integrity, mutual respect, commitment, service, and non-partisan. Its main objectives are to: promote the principles and aims of the United Nations in its legal and social aspects; establish friendly international relations on a basis of equality and mutual respect for all peoples; promote the study of comparative law; proffer advice to Government in cases relating to women and children.

FIDA Nigeria actualizes its objectives through free legal representation for indigent women and children, advocacy and policy campaigns, education and training, mediation and counselling services, and publishing information resources. FIDA Nigeria has formally inaugurated 44 branches in 36 states of the federation as well as the Federal Capital

Territory, Abuja. These branches are headed by duly elected State Officers and overseen by the National Executive Officers and staff of the National Secretariat.

FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State branch was formally inaugurated as a branch of FIDA Nigeria on 16th May 1987 at Hotel Presidential, Port Harcourt, by Mrs Udom Azuogu, the then FIDA Nigeria Deputy Country Vice President. Hon Justice (Mrs.) Mary U. Odili, (JSC RTD) became the inaugural Chairperson while Hon justice Denton-West (RTD) was made the inaugural patron of the branch.

Other Chairpersons of FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State branch in the order of their service are Hon. Justice D. W Okocha (RTD), Dame Aleruchi Cookey-Gam, Rev (Mrs.) Gloria Akara, Ms. Boma Bromillow-Jack, Hon. Justice (Mrs.) Elsie Thompson (member of FIDA Nigeria Board of Trustees), Hon. (Mrs.) Florence Amiesimaka (FIDA International, Secretary), Hon. Justice (Mrs.) Harriba Dagogo-Jack (Judge of the High Court of Rivers State), Hon, (Mrs.) Inime I. Aguma (UN REP, FIDA NIGERIA), Hon. Justice Florence Atili Fiberesima (Judge of the High Court of Rivers State), Mrs Eucharia Somieari-Pepple, Mrs. Florence Itamunoala, Mrs. Anthonia Osademe, Mrs Nnenna Igbokwe and currently Mrs. Adata Bio-Briggs.

This great and noble association has distinguished its work over the last 35 years, applying a multifaceted approach. We operate a free walk-in legal clinic at the Legal/ADR Centre, equipped with a functional secretariat situated on the first floor, Block D of the new Magistrate

Court Building, High Court Complex, Port Harcourt and 3rd floor, NBA Port Harcourt Branch Building, Bank Road, Port Harcourt. The branch also has four (4) liaison offices situated at Buguma, Okrika, Ahoada West and Akuku-Toru Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

Both civil and criminal matters are reported daily at the ADR/Legal Centre which operates as a law chamber with two legal officers, four (4) Youth Corps members and other volunteers to attend to clients and handle matters reported at the Centre primarily advocating for and encouraging Alternative Dispute Resolutions, especially in matrimonial matters, but may resort to litigation when such is inevitable, at which point, free legal representation is further provided until the case is disposed of.

The FIDA Rivers Legal/ADR Centre recorded 4,213 Complaints from July 2019 - to March 2022 ranging from Rape, defilement, assault, battery, child abuse, domestic violence, failure to provide necessities, custody, unlawful carnal knowledge, incest, child maintenance/upkeep, abandonment, bigamy, etc., out of the 4,213 complaints received, 2,546 were amicably settled via mediation (alternative dispute resolution) while 1,667 were charged to court. The branch through the diligent efforts of members of the litigation/ADR committee received 1351 consent Judgments and secured 28 convictions. 288 matters are currently ongoing in court. Efforts are made to settle civil cases at the stage of mediation. Only civil matters cannot be settled at this stage and criminal matters progress to litigation.

FIDA Nigeria, Rivers state branch is celebrating thirty-five years of investing in women and children and compliance with the 5-years strategic Plan of FIDA NIGERIA (2015-2020) has the following to her credit:

THE JUDICIARY

The branch has enjoyed the partnership and support of the Rivers State Judiciary which has resulted in.

- a) The Chief Judge of Rivers State is the Patron of FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State branch.

- b) Waiver of filing fees for all pro-bono cases handled by FIDA via the capturing of FIDA Rivers as a probono organization into the Rivers State Judiciary electronic filing platform.
- c) Co-opting of FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State branch represented by the Chairperson as a member of the Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Council.
- d) Partnering to secure the release of several women and juvenile offenders unlawfully incarcerated or unduly detained without trial at the Prisons through the annual Goal Delivery exercise of his Lordship, the Chief Judge of Rivers State.
- e) Assent to the establishment of both lower and higher divisions of a Family Court in Rivers State.

ENLIGHTENMENT CAMPAIGN AND SENSITIZATION

FIDA Rivers has successfully carried out enlightenment campaigns /sensitization with positive outcomes in over 90% of the Local Government Areas in the State e.g. Abua, Khana, Eleme, Bonny, Ahoada, Emohua, Port Harcourt Local Government Council, Obio/Akpor, Oyigbo, Opobo, Ogu/Bolo, Okrika, Asari-Toru, Etche, Tai, and school advocacy visits in over 60 per cent of the public secondary schools in Rivers State on the following issues;

- a) Gender Equality
- b) Violence against Women & Children
- c) Sexual Violence
- d) Women Building Peace
- e) Provisions of the VAPP Law, ACJL and Child Rights law.
- f) The Plight of Nigerian Widows
- g) Women Inheritance Rights
- h) Women in Politics
- i) Maternal Mortality
- j) Women Empowerment,
- k) Cultism and Bullying.
- l) Cybercrimes

INFLUENCING LEGISLATION ON THE FOLLOWING LAWS:

- a) The Prohibition of Harmful Traditional Practice
- b) The Prohibition of Female Circumcision.

- c) Women's inheritance rights in Rivers State
- d) The Reproductive Health Services
- e) Administration of Criminal Justice Law
- f) The Child Rights Law.
- g) Violence Against Persons Prohibition Law, etc.

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME

- a) Building grassroots Democracy
- b) Formation of pressure groups
- c) Training of Paralegals in several communities.
- d) Voter Education
- e) Advocacy and lobbying on gender issues, etc.
- f) Campaign On increasing Participation of Women in Politics.

PUBLICATIONS SINCE INCEPTION:

- a) FIDA Journals
- b) The plight of the Nigerian Widow.
- c) Women know your Rights (courtesy of the Norwegian Human Rights Fund).
- d) Women in Governance (courtesy of CEDPA, 1998)
- e) Marriage in Nigeria (courtesy of CEDPA, 1999)
- f) Women Empowerment in Politics (Courtesy of USLWW, 2000)
- g) Making International Conventions relevant in the lives of Rivers Women.
- h) Violence Against Women (Courtesy of UNIFEM)
- i) Engendering Legislative Issues
- j) Empower Magazines and Newsletters
- k) Laws Affecting Women in Rivers State (2009)
- l) Women Who Dared to Make a Difference Through the Courts (2016).
- m) A simplified version of the ACJL 2022.

HUMANITARIAN SERVICES

FIDA Rivers renders walk in free legal clinics, voluntary services to inmates of the Remand Home, Old People's Home, Special School for the Handicapped, Children's Home, Cheshire Home, and other Orphanages and Homes in Rivers State. We also offer career guidance and

counselling services, seminars, and life skills training for primary and post-primary students in the state. Advocacy, policy campaigns, mediations, assistance and collaborative programs.

BUILDING COALITION

FIDA Rivers, in recognition of the necessity to garner support and partnership in pursuit of its set aim, developed the strategy of engaging partners from all sectors of the state. We have built a strong partnership over the years with the Rivers State Government, National Association of Women Journalist (NAWOJ), Rivers State Police command, Doctors without Borders, Medical Women Association of Nigeria Rivers State Chapter, Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, Action Aid, International Community of the Red Cross, MacArthur Foundation and Media Organizations. These agencies and organizations have partnered with FIDA Rivers in their programs over the years.

RECENT PROJECTS SUCCESSFULLY EXECUTED

The following projects, awarded to the branch were successfully executed;

- 1) Workshop on the Effective Implementation of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law themed the Network of the Bar and Bench, Police, and Correctional Service Officers successfully executed in September 2020.
- 2) Paralegal training (FIDA Nigeria sponsored project) in communities from three Local Government Areas of Rivers State to wit; Ahoada East and Ahoada West Local Government Area and Okrika Local Government Area aimed at equipping non-lawyers with basic tools to enable them to enlighten their community and bridge the gap between police, judicial system and the community. The participants of the training were drawn from Women's groups, youth bodies, church, market, school and community development groups. The Project was executed in

- January 2021.
- 3) A one-day training workshop on the Administration of Criminal Justice Law (MacArthur sponsored project) was executed at Kirike Community of Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers State.
 - 4) Administration of Criminal Justice Sensitization outreach project (MacArthur sponsored project) in four communities; Amadi -Ama, Ozuoboko, Ukukalama and Somiari/fimie successfully executed in 2020.
 - 5) Inauguration of the Rivers State Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Council (MacArthur/FIDA Nigeria sponsored Project) executed in 2020 as the Council was inaugurated by the then Chief Judge of Rivers State, Hon. Justice Adama Iyayi Lamikanra (As she then was).
 - 6) MacArthur/FIDA Nigeria sponsored the October quarterly meeting of the Administration of the Criminal Justice Monitoring Council successfully executed in October 2021.
 - 7) Action Aid Nigeria Sustenance Project aimed at provision of temporal accommodation to over 60 displaced persons and legal aid to 30 indigent persons successfully executed in 2020.
 - 8) FIDA Rivers is currently executing a three- year project on effective implementation of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law sponsored by the Mac Arthur Foundation.

Capacity Development

FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State branch during our monthly general meeting has continued to train and empower members in different areas to help them and recently the branch conducted leadership training on organizational effectiveness in 2021 and Leadership training in 2022.

The branch participated actively in National and international conferences of FIDA International and FIDA Nigeria as well as hosted FIDA Nigeria, National Activities successfully.

ELEVATIONS

FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State branch in the past thirty-five years has produced judges, magistrates, national and international offices some of whom have retired, however, the branch currently has the following as its members; Hon. Justice Elsie Thompson (Member of FIDA Nigeria, Board of Trustees), Florence Amiesimaka (FIDA International Secretary), Hon Inime Aguma (FIDA Nigeria, UN Rep), Mrs Evelyn Membere -Asimiea (Deputy Country Vice President, FIDA Nigeria), Hon. Justice Joy Akpugunum, Hon. Justice Margaret Opara, Hon. Justice Harriba Dagogo Jack, Hon. Justice Constance D. Green Hon. Justice Uche Kingsley – Chuku, Hon. Justice Florence Fiberesima, Hon. Justice Chinelo Odili, and more than 9 magistrates.

AWARDS

The branch in the past has received so many awards and recently the following awards:

- 1) 27th day of September 2019, amidst other invited resource persons, FIDA Rivers received an award from the Shell Petroleum Co. in recognition of FIDA's impact and campaign against sexual abuse.
- 2) 26th day of August 2019 FIDA Rivers clinched the South-South media corporate social responsibility award aimed at celebrating institutions, organizations or associations helping to build the society around them.
- 3) Award of excellence from the National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) in recognition of FIDA Rivers' selfless service to humanity.

MEET OUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



MRS. ADATA BIO-BRIGGS
CHAIRPERSON



TAMUNOIBUEMI JIM GEORGE
VICE-CHAIRPERSON



INIOBONG IRENE PEPPL
SECRETARY



CHIOMA AMAEHULE
ASST. SECRETARY



MRS. EREFAKA BOMA
TREASURER



HON. VIRGINIA OTONYE KALIO
FINANCIAL SECRETARY



MRS. SOPHIA I. J. AFOLAYAN
PUBLICITY SECRETARY



MRS. CONCELLIA ENWEREUZOH
ASST. PUBLICITY SECRETARY



MRS. ANTHONIA ONYKERE
WELFARE SECRETARY



MRS. NNENNA IGBOKWE
EX-OFFICIO



MRS. MERCY HIRSE-DAMINA
EX-OFFICIO

GIRLS HAVE, GIRLS CAN AND GIRLS WILL!

By Boma Ayomide Alabi OON, SAN

SYNOPSIS:

The intention of this essay is firstly to honour one to whom honour is due, Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili JSC, and secondly, and equally importantly, to inspire the younger generation to the realization that they stand on the proverbial shoulders of this giant of a jurist and others like her, hopefully, leading to the unshakeable confidence required to strive! Strive, knowing that success is attainable. Indeed, it is possible to achieve the pinnacle of one's chosen career, as this great jurist has if one stays focused and stays the course.

We will look at the life and career of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg aka Notorious (RBG) Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili and Justice Ketanji Jackson Brown and attempt to distil the commonalities between these girls who have, and can, encourage and guide the girls who will!

RUTH BADER GINSBURG (NOTORIOUS RBG)

EARLY LIFE

RBG was born Joan Ruth Bader on March 15, 1933, in Brooklyn, New York. The second daughter of Nathan and Celia Bader. Although she was a good student, her mother did not attend college but worked in a garment factory to pay her brother's tuition. She took an active role in her daughter's education, thinking she would become a history teacher one day.

Ginsburg studied Government at Cornell University where she met her husband Martin D. Ginsburg. While at Cornell, she studied under Russian- American novelist [Vladimir Nabokov](#) who she identified as having influenced her writing. She was a member of [Alpha Epsilon Phi](#) and [Phi Beta Kappa](#) and graduated as the highest-ranking female student in her graduating class. She married Martin a month after graduating and they moved to [Fort Sill, Oklahoma](#), where he was stationed as a [Reserve Officers' Training Corps](#) officer in the [United States Army Reserve](#) after his call-up to active duty. At age 21, she worked for the [Social Security Administration](#) office in

Oklahoma, where she was demoted after becoming pregnant with her first child. She gave birth to a daughter in 1955.

Martin served for 2 years and after his discharge, the couple returned to Harvard where Ginsburg also enrolled. She was, however, met with a male-dominated, hostile environment, being one of 9 females in her class of 500. It was also reported that the Dean invited all the females and questioned why they were taking the place of men. Despite the harsh realities, Ginsburg excelled academically and eventually became a member of the Harvard law review.

Her husband Martin was diagnosed with testicular cancer in 1956 which required intensive treatment so Ginsburg started taking notes for her husband while she continued her studies and took care of their young daughter. Martin recovered, graduated from law school and took a job in New York. Ginsburg applied to complete her third year towards a Harvard degree in Colombia but the Dean denied her request so she transferred to Colombia becoming the first woman and one of the very few individuals to be on two major law reviews (The Harvard law review and Colombia law review. She graduated joint first in her class in 1959.

EARLY CAREER

Although she graduated top of her class, she struggled to find a job. She was turned down for a clerkship with Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter because of her gender. Although he was impressed with her, he was not ready to hire a woman. The first female clerk, Lucile Lomen, had been hired just 16 years earlier, in 1944 by Justice William O. Douglas. She was eventually hired by Judge Edmund L. Palmieri, a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. It had been earlier reported that Colombia Law Professor Gerald Gunther, who recommended her, threatened to never recommend any Colombia Law student if Ginsburg was not given the chance. After her clerkship, she was offered jobs by law firms but at a lower salary than her male

counterparts. She instead chose to join the Colombia Project on International civil procedure, she learned Swedish and co-authored a book with Anders Bruzelius on Civil procedure in Sweden. While researching her book, she lived in Sweden and was impressed and influenced by the changes in Sweden where women were 20 to 25% of all law students. She also observed a judge who was 8 months pregnant and still working. When she returned to America, she became a professor at Rutgers University Law school where she was paid less because “your husband has a very good job.” She ended up joining an equal pay campaign at Rutgers which eventually led to a salary increase for herself and other female staff. She also became the first faculty advisor to the Women’s Rights Law Reporter, which was the first law journal to focus 100% on women’s rights. When she left Rutgers, she took up a job teaching in Colombia in 1972 where she became the first female professor in Colombia to earn tenure. Ginsburg also directed the influential Women’s Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union during the 1970s. In this position, she led the fight against gender discrimination and successfully argued six landmark cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. Ginsburg took a broad look at gender discrimination, fighting not just for the women left behind, but for the men who were discriminated against as well. A clear example of this is the case of Charles Moritz which she handled while she was a director of the ACLU Women’s Rights Projects which she co-founded with Brenda Feigen in 1972.

NOTORIOUS RBG

Ginsburg described the origin of her Notorious RBG moniker in 2017, in a video from NBC “[It was] a second-year student at NYU Law School who started the Notorious RBG moniker. This young woman was, to put it mildly, disappointed by the Supreme Court’s decision in the Shelby County case — the decision that held a key part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 no longer constitutional. She was angry, and when it came to her that anger is a useless emotion. It doesn’t win

any friends or make any changes. So, instead of being angry, she would do something positive. And the positive thing she did was to put on that blog the announcement of my dissenting opinion in the Shelby County case, and then it took off from there.”

RBG further stated that she had no issues with the title noting that she and Biggie Smalls (Notorious B.I.G.) had a lot in common. “First and foremost, we were both born and bred in Brooklyn, New York.” Biggie was born in the same borough as RBG 39 years later.

GENDER EQUALITY

Her First Experience with gender inequality in the workplace was in 1955 while she worked at a Social Security Office in Lawton, Oklahoma. She had originally been rated for a GS-5 job, however, when she mentioned she was pregnant, she was given a GS-2 job as a typist. While she worked there, she discovered how hard it was for Native Americans to receive their social security. Both forms of discrimination helped form the basis of her future career.

Ginsburg helped pass several laws which helped to achieve gender equality in America. They include:

1. **Employers cannot discriminate against employees based on gender or reproductive choices.**

Ginsburg and Susan Deller Ross have been credited for helping pass the pregnancy discrimination Act which protects women from being fired or not considered for a job because they are pregnant or have plans to get pregnant.

2. **State-funded schools must admit women.**

In 1996, Ginsburg [led](#) the ruling decision in the United States v. Virginia case. She argued that rather than create a female program, women should be allowed to enter the same program as men. Creating a different program for women puts them in a cage.

3. **Women have the right to financial independence and equal benefits.**

¹Kagan Says Her Path to Supreme Court Was Made Smoother by Ginsburg's (Published 2014)' (Nytimes.com, 2021)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/11/us/kagan-says-her-path-to-supreme-court-was-made-smoother-by-ginsburg.html?_r=0> accessed 28 October 2021.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/video/ruth-bader-ginsburg-explains-origins-of-the-notorious-rbg-883729987755?v=raila&>

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/gender-equality-laws-quotes-ruth-bader-ginsburg/>

Ginsburg's work helped pass the equal credit opportunity Act 1974, which allowed women to apply for credit cards, bank accounts and mortgages without a male co-signer.

4. **Men are entitled to the same caregiving and Social Security rights as women.**

The plaintiff Moritz had been the sole caregiver of his aged mother; however, he had been denied tax deductions because he was an unmarried man. The US Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit ruled that the IRS had violated the Equal Protection Clause of the US Constitution and in 1971 Section 214 of the IRS Code was amended to allow individuals to claim caregiving deductions, regardless of sex. Ginsburg knew that for women to step out of caregiving roles, men would have to step into them.

5. **Juries must include women**

Until 1979, women were not considered important enough to participate in jury duties. It was thought that they were more useful in their homes. Ginsburg told the USA today in 2009, that women belong in all places where decisions were being made.

Ginsburg is well known for championing women's rights, she, however, understood that the fight for equality was a fight for all. This is why it seemed off when she argued to raise the drinking age for women. The law allowed for weak beer to be sold to women over the age of 18 because it was believed they had better self-control than men who had to wait till they turned 21. By winning this case, Ginsburg ratified a precedent for future gender equality arguments

In *Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld*, Wiesenfeld who made significantly less than his wife and when she died, was unable to claim her social security survivor benefits because the law only recognised widows. After all, men have assumed the

breadwinners of the house. She argued that the law was discriminatory and won a unanimous verdict. Biographer Wendy Williams said Weinberger was Ginsburg's favourite cause. Forty years later, Ginsburg officiated when Wiesenfeld remarried.

SUPREME COURT

On June 14, 1993, Ginsburg was nominated to the Supreme Court by President Bill Clinton to replace retiring Justice Byron White. Her confirmation hearings were relatively uncontroversial, and she was confirmed by the full Senate on August 3 by a vote of 96 – 3. As an Associate Justice, she became the second woman and first Jewish woman to serve on the supreme court.

Although she was liberal, she exercised judicial restraint. However, she did not shy away from forceful dissents which warranted objecting to, among other issues, the Supreme Courts' rejection of Lily Ledbetter's challenge of pay disparity and its decision on the *Bush v. Gore* lawsuit that decided the 2000 election. She became known for wearing a "dissent collar" a beaded jabot, which she wore when she dissented from the supreme courts' decision.

Her husband, Martin Ginsburg, died of cancer on the 27th of June 2010. Ginsburg, however, showed up to court the next day. Her decision to appear in court that day was fueled by her fierce dedication to her historic legal career. And it's what her husband would have wanted her to do, she later said.

RBG'S SUPREME COURT RULINGS

United States v Virginia

In 1996, Justice Ginsburg voted with the Majority for the right to attend any public university regardless of gender.

Ria Tabacco Mar, 'ACLU News & Commentary' (American Civil Liberties Union, 2021) <<https://www.aclu.org/news/civil-liberties/ruth-bader-ginsburgs-fight-for-gender-equity-was-for-all-of-us/>> accessed 27 October 2021.

Stephanie Buck, 'The 'On the Basis of Sex' Story Wasn't the Only Time Ruth Bader Ginsburg Used Cases About Men to Argue for Women's Equality' (Time, 2018) <<https://time.com/5481422/rbg-movie-male-plaintiff-history/>> accessed 30 October 2021.

Michael Rosenwald, 'The Day After Her Husband Died, Ruth Bader Ginsburg Went Back to The Supreme Court' (The Washington Post, 2020) <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2020/09/23/rbg-husband-marty-ginsburg-ruth-bader-death/>> accessed 29 October 2021.
<https://supreme.justia.com/justice-ruth-bader-ginsburg-cases/>

[Olmstead v. LC](#)

Ginsburg agreed that the Americans with Disabilities Act asserted that those with mental disabilities should be allowed to participate in society.

Although the Supreme court sided with the employer of Lily Ledbetter, who was paid a lower wage than her male counterparts, Ginsburg continued to push against the gender wage gap which led to the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in 2019, which protects workers against pay discrimination. she hung a copy of the act in her office.

In honour of her life and work as a jurist, Justia has compiled a complete list of all the opinions Justice Ginsburg authored

Death

Ginsburg had five major run-ins with cancer herself. She scheduled her chemotherapy on Fridays so she could recover over the weekend and as a result, she only missed 2 oral arguments because of illness. Ginsburg died from complications of pancreatic cancer on September 18, 2020, at age 87.

**MARY UKAEGO PETER – ODILI, CFR
EARLY LIFE**

Mary Ukaego Nzenwa was born on 12 May 1952 in AmudiObizi, [Ezinihitte-Mbaise](#) Local Government Area of [Imo State](#). She is the second daughter of Eze Bernard Nzenwa and Ugoeze Benadette Nzenwa. Her father Eze Nzenwa worked as a lawyer in the United Kingdom in 1959 before he was made Secretary of [Nigeria Airways](#). Ukaego attended several primary schools as a child including St Benedict's Primary School, Obizi Ezinitte, St Michael's Primary School, [Umuahia](#), St Agnes Primary School, Maryland and Our Lady of Apostles Primary School, Yaba. She briefly attended Our Lady of Apostles Secondary School, also in Yaba, Lagos.^[3]

Following the outbreak of the [civil war](#) in 1967, Ukaego and her parents relocated to the

[southeast of the country](#). There, she continued her education at Owerri Girls High School until her family moved back to [Mbaise](#). She then attended Mbaise Girls Secondary School and later enrolled at the Queen of the Rosary College in [Onitsha](#). In 1972, she passed with Grade I (aggregate 6) in the West African School Certificate Examination. The same year, Ukaego gained admission into the [University of Nigeria](#), Enugu campus where she read law. In her second year at the university, she earned a scholarship for maintaining the second-class upper division league with higher scores. She met [Peter Odili](#), a medical doctor, at a campus party and the two began a romantic relationship. In 1976, she graduated with an LLB (Hons) and was rated the best student in the department of commercial and property law. Shortly after, she attended the [Nigerian Law School](#) and received her B.L. certificate in 1977, before embarking on her youth service in [Benin City](#) and Abeokuta. Peter Odili was serving as a house officer in Benin City at the time.^[3]

CAREER JURIST AND FIRST LADY OF RIVERS STATE

Mary commenced her career in the judiciary as a Magistrate Grade III in November 1978. She married Peter Odili in 1979 and gave birth to a daughter, [Adaeze](#). Mary and her family moved to [Port Harcourt](#) city where her husband founded his medical centre Pamo Clinics. Between 1980 and 1988, Mary served as Chief Magistrate Grade I, Chairman of the Juvenile Court, President, Marine Board of Inquiry into the 1979 Buguma Boat disaster, Chairman, Constitution Drafting Committee of the [University of Nigeria](#) Alumni Associates, Inaugural Chairperson of the International Federal of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Rivers State and Secretary, Nigerian Horticultural Society. With her support, her husband, Peter, entered politics and served as a member and leader of Rivers State Delegates to the Constituent Assembly. In 1992, while she was a High Court Judge, Peter was serving as the Deputy

<https://supreme.justia.com/justice-ruth-bader-ginsburg-cases/>

Governor of Rivers State. In 1999, following her husband's election as [governor](#), Mary became the [First Lady of Rivers State](#), serving until 29 May 2007.[3]

COURT OF APPEAL AND SUPREME COURT

She had held the offices of Justice, Court of Appeal, Abuja Division and Presiding Justice, Court of Appeal, Kaduna Division. On 3 May 2011, [President Jonathan](#) nominated Mary with two other Appeal Court Justices to the Supreme Court. In the prevailing geopolitical arrangement, she represented the South-East geo-political zone on the apex court bench. In a letter to the Senate, Jonathan said their appointment was necessitated by the retirement from service of Justices [Niki Tobi](#), I.F. Ogbuagu, J.O. Ogebe and G. A. Oguntade.[4] Mary was appointed a [Justice](#) of the [Supreme Court of Nigeria](#) (JSC) on 23 June 2011.[5][6]

NOTABLE CASES

Mary's notable cases are too numerous to mention having served for over forty years in the judiciary and indeed are the subject of another publication. Suffice to say that more recently, she was the leader of the Five Person Panel at the Supreme Court that nullified the Gubernatorial Election of David Lyon after his deputy was found wanting for submitting fake certificates during pre-election screening after they were declared winners on November 16, 2019, Bayelsa State gubernatorial elections.[7]

KENTAJI BROWN JACKSON

EARLY LIFE

Kentaji Jackson, Born KentajiOnyika Brown which translates to "lovely one" was born on the 14th of September 1970 to Johnny Brown and Ellery Brown she was brought up under the ignominies of racial segregation in the US South. Although originally from Miami, she was born in Washington DC where her parents relocated to escape Jim Crow in the great migration She developed a love for the law from her father who trained her to be a lawyer as a mature student while she was at preschool. Her father went on to

become the chief attorney for the Miami-Dade County School Board.

She attended Miami Palmetto Senior High School in 1988. She shared in her school yearbook that her goal was to eventually receive a judicial appointment. Ketanji studied government at Harvard University where she graduated in 1992 with an A.B magna cum laude, then attended Harvard Law School and graduated in 1996 with a Juris Doctor cum laude.

Kentaji's Uncle was sentenced to life in prison for a non-violent cocaine crime, while she was in college, which, no doubt, added to her determination to become a lawyer and ensure that justice is dispensed equally to all. Her uncle's case gave her an early understanding of the criminal justice system's complexities and she sought to correct that later in her career. His sentence was eventually commuted by Barack Obama after she had convinced a law firm to take up the case pro bono.

She is also the niece of a former Miami police chief, another uncle who is a sex crimes detective, while her younger brother worked for the Baltimore police in undercover drugs stings

CAREER

Jackson served as a law clerk to Judge Patti B. Saris, Bruce M Seyla and Justice Stephen Breyer, who she is replacing on the supreme court. She also worked in private legal practice working at Miller Cassidy Larroca & Lewin (now part of Baker Botts), Goodwin Proctor and Kenneth Feinberg (now Feinberg & Rozen LLP)

She was nominated by Barak Obama and was confirmed by unanimous consent, becoming the vice-chair of the United States Sentencing Commission. During her time there, the commission amended the sentencing guidelines to reduce the guideline range for Crack Cocaine offences and enacted the two-offence level reduction for drug crimes.

(Ajunwa, 2022)
(Pilkington, 2022)
(Pilkington, 2022)
(NEWKEY-BURDEN, 2022)
(NEWKEY-BURDEN, 2022)

She was also nominated by Obama to serve as a Judge for the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. She was confirmed by the full Senate and sworn in by Justice Breyer.

US Court of Appeals

President Joe Biden announced his intent to nominate Jackson to serve as a United States Circuit Judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. She was to replace Judge Merrick Garland who became Attorney General. She was confirmed by the United States Senate in 53 – 44 votes. Her first decision as a Court of Appeals Judge invalidated an effort by the Federal Labor Relations Authority to heighten bargaining requirements for public sector workers. The decision means that the agency would have to reconsider a rule that would not require it to bargain over small or trivial changes to conditions of employment, including office and seating arrangements.

US SUPREME COURT

Jackson was nominated to the Supreme Court by President Joe Biden and was confirmed by the US Senate with a tally of 53-47, the second shortest confirmation process for any sitting justice. She will become the first black woman to sit on the supreme court. She would also be the first Supreme Court Justice since Thurgood Marshall, who is the first black Supreme Court Justice, to have career experience representing criminal defendants.

Justice Breyer has confirmed that he would retire at the end of the Judicial term. Jackson could then take the bench with the start of the new judicial term, traditionally the first Monday in October. This year that falls on Monday, Oct. 3.

GIRLS CAN! GIRLS HAVE! GIRLS WILL! – if girls pay attention to those commonalities we mentioned at the start of this essay. Here are a few, in the words of these great women and jurists. Adopt them as your guiding principles and you most certainly will!

WORK ETHICS

"I got into the habit of writing my judgments between the time when my children went to bed and my husband came home from the hospital."

Mary Ukaego Peter – Odili CFR JSC.

"You can't always expect to be the smartest person in the room but you can promise to be the hardest working." Kentanji Brown Jackson

ACTIVISM

"Women belong in all places where decisions were being made. It shouldn't be that women are the exception" Ruth Gader Ginsburg (Notorious RBG)

"I believe in hard work and the right of all women to work for financial independence. Financial independence to enable them to take care of their families but also just for their self-esteem." **Mary Ukaego Peter – Odili CFR JSC**

"Fight for the things that you care about. But do it in a way that will lead others to join you." Ruth Gader Ginsburg (Notorious RBG)

"No child shall be disadvantaged on account of gender. The problem has been that people are not familiar with the court processes, and so have not felt confident to argue against the inheritance traditions..." **Mary Ukaego Peter – Odili CFR JSC**

VALUE OF MENTORSHIP

"There are also women I have never met but who are recorded in the pages of history and whose lives and struggles inspire me and thousands of other working women to keep putting one foot in front of another every day." Kentanji Brown Jackson

"I'm a very strong believer in listening and learning from others." Ruth Gader Ginsburg (Notorious RBG)

"My most important role is to encourage people, and especially young people, to feel that there is dignity in labour.

(DAILEY and TRICCHINELLI, 2022)
(Dong and Rieger, 2022)
(Avery, 2022)

And I couldn't persuade young girls if I were just a First Lady who went around in a lot of gold jewellery who had never worked and who had no understanding of their difficulties." **Mary Ukaego Peter – Odili CFR JSC**

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Counsel has been cross-examining for more than 30 minutes asking witness about ancestral history.

Judge intervened: "Counsel, let these ancestors rest in peace lest they start pursuing you...you may continue with your questions."

Counsel: "That will be all for the witness."



MENTORING: AN ART OR A MYTH?

By Hon. Justice Margaret Opara

Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili (JSC) has been a consequential and impactful Justice on Nigeria's Apex Court over the last eleven years. The law reports are replete with so many of my Lord's erudite decisions.

I do believe that law professors and legal practitioners will do this subject of Justice Mary Peter Odili (JSC) more justice than I can ever imagine. My piece is less ambitious. I intend to look at our retiring luminary from the eyes of a young "baby" lawyer who has sojourned with her lordship since my call to the bar in 1987.

Let me start by saying that Hon. Justice Odili has legal royalty behind her, being the daughter of the first lawyer from Mbaise (called to the Bar

in 1959) at a time when a good number of parents did not possess standard 6. It was therefore not surprising that when I first appeared before my Lord as a Chief Magistrate in Port Harcourt, she seemed to have been born into the office.

Permit me to say what we women are permitted to say about or concerning our fellow women which men have no right to say out loud. Here was a beautiful, elegant, cute, humble, cultured and debonair lady with a sweet voice and a calm mien and demeanour. She walked with poise and radiated elegance even in her simplicity. It was therefore no surprise that most of us young female lawyers easily gravitated toward her. She was an instant role model and mentor for me and many others.

To our joy, my Lord was elevated to the High Court Bench in 1992. This did not come as a surprise to most of us who practised in the state. My Lord was studious and worked strenuously to dispense Justice in a summary fashion as is expected of the Magistracy. Even as mild-mannered and kind-hearted as she is, she was firm, decisive and did not allow litigants and their counsel to delay the administration of justice.

At the High Court, I was privileged to appear before my Lord on several occasions. My Lord continued to inspire me and other young female lawyers and I dare say, even our menfolk immensely benefited from appearing before her. I would say that it was mostly from the point of her elevation to the High Court Bench in Rivers State that I unconsciously and completely submitted to my Lord as my mentor. My Lord carried herself with so much poise and grace in every aspect that a distant observer such as I then could not but admire and aspire to emulate. But more was to come.

After my Lord's husband, His Excellency Dr Peter Odili was elected Governor of Rivers State in 1999, I was privileged to relate with my lord more closely. To my surprise, even as the First Lady of Rivers State, Madam or Daa Mary as we fondly referred to her behind her back, would arrive in court early and sit till very late. She wrote and delivered rulings and judgments on time. I wondered how she could mix these burdensome tasks with family life; raising wonderful children and being a fantastic housewife.

At close range, I realized that while many of us operated at the realm of 100%, my Lord had 200% to play with. She gave her family life 100% just as she gave her work-life 100%. To this day, regrettably, no one that I know can explain her recipe or compete with her. I think My Lord qualifies as the wife of the noble character described in Proverbs 31 in the Holy Bible.

While my Lord's husband held sway in the State as its Governor, one fact that was not in doubt was that his Excellency was so beholden of my Lord. Now that my Lord can no longer hold me in contempt, I can say that on the contrary, it was my Lord that was beholden of His Excellency, her dear husband.

It will interest the reader to note that at the times when one was around my Lord and possibly having a sweet chat, once His Excellency got into the house my Lord was a different person; Mummy or Ma as I fondly call her would immediately rush to the service of

her husband. Since I am already taking liberties, I will tell a short story on how attentive my Lord could be to her dear husband. On one occasion, my Lord and I and a certain lady were 'gisting' in her house when His Excellency returned. My Lord, in her characteristic manner, barely excused herself and left us to attend to her husband. Having sorted the home front out, my Lord returned and the other lady tried to inquire why Mummy had to abandon us abruptly just because her husband returned from work. The lady asked if my Lord must run to "Peter" as if they did not wake up from the same house or he travelled for a while and just returned. We all laughed but my Lord's response sent us both rolling on the rug with laughter. She said if she did not play that vital role at that time, perhaps we all shall conclude our gist in her father's house in Mbaise village. This little joke struck a chord in me and affected me positively in my response and dealings with my husband. Here was a woman up there whom very senior and junior lawyers bowed to when they appeared before her in court, the First Lady of this great State, always ready to give to Caesar his due.

Gentlemen reading this, please relax. Don't be quick to conclude that "O! imagine, that small girl I kept in my house cannot even give me simple respect. She must read how a whole Justice of the High Court/Court of Appeal (now Supreme Court) is treating her husband like a lord and master." Yes, Mummy sees her husband as the head of the family and indeed her king. But her respect and reverence for her husband are totally and completely reciprocated. Peter, as my Lord would call her husband, holds up my Lord as a deity.

In Anthony and Cleopatra, one of the great works of Shakespeare the fact that love is unquenchable and greater than kingdom or earth was demonstrated by Anthony when Enorbabus (Anthony's boy) ran to Egypt to meet Anthony concerning the crisis in Rome (that Rome was burning). Anthony who was madly in love with beautiful Cleopatra exclaimed, in response to Enorbabus' message, thus: "Let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide arch of deranged Empire fall! Here is my space" Anthony demonstrated undying love for

Cleopatra which he believed was incomparable to any other thing including the Roman Empire in which he was the leader of the Armed Forces at the time. The love story between My Lord and her husband can be likened to that of Anthony and Cleopatra.

His Excellency treats My Lord with respect and most of all he never failed to be in constant communication with her. From my relationship with the family, I can boldly claim that I believe My Lord Knows wherever His Excellency is and whatever he is doing most of the time. From My Lord and her dear husband, I saw reciprocity of respect and love in action.

As younger female lawyers married to Politicians, some of us had cause to agonize and complain to Mummy, concerning our husbands and she played the role of a mother to many of us. Some of us had a truckload of complaints. Every time we complained to her, while my Lord sympathized and encouraged us, she had zero tolerance for bad conduct. For my Lord, constant communication and respect between spouses were a sine qua non and this was not negotiable. We all saw this in practice in our Madam's relationship with her dear husband. Therefore, slowly but steadily, most of us began to eschew bellicosity in our relationship with our husbands and communicate more with our other halves. Today, many of our marriages have survived and thrived, thanks in large part to My Lord, our dear Mummy.

And this is where the mentorship factor comes in full bloom. Most of the female lawyers who have had the fortune to be elevated to the Lower and Higher Bench in the State have especially one person to thank - My Lord who acted as a role model and mentor. We looked up to her and are still struggling to emulate her hard work and carriage.

It is pertinent to state that My Lord was not the only lawyer married to a Governor at the return of civil rule in 1999.

Other wives of Governors in other States found their niches in other areas of life. Many went into business and made tons of money. The young lady lawyers in those States married to

businessmen, Politicians, Lawyers, etc, also looked up to their First Ladies as their mentors. Invariably, many of them did not become Magistrates and Judges. Like their role models, they ventured into other careers and some made tons of money. They did not have Justice Mary Peter Odili as a mentor and role model - a woman who never failed to tell anyone who cared to hear that she does know what an LPO looks like.

So, what will I call mentoring? Is it an art or a myth?

Merriam Webster's Dictionary defines a mentor as a trusted counsellor or guide whereas mentorship is defined as the influence, guidance, or direction given by the mentor to the mentee.

Apostle Paul in his epistle to Titus in Crete instructed Titus on how he must teach different persons in the church. For older Women, he commanded them to be teachers of good things, reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not given to much wine, must admonish the young women and teach them to be sober, to love their husbands, children, etc. Over the years, our Madam has used her wisdom and wealth of experience to encourage younger women to love their husbands, love and raise their children with the fear of God in line with the Word of God in the Holy Bible - Titus 2:3-5. As a proud beneficiary of My Lord's influence, guidance and direction, I can comfortably be referred to as My Lord's MENTEE.

For me and indeed all Honourable Justice Mary Peter Odili's mentees, mentorship is a lived experience and one that I will continue to cherish till the end of time.

I met a woman of valour. A lady in every sense of the word. A lady of grace and elegance. A lady of the strong Christian faith. A thorough legal mind. A mother figure. I quickly looked up to her as a mentor and role model and I hereby declare that I have not had cause to look back. Thank you, Ma.

The apex court will be the poorer for My Lord's absence. My Lord, my Mentor, His Excellency your dear husband, your adult children and your grandchildren would by your retirement reap a bountiful harvest. CONGRATULATIONS MA.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE LAWYER

Onimim E. Jacks, LL. M. (Unilag)
Formerly Senior Lecturer, Nigerian Law School.

(A). Introduction

To most people, Artificial Intelligence (AI) would seem abstract, futuristic and mysterious, but in fact, its application is around us, everywhere. The hallowed chamber within our judicial system is in no way immune from its effect, even though AI is more pervasive and obvious in our other day to day activities.

As commonly defined, artificial intelligence, AI, is the ability of machines to learn similarly to humans. Computer systems can now complete tasks that normally require the intelligence of humans also known as cognitive thinking. AI machines now have the cognitive ability to process information, interact, store and retrieve memories and select appropriate responses and actions. Additionally, with AI, machines can now recognize speech, recognize images, make decisions and process languages.

Acquiring all of the above attributes seamlessly, in addition to legal knowledge will be the desire of every lawyer. Having a machine trained to do the above, for instance, when reviewing legal documents and handling other legal tasks will only enable the lawyer to perform his duties better and faster.

(B) AI and Legal Regulations

The deployment of AI in the legal profession by having machines undertake tasks ordinarily performed by humans (lawyers) presents challenges to the lawyer. The risk is immediately apparent to the lawyer, the client and the expected work product. Would a lawyer entrust his clients' care to a machine? With these concerns, it is no wonder lawyers are yet to wholeheartedly embrace AI.

In the last decade, more especially in the last five years, policymakers all over the world have been and are actively devising governance frameworks to regulate the use of AI. In Nigeria, however, there has been very little by way of substantive law or regulations of AI and the broader digital space.

(C) Understanding the working of AI

The goal of AI is to enable machines to recognize, think, perform and solve problems like humans. The question now is, with what do the machines perform this cognitive role? AI can only work with 'DATA' inputted into the machines. Such data is a fundamental and essential component of artificial intelligence. Data can exist in many formats which AI is expected to understand and perform various tasks with. Therefore, the first step, when it comes to the use and application of artificial intelligence is the collection and qualification of data. After that will follow the preparation

of and modification of the data to enable the AI put the data to use.

The major challenge of the legal world at this point is appreciating, understanding and dealing with the legal ramifications of improper use of artificial intelligence or failure to be forthcoming about how data is used. How is the data collected? How is the data stored and who stores the data? How is it safeguarded? Who is responsible where there is misuse or abuse? What are the rights of data subjects? Is the data used ethically? These and several other myriad questions are what policymakers, regulators, lawyers, lawmakers, etc. have to grapple with.

(D) Data Protection Law in Nigeria

Data protection law has been defined as rules that specifically regulate all or as many stages as possible in the processing of personal information. The persons whose data are being collected are referred to as data subjects.

Unfortunately, early attempts by the National Assembly to pass laws that would in some way protect the collected data did not pass the bill stage to become law. These are the Computer Security and Critical Infrastructure Protection Bill of 2005 and the Data Protection Bill of 2011. Thereafter the Freedom of Information Act was passed in 2011 which only partially protects the citizen's personal information.

The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) was set up in 2001 to implement the national digital economic policy for Nigeria. Its mandate amongst others is to regulate the Information Technology practices in Nigeria, which would include developing, regulating and advising on IT through setting regulatory standards, guidelines and policies. The NITDA Act was passed thereafter in 2007 to legalize the establishment of the agency.

In 2019, NITDA under its powers to make subsidiary legislation issued the National Data Protection Regulation, commonly referred to as the NDPR. The NDPR seeks to regulate data processing activities involving Nigerians and residents of Nigeria. The NDPR can be said to be the most comprehensive piece of legislation (subsidiary though it may be) on data protection in Nigeria today. Globally, over 100 countries have enacted

comprehensive data protection legislation, with at least a further 40 countries in the process of enacting such laws. The most notable of them so far is the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) passed into law by the European Community in 2016 and became applicable in all European Union countries in 2018. This law was enacted to protect EU citizens' data, potentially affecting every consumer brand worldwide. The GDPR is being touted as the toughest privacy and security law in the world and has more or less set the standard for other countries to follow.

(E) Legal Data

For a lawyer in any field of practice to effectively use artificial intelligence, your first and most important step is to gather legal data. Simply put, legal data is information about the law. Such data would comprise court records, cases, court documents, judges and magistrates, lawyers' information, contact information, law firms, litigation history and parties involved.

In addition to the above list, which is mostly external, internal data must also be collected. These would be current and previous matters the firm has handled, former and current clients, lawyers, other professionals engaged, time to resolution, methods of resolution and outcomes.

I must single out one of the most valuable data for lawyers - court judgments and all data relating thereto: date of judgments, parties, legal issues argued, citations and both pre-and post-trial motions and their outcomes. Some of these can be found in law reports, but we also know that only a minuscule percentage of cases are reported. Almost none of the judgments of the lower courts are reported at all and these makeup over three-quarters of all court judgments. To get AI to work maximally efficiently all these are very important data that must be collected and utilized.

(F). Conclusion: Lessons for Lawyers implementing AI

Lawyers would need to take into consideration the following lessons to effectively engage and apply AI in their practice by engaging competent IT professionals in their practice, (either on a full time or part-time basis).

(i) Understand the data on which your law firm sits

before considering AI. By this method, you identify the problems you are trying to solve and decide if AI technology might have a role in resolving them.

(ii) Note that AI is not a single tool and that it is also dynamic. It is a technology that has different applications and products. Once you have decided to use technology, look for what solves your problems, either with AI or some other technology.

(iii) Recognize the usefulness of AI in your business and the practice of law by the use of AI technology in enhancing your data-intensive tasks. The key phrase to note is 'enhancement of lawyers' work' and not a replacement of lawyers. The machines are to assist humans to achieve greater accuracy and efficiency.

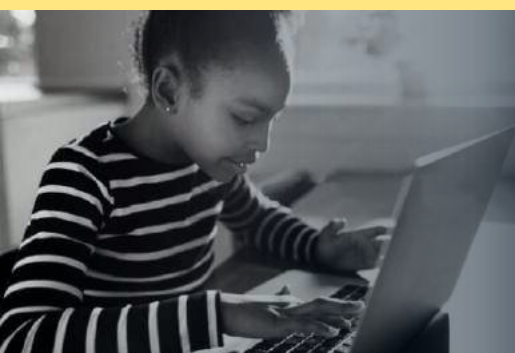
(iv) In today's world, there's the possibility of your clients' needs driving the adoption of many AI

applications. Your own AI readiness would enable you to meet the demands of your clients better, efficiently and expeditiously.

In conclusion, the adoption and application of an appropriate form of Artificial Intelligence technology will enable lawyers and law firms to make better decisions and improve core legal practice processes by increasing both the speed and accuracy of decision-making to the benefit of their clients and ultimately to the benefit of the legal profession as a whole.

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- i. Matt Hervey and Matthew Lavy, The Law of Artificial Intelligence; 2021.
- ii. Chris Neil, AI for Beginners; 2020
- iii. Chris Neil, Machine Learning for Beginners; 2020
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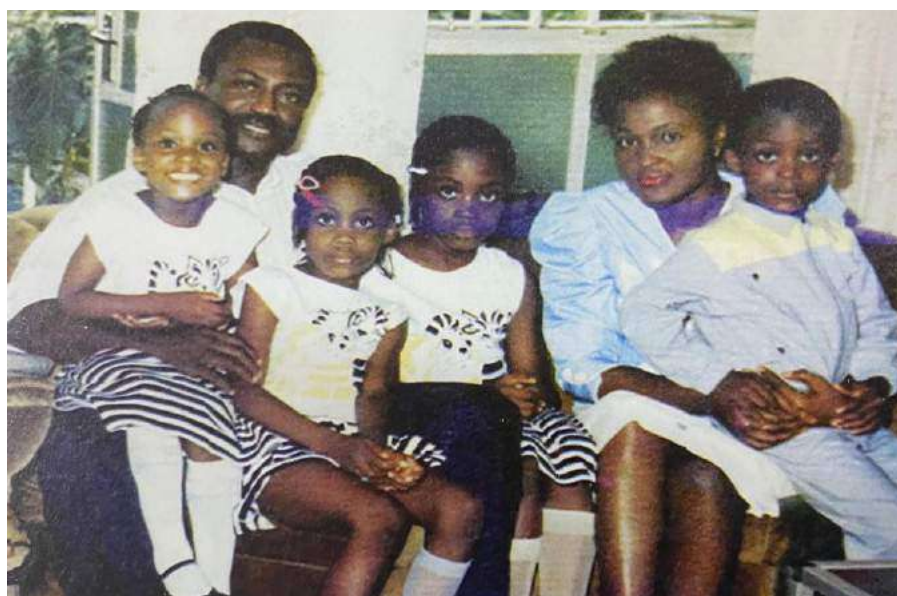
Musing: ICT and the Girl Child

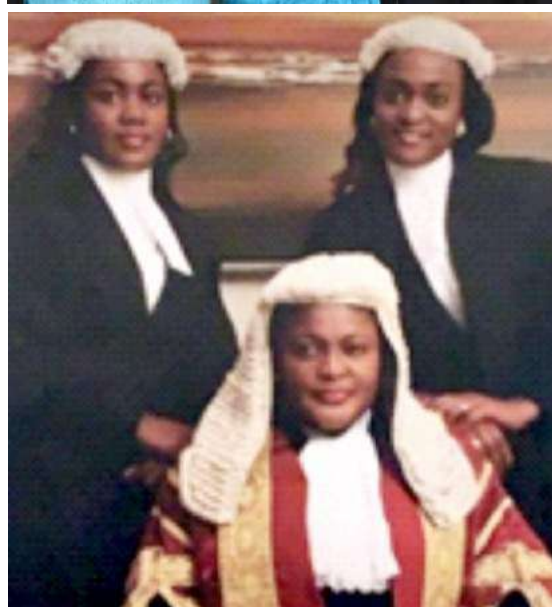
- Justice Elsie Thompson

Though ICT is becoming an increasingly essential part of our day-to-day activities, the gender digital divide is becoming even wider as the girl child continues to be side-lined when accessing and using these technologies. According to a National Bureau of Statistics report, young males in Nigeria are about twice as likely as women to pursue a career in computer science and technology-related disciplines. In addition, women account for only 22 per cent of all Engineering and Technology university graduates in Nigeria each year and account for around one-fifth of all workers in the information and communication technology industry. This disparity can be attributed to a lack of e-literacy as a result of factors such as inadequate provision for ICT education by government agencies, inadequate infrastructure, lack of awareness and training, mindset and sociocultural constraints, poverty and religious beliefs. Initiatives to boost ICT participation amongst girls have been implemented in recent times nevertheless, these projects did not prove to be fruitful.

To address these issues, efforts must be made to develop digital abilities amongst girls from an early age through continuous exposure to diverse digital technologies. The most critical step towards narrowing the digital gender gap in education.

Interventions, however, should not be confined to the formal schooling contexts; rather, they should incorporate a multidimensional solution that enables girls to acquire skills in a range of formal and informal settings including their homes, schools and communities. Moreover, these initiatives should also emphasize sustainability by ensuring that the programmes are structured in such a way that young girls can upskill and reskill as they get older. The basis for these thoughts is a call for action by FIDA and other NGOs and CSOs. We do not have to wait to achieve gender parity in education before tackling this issue. The time is now.





TO MY

MENTOR MOTHER BIG SISTER AND FRIEND

The Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili JSC has impacted my life in several ways that writing it all down will need an entire journal. She helped shape my view on work ethics and excellence in my career, marriage and family, including managing finances and life in general.

I have truly never met someone as equally impressive, smart and grounded as she is. Though at the highest pinnacle of the legal profession, she remained accessible to my family and me. For that, I will always be grateful.

Our first meeting was in 1986 when I joined her and other seniors in the profession to champion the cause of Women through FIDA. I took to her instantly. I admired her carriage as a Magistrate, a

dutiful wife and mother. This was more so because I was about to get married and the fear of being inadequate or falling short was palpable. It is not that common to have a career woman who had effectively and efficiently managed to balance family life as well. My mentor did that. Her example helped shape my intellect, interests, and approach in general. While we were originally brought together in the quest for the protection of the rights of women and children, I soon began to learn from her views, perspectives and her wealth of knowledge, which will always be fundamental in my understanding of the world. She is in all sense of the word virtue to womanhood.

In 1991 when I got married, she gave the toast, her words were: "I feel as if it is my daughter getting married" and from thence forward she counselled me like her daughter. My marriage has been greatly shaped by her. Today, I call her mummy and I mean it. I hope that all, who have people come across their paths in the course of life's journey will see it as an opportunity to mentor and mould them as she did for me. In doing that we create a better and peaceful society.

Mummy, I am glad that I can write this tribute while you can read it.

Thank you for being a shining light.

Justice Elsie Thompson

High Court Rivers State and Member, Board of Trustees FIDA Nigeria



HON. JUSTICE MARY UKAEGO PETER ODILI JSC — A ROLE MODEL

I recall my earliest memories of Hon Justice Mary Ukaego Peter -Odili was sometime in the year 1990.

She has over the years, impressed me as a wonderful combination of beauty and brains, one whose beauty radiates from the inside to the outside.

My Lady is very humble, kind, amiable, courteous, unassuming and a gentlewoman, yet with great

inner and outer strength. She is an eminent Jurist, a trailblazer, a virtuous woman and indeed a role model.

I give glory to God for this wonderful gift to humanity. I wish Milady very many more glorious years ahead. May the good Lord continually bless and keep you.

Justice Constance Douye Green

Judge of the High Court of Rivers State



IN HONOUR OF HON. JUSTICE ODILI, JSC

The Preacher said in Ecclesiastes 3:1:

"To everything, there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

For My Lord, Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Peter Odili, JSC, CFR, there is a time to work and a time to retire from work. This is indeed a glorious moment to retire from a chequered career that began in 1978 as a Magistrate Grade III and rose through the ranks to the position of Chief Magistrate Grade I until My Lord was appointed a Judge of the High Court of Rivers State in 1992 till 2004 when she was elevated to the Court of Appeal Bench and finally to the highest Court in Nigeria, the Supreme Court on the 23rd of June, 2011 where My Lord served meritoriously and distinguished herself as a learned fearless, courageous Jurist of exceptional character and high integrity. Her judgments revealed a touch of special motherly instinct, justice with fairness without minding those whose ox was gored.

To My Lord, justice must be fair and meaningful, devoid of external influence or filthy lucre! Indeed, she made all women folk proud with her lucid writings, sound knowledge of the law, and immutable Judgments which could not be questioned on the altar of criticisms or bias.

My Lord was the inaugural Chairperson of FIDA Rivers, who laid a solid foundation that continues to endure till today!! Her rare ability and sense of duty and responsibility enabled her to combine her judicial work and responsibilities with her official duties as the 1st Lady of Rivers State between 1999 and 2007, a task she performed so admirably, touching the lives of every woman and child in Rivers State. That was the glorious moments of FIDA Rivers because she integrated our organisation very well, making use of the abundance of professional women lawyers to advance her work as 1st Lady and seeing to the elevation of many of our members to the Bench and other executive appointments within and outside the State while not compromising standards. I am a proud beneficiary of this gesture.

In the case of *ECOBANK NIGERIA LIMITED V ANCHORAGE LEISURES LIMITED & 2 ORS* (2018) 18 NWLR (PT 1650) pg. 116 SC, my Lord reaffirmed the law on doing justice in any matter before the Court, the function of Courts and of course the duty of Counsel to advise litigants against frivolous appeals in the Supreme Court. Reading the lead Judgment, my noble Lord held thus:

"The essential function of all Courts is to discover the truth to do justice to the parties before them. In this case, the Respondent's objection has the semblance of academic discourse on technical grounds bereft of substantial justice..."

On the Power of the Supreme Court to draw inferences of facts and give necessary Judgment or Order, she held:

"By virtue of Order 8 rule 12(2) of the Supreme Court Rules, the Court has the power to draw inferences of fact and to give any Judgment and make any Order which ought to have been given or made, and to make such further or other orders as the case may require, including any order as to costs."

On the duty of legal practitioners not to use indecent and depreciating words against Judges, my Lord further made the following NOTABLE pronouncement thus:

"That a Judge has no forum to defend himself is not a license for being available for target practice in the use of indecent and deprecating words. I have to say so here and now to remind legal practitioners of the red line not to cross."
(Underlining mine).

This clearly shows the kind of Jurist and teacher that my noble Lord was on the Bench, enforcing standards, and applying the law appropriately.

In conclusion (for lack of space), my noble Lord Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Peter Odili, JSC is my Role Model, Mother, and amazing influencer of what is good and just for humanity at large. So, my Lord as the saying goes – "Wishing you the best retirement ever! Enjoy the new chapter of your life and enjoy being your boss."

I congratulate His Excellency, Dr Peter Odili, the children (two of whom are Honourable Judges) and grandchildren for having your wife and mummy back whole, healthy and unblemished!!

My Family, therefore, joins the whole world to celebrate a worthy and erudite Jurist, loving wife, mother, grandmother, and daughter of Zion on her meritorious retirement as Honourable Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

Congratulations my noble Lord!!

Chief (Mrs) Victoria O. Awomolo, SAN, FNICarb, FICMC, JP
FIDA Regional Vice President (RVP) (2017-2020).

My Dear Sister and Very Senior Learned Jurist

I rejoice with you as you retire from the pinnacle of your career with an unblemished name. You have been able to achieve this enviable feat due in no small measure to the largesse and support on every step of your ascent of your refined gentle husband. You are blessed among women.

For all the support I received from you as CVP from 1991 to 1997 I will be eternally grateful.

As you now step out into the unknown may your tomorrows outshine your yesterday
Mi Lord boldly step forward, soar high beyond the clouds.
God's speed my friend, I wish you well.

Chief (Mrs) Tessa Egbe Ikimi
Chairman BOT
F.I.D.A. Nigeria

Celebrating a Truly Special Lady!

Some expressions readily describe and define the Hon Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili JSC, which those who have come in close contact with her, can readily testify to. She is a woman with a pleasant, calm and gentle mien. She has a ready smile and a warm and welcoming heart for those she meets. She carries herself with admirable dignity. One could describe her as pragmatism and intelligence wrapped around a core of uncommon wisdom, a Lady by every count!

It is my pleasure to write this tribute to celebrate and honour My lord Hon. Justice Mary Peter-Odili JSC as we mark her retirement from the Supreme Court of Nigeria Bench after almost 11 years of meritorious service. Her career advancement and stellar performance have been a source of pride, joy, and motivation to many who looked up to her. As the curtains are drawn on that stage of her life, we heartily rejoice with her over what has indeed been a glorious career.

She stands out as a mother, teacher, friend, leader and mentor to the scores of people, who had the privilege of relating with her in the course of life and especially in promoting the cause of women and the vulnerable. As a core professional, she stood as a lighthouse providing direction and guidance to many, on legal principles and procedures as well as to conduct and etiquette within and outside the Bar. Many testify of profiting from her exceptional advice on various other matters - economic empowerment, investments, matrimonial and domestic matters as well as child-raising, to name but a few. She is also renowned for her generosity of heart, hand, and spirit.

Her interventions have been strategic and awe-inspiring. She remains one of the treasures and pillars of the International Federation of Women Lawyers

(FIDA) Nigeria, especially on account of the significant role she played in nurturing the Rivers State Branch from a little acorn to a gigantic oak. The fruits and branches of FIDA Rivers have spread far afield across Nigeria, Africa and indeed, the entire world. At The Adolescent Project (TAP), she turned the lives of young persons, women and indeed, families, around positively. With scholarships, skill acquisition, economic empowerment and mentoring programmes, many were pulled from the throes of helplessness and hopelessness and elevated to unprecedented heights of stability and accomplishment.

As My lord moves on to a different phase of her life, I must, on behalf of all women, thank her for the positive influence she exerted on our lives. I benefitted greatly from her wisdom, counsel, and large-heartedness before, during and even well after my tenure as FIDA Nigeria Country Vice President. Two wisdom nuggets I can readily remember are: "Make a positive difference in the lives of those around you".

"Keep looking ahead and focus on the good you can do. Do not let the past hold you down".

There is no doubt that we are set to witness a new phase in what has been an awesome life. She certainly isn't going to sit in her rocking chair and reminisce about days gone by - far from it! I can confidently predict that because she has a heart of gold and a calling to serve society, she will plug into other impactful initiatives, and we shall stand by to admire, learn from, support and applaud her. I pray that the days ahead will be richer and more colourful than the previous ones, and the grace of God abounds to her continuously. Happy retirement from the Bench, My lord!

EZINWA OKOROAFOR
DIRECTOR, FIDA INTERNATIONAL

TRIBUTE TO A MENTOR AND MOTHER

I celebrate you our Quintessential leader, Mentor and Jurist. A passionate and Caring mother who nursed and nurtured FIDA RIVERS upon her birth in 1987 giving us a solid foundation to build on in the past 35 years. As you bow out meritoriously as a sitting Judge of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, we stand in awe of you and your remarkable contribution to the legal profession.

We are glad that you stood tall and distinguished yourself amongst all. I pray that God who rewards good works will surely keep you and grant you greater heights in your future endeavours.

NNENNA J. IGBOKWE
Past Ag. Chairperson, FIDA RIVERS

Congratulations

TO HER EXCELLENCY, HON JUSTICE MARY UKAEGO PETER-ODILI JSC!

Our Joy, Our Pride & Our Inspiration!

Eulogizing you seems so easy as you have strode like a colossus from the lowest rung of the judiciary to the highest, accomplishing much. You are also an easily identifiable model for many to follow.

Your life, carriage, empathy, resourcefulness, excellence, beauty, humility and integrity endear you to many. It is because of this that my husband and I chose you as our last child's Godmother. Your counsel encourages many - the willingness and simplicity in sharing your experience to encourage and challenge us to be our best in professional and family life are highly appreciated. Your keen interest in people and community; especially women and children, exposed FIDA Rivers as an Organisation, after its 10th anniversary, to expand its impact by linking us up to international donor agencies; deepening our work in various communities, making FIDA Rivers a household name while enhancing our leadership capacity.

That same interest and unwavering support spurred us to undertake programmes such as "Engendering legislations" and caused us to build skills in legislative advocacy and Grassroots democracy.

Your then pet project- The Adolescent Project (TAP) was an eyeopener to the depth of reproductive health needs in Rivers State. As a member of the TAP Planning Committee and later, a member of the TAP Management Committee, I witnessed you open up a vista of possibilities in assisting the vulnerable and enhancing women and children's health while bringing reproductive health rights to women to the front burner.

Your strong, dignified interpersonal skills command authority and loyalty.

For those of us privileged to be mentored by you, you are a shining example and our pride. Your journey is glorious, fascinating and motivating.

We are grateful that we share in a way in this journey. It has been a privilege and a blessing in so many ways.

This write-up, therefore, allows me to publicly say- "Thank You Very Much Ma!".

As you move to the next phase of your life, may the Holy Spirit direct your path and may opportunities be created for many more to benefit from your vast knowledge and experience.

Have a joy-filled retirement! You deserve it.

Mrs Florence Adokiye Amiesimaka
Secretary FIDA International

Tribute to the Hon. Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili, JSC, on your Retirement

My Mentor and mother, I describe you like a bouquet of beautiful flowers filled with a lovely fragrance that has impacted the lives of so many.

I celebrate a quintessential jurist, an accomplished Amazon, a leader par excellence, a mentor and a virtuous woman indeed.

As a young lawyer, I was enthralled by your graceful mien and poise and you have retained these sterling qualities to date. Over time I have had the rare

privilege to drink from your wealth of experience and kindness and unrivalled passion to develop and create opportunities for all who cross your path.

I have equally watched your never dwindling interest and passion for issues that concern women and children. No wonder you along with other female lawyers founded the Rivers State branch of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), and you served as the inaugural chair.

You have mentored a large number of women to

fulfil their roles as professionals yet you strike a balance with family responsibilities. Thank you our dearest My Lord for allowing your light to shine so that all who know you will give glory to God Almighty.

As you take your deserved rest from active judicial service it is my prayer that your sacrifices and passion for the welfare of women and children will always be remembered and rewarded.

You have also remained our pride as a Judicial Officer, having served from the Magistracy up to

being a Justice of the Supreme Court. We thank you for modelling hard work, consistency and excellence in service and contributing your part to the jurisprudence of judicial precedents in Nigeria. God bless you richly and best wishes for a retirement filled with peace, good health and prosperity. Congratulations My Lord.

Hon. Justice Florence A. Fiberesima.
High Court, Rivers State Judiciary.



Tribute

To Honourable Justice Mary Peter-Odili On Her Retirement

It is eternally humbling for us in FIDA NIGERIA to write this tribute on this very great Legal Amazon! Your Lordship is bowing out at the most auspicious age of 70, after having given your all in the service of our country with so much intellectual versatility, astuteness, hard work, commitment and integrity. Your judicial record is simply impeccable!

To all who have appeared before you, my lord has followed the law, applied it judiciously and judicially with compassion and respect for the dignity of all persons.

Your lordship made history by being the third woman to ascend the bench of the Supreme Court of our nation only after Justices Aloma Mariam Mukhtar and Olufunlola Oyelola Adekeye.

Throughout your work on the bench, you have stood so strongly in the defence of rule of law. Your judgements were lucid and erudite and indeed have helped in the shaping of the Justice sector of our country. You deployed the entirety of your life so sacrificially with wits and wisdom. No

wonder, the recent shameful attack on your residence received huge condemnation and rejection. Your passion for Women and children is equally unparalleled. This propelled you to pioneer the opening of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Rivers State Branch in 1986 where you served creditably well as the Inaugural Chairperson (1986-1988), promoting, protecting and defending the rights of women and children.

As a current Member of FIDA'S Board of Trustees, you have remained passionate, committed and consistent as one of the moving forces behind the successes recorded of FIDA NIGERIA, for which we remain greatly indebted to you.

As you enter this new phase in your life, on behalf of FIDA NIGERIA, I wish you good health, strength, long life and more of God's grace.

FIDA NIGERIA is proud of you!
CONGRATULATIONS MY LORD!

Amina S. Agbaje
CVP/National President

HONOURABLE JUSTICE
MARY UKAEGO ODILI
**AN EPITOME OF
CAREER EXCELLENCE**

Honourable Justice Odili does not need any introduction in Nigeria. Her footprints in her career made her so popular that paying tribute in honour of her contribution to public service is an easy task. But the simple things are sometimes difficult to accomplish as the attestation of the virtue of Justice Odili. The depth and dimension of her profile are daunting.

One striking element is her ascendancy in the legal profession. She served on the lower Bench as a Magistrate and was elevated to the higher Bench as a High Court Judge of Rivers State, meaning that she was promoted to a senior, and later Chief Magistrate before she sat on the higher Bench.

I became acquainted with her when I was in charge of the Nigeria Police, State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Rivers State. I knew the crime statistics in the State by extension in Nigeria. Her record of public service is impeccable and corruption-free.

It was not surprising, therefore, that she was appointed Justice of the Court of Appeal. Most lawyers who joined the magistracy retired as magistrates. A limited number made it to the higher Bench where they retired as high court judges. Yet a few were appointed to the appellate Bench and a restricted minimum elevated to the apex court, like Honourable Justice Mary, a shining example of career excellence. As a wife and mother, she neatly combined her role as a one-time first lady with her judicial functions with dignity, probity, industry and comportment.

The view of practitioners who practiced before her is that Honorable Justice Odili is an embodiment of the “*supreme good*” – the canons of judicial ethics that regulate the standard of ethical conduct for members of the judiciary.

Justice Ukaego not only aspired to attain that standard, but she also excelled in the ethics of the Judiciary. She is the cynosure of the appellate Bench. Justice Mary is Brilliant in mind and Erudite in words. Her lifestyle and idiosyncrasies depict the best traditions of the professional Bench. At all times, in and out of the Court, she upholds the aura and dignity of a fine judge. She is not arrogant. Not prideful. Courteous and patient discharged her judicial duties faithfully and in the protection of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

In conclusion, I call upon all Women of goodwill to honour this great woman by emulation of her public service record.

I wish Honourable Justice Odili bliss and more public service opportunity in her retirement. By God's grace, she is still strong in health and limbs. Nigeria and the entire world will still benefit from her knowledge, discipline and experience gained during her service years.

HILDA IBIFURO-HARRISON ESQ. (MRS.)
Assistant Inspector General of Police (Rtd)

Hon. Justice Mary Ukaego Peter Odili A Distinguished Jurist, Trailblazer and Nation Builder



We celebrate a Star in every respect, whose path has been without doubt divinely illuminated from birth. Born to the renowned family of Eze B. S C. Ezenwa (KS) a royal father and lawyer of international repute, she established her class as an intellectual very early, with multiple laurels, awards and scholarship in her undergraduate studies, finishing strong with a coveted second-class upper-division and also the best graduating student, Commercial and Property law, in the class of 1976 at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

His Lordship holds a very special place in the life and career development of many young female lawyers who have followed her footsteps as an excellent role model on many levels: the bar and bench, empathy and philanthropy, incredible commitment to marital and motherly duties as a perfect wife, caring mother and doting grandmother, a way of life she lived with infectious calmness and grace.

His Excellency Sir, Dr. Peter Odili, in his book titled "Conscience and History" stated @ p50:

"...Mary who has been a formidable asset in the upbringing of our children. Mary had two jobs – Judiciary and the children..."

"...some marriages are indeed made in heaven - no doubt ours is one of them..."
Need we say more?

Your Lordship, on a more personal note, I find this a fitting moment to also express my profound gratitude for your guidance during my days as a young Magistrate, encouraging me to strike a healthy balance between my job and family when my husband, Engr. Bekinbo Dagogo-Jack served as a Commissioner in Rivers State. Today, I consciously do the same to younger professionals, I do hope they are inspired by my example and also our children have retained fond memories of the times we shared. Evergreen in our memory is the extra mile you went, to help us heal considerably, at the demise of my sweet mother, Madam Ereiyi E. W. Tienabeso. Thank you, my Mentor and Role model.

You brought to our Judiciary, your deep-seated wisdom, passion for truth, drive for excellence, a fearless voice of reason and an enormous capacity to listen (not only to what is said but to what has remained unsaid), engraving your name in gold from your days as a Magistrate to a High Court Judge, to a Justice of the Court of Appeal in 2005, to being elevated to the Supreme Court in 2011 and now bowing out with your head held high, unblemished and loved by many.

My family and I join other friends, well-wishers and the nation at large to congratulate you and celebrate the realization of this glorious climax in your judicial career and national service.

We commit, your retirement years into God's Hands and earnestly look forward to enjoying the rich fruits of your restful years, by way of books and other forms of advisory contributions to national development as well as sharing moments of dancing and gardening with you when such occasions present.

Surely, you shall continue to flourish in good health as you enjoy the fruits of your labour, to the glory of God. Amen.

Hon. Justice Hariba J. Dagogo- Jack
Judge of the High Court of Rivers State

GOODWILL MESSAGE IN HONOUR OF AN ICON: HONOURABLE JUSTICE MARY UKAEGO PETER-ODILI (JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF NIGERIA)

I commend a legend and an icon, Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili (Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria), one of the giant strides and important personalities we have and we will ever have in the legal profession today. My Lord, you made the FIDA Nigeria Rivers State branch active and global. As the first Chairperson of FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State branch, your strides and persistent efforts geared towards the growth of FIDA Rivers and the Judiciary at large can never be overemphasized.

As a judge, your decisions were precise, stunning and in accordance with the principles of law. Today, FIDA Rivers is doing marvellously well as a result of

your antecedence. Thanks for your undying efforts and the good example you laid down for us to emulate.

You've worked hard for many years and now you are retiring, it is a perfect moment for relaxation as well as a great moment to spend quality time with your loved ones. As you embark on your retirement journey, I wish to congratulate you! I pray you enjoy the fruit of your hard Labour and also wish you a relaxing and wonderful retirement. CONGRATULATIONS and God bless you, my Lord.

ANTHONIA NKEM OSADEME ESQ.
PAST CHAIRPERSON FIDA NIGERIA,
RIVERS STATE BRANCH (2016 - 2019).

Tribute to an Amazing Woman -HON. JUSTICE MARY ODILI (JSC)

Congratulations to the amazing pioneer Chairperson of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Nigeria, Rivers State Branch, on her successful retirement from the Supreme Court of Nigeria. As a true mother and despite her very busy schedule, Hon. Justice Mary Odili has always been available to FIDA both at the national and state level.

Hon. Justice Mary Odili is a multitasking woman who successfully combined her role as a wife in the private and public sphere, mother to her children, First Lady of Rivers State and also effectively and efficiently executed her duties as a professional with a spirit of humility. It is no wonder therefore that she rose meritoriously from her humble beginning as a magistrate to become a Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria and earning the reputation of a forthright judge.

Hon. Justice Mary Odili is a woman of substance and an example to womenfolk. She is a testimony to the fact that it is the personality of a person and not gender that should define a person's progress in life.

May I be excused to pay quick respect to the late father of Hon. Justice Mary Odili for not impeding through unwise gender discrimination, the icon we are paying tribute to today, only because she is female and More so, the fourth girl-child born to him after three consecutive births of her three elder sisters. I recall his burial at Mbaise, Imo State and give thanks to God that he lived to reap the fruit of his wise decision of not discriminating against this iconic girl-child, who grew up to become the First Lady of Rivers State and is now retiring as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. And who knows what lies ahead? Kudos also to His Excellency, the former Governor of Rivers State, Dr Peter Odili, her husband, who also believed in her and encouraged her to attain great heights.

My trust in God is that the retirement years of the Hon. Justice Mary Odili will be healthful, fruitful, impactful and spent in the true fulfilling service of God and humanity.

Florence Itamunoala
Past Chairperson, FIDA RIVERS



Tribute

TO HONOURABLE JUSTICE MARY UKAEGO PETER-ODILI JSC, GSSRS.

I celebrate the legacy of a trailblazer and veritable icon, Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili JSC, GSSRS.

Honourable Justice Mary Peter-Odili has truly been an eminent Bencher of the highest Court in Nigeria, a distinguished mentor and pioneer par-excellence whose imprint of legacy remains indelible.

To capture a glimpse of Honourable Justice Mary's giant strides, I recount that her professional career spans over 4 decades, with her, steadily rising from the lowest row in the judiciary to the highest. As an internationally renowned professional whose achievements have immensely impacted society especially the rights of women, children and vulnerable persons, I celebrate the journey of a woman whose life speaks of indomitable distinction and brilliance.

My Lord's strides are characterized by grace, poise and devotion. Fulfilling all her obligations as an astute professional, leader, wife, mother, daughter, friend and many others, she effortlessly wears the various hats whilst nurturing great minds like myself to attain their highest potential across all spheres of life. Justice Mary Peter-Odili is a dear mentor who has painstakingly and veraciously prepared me for the journey ahead both in terms of my career, marriage, motherhood and opportunities. As wife to His Excellency Dr Peter Odili KSM, CON GSSRS, the Executive Governor of Rivers State from May 1999 to May 2007, she assiduously executed all her responsibilities and stewarded her influence towards the realization of the rights and welfare of women, children, older

persons, persons with disabilities and vulnerable persons.

Justice Mary Odili, being the Inaugural Chairperson of the International Federation of Women Lawyers, Rivers State Chapter successfully mentored several women for excellent leadership.

Working with Hon. Justice Mary Odili on the Adolescent Project (TAP) Nigeria and several projects of the International Federation of Women Lawyers and other Organizations, the skills, knowledge and network gained remain highly relevant even in my present and future endeavours.



To my beloved mentor and friend, Ma, I truly applaud your excellent course thus far. It is the close of one chapter and the commencement of another. We are most grateful to God, your help in ages past who has led you thus far and in Him, we put our trust that he will continually guide you on to greater heights.

Inime Chinwenwo Aguma
UN Representative, FIDA INT'L

TRIBUTE IN HONOUR OF JUSTICE MARY PETER ODILI, JSC

I met Justice Mary Odili for the first time when as the Rivers State 1st Lady she hosted FIDA Nigeria to lunch during the Bar Conference in Port Harcourt and I was struck by her simplicity, humility and candour.

As a FIDAN and the pioneer Chairperson of FIDA Rivers, she showed exemplary leadership and took the branch to an enviable height with many mentees to continue her good works and for others to follow.

As a woman, she is remarkable, a leading light, a consummate personality, simple and an epitome of humility and compassion to all that come across her path with an ever-reassuring smile.

As a legal professional, she is a trailblazer, a role model who has excelled to the peak of her career in a world where women are considered less human and not fit, no wonder she is an advocate for gender equality and women's rights. Unfortunately, the constitution's mandatory retirement age of 70 is taking away this erudite

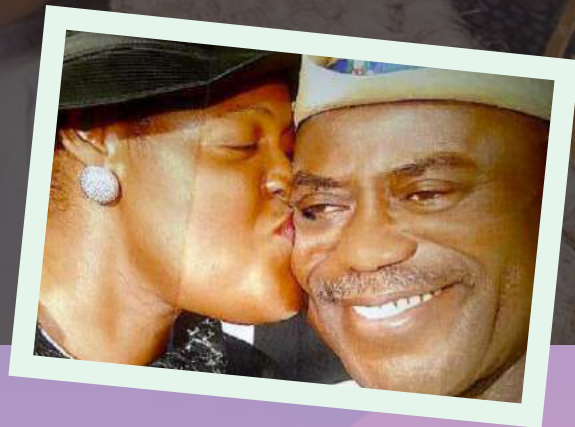
Justice and quintessential woman who is at the peak of her career out of service at a time when our Nation needs more of her.

Even though retired, we know she is not tired to continue with the God-given gift of Impacting and inspiring lives.

Congratulations mi-Lord for ending well despite all the trials and tribulations and May God enlarge your coast and territory in your next endeavours.

Rhoda Prevail Tyoden

Past Country Vice President/ National President/
FIDA Nigeria



A TRIBUTE TO A WISE JURIST, MOTHER AND ROLE MODEL

The opportunity to write about such a remarkable person and fine jurist is truly an honour and a joy. I also believed that the task would be relatively easy because our mother and mentor, Hon. Justice Mary Odili, JSC has accomplished so much that is worthy of recognition and thanks. Throughout her tenure from the lower bench to the federal bench and then the highest bench of our country, Hon, Justice M. U. Odili, JSC endeavoured to do justice as a jurist, striving not only to help those less fortunate than herself but also to train those who sought to follow in her footsteps. She set a remarkable example in the way that she conducted herself-always fair, decent, and caring. I am a recipient of our endearing heart and love. She is a great inspiration personally and professionally.

Thank you for always supporting FIDA with your constant encouragement. You gave us direction and

inspiration, may your faithful service all these years bring to your life every blessing you need.

To a mother and mentor who has made a strong and lasting impact on me, may your retirement be everything you've hoped for. Have the happiest of retirements.

EVELYN MEMBERE-ASIMIEA

DEPUTY COUNTRY VICE-PRESIDENT FIDA NIGERIA





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Carrera 24 c Numero4-38 Apto 402
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+57 310 821 5312 (mobile)

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cmezaingar@hotmail.com

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inimeaguma@yahoo.com

DIRECTORS:

Jethlyn A. Burrows (Bahamas)
jaburrows@mblcbahamas.com

Sheela Anish (India)
sheelawanish@rediffmail.com

Ezinwa Okoroafor (Nigeria)
ezinwaokoroafor@yahoo.com

Hsiu Fon Chen (Taiwan)
sirayachen@yahoo.com.tw

Silvana Vanadia (Italy)
silvana.vanadia@avvocaturastato.it

Afua Addotey (Ghana)
afuaaddotey@gmail.com

HISTORIAN:

Gladys Fri Mbuya (Cameroon)
gladysluku@gmail.com

PARLIAMENTARIAN:

Sadhonadevi Gunaratnam (Switzerland)
shadhana_gunaratnam@yahoo.co.uk

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INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES JURISTES

FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE ABOGODAS (FIDA)

FIDA INTERNATIONAL Congratulates our Dear Justice Mary Odili on her retirement from the Supreme Court of Nigeria. We acknowledge the great service you have rendered.

The tenacity and bravery you exuded are so admirable and a trait we commend to all to follow.

The time to retire has come- a perfect season for reflection and relaxation as well as spending more quality time with your loved ones.

As you embark on your retirement journey, there is no doubt that you will be riddled with mixed emotions. You will feel excited for the new opportunities and challenges that await you in this next chapter of life, but at the same time, it can be hard to say goodbye to a life's worth of memories and relationships.

I therefore on behalf of all members of FIDA wish you the best of the season, God's guidance and love.

The story of FIDA NIGERIA can not be complete without the mention of your name. I thank you for your numerous contributions. It is more gladdening that you will still serve on the Board of Trustees of FIDA NIGERIA.

Best wishes to a notable jurist.

Signed:

Caroline Rios Villota.
President.

Florence Amiesimaka
Secretary

Congratulations MUMMY

We heartily congratulate our dear Mother and Grandmother Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Peter-Odili CFR on her retirement from a meritorious and most esteemed judicial career - a career trajectory which spanned the magistracy to the apex Supreme Court of Nigeria.

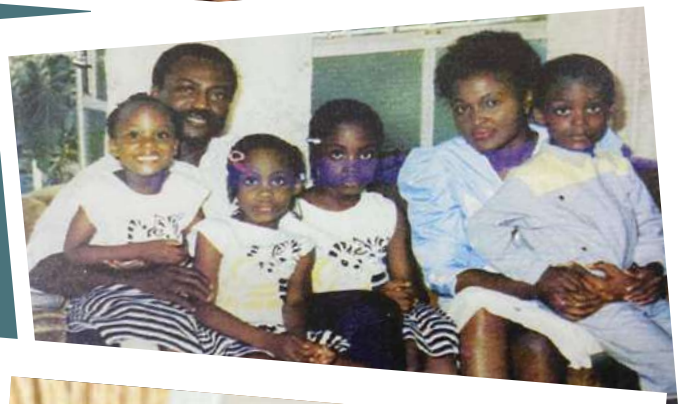
Indeed, Mummy, you have been an exemplary model of dedicated and selfless service to humanity to the Glory of God Almighty. You have steadily instilled in us an unparalleled work ethic and commitment to excellence.

You are a light in our family and our nation; and it gives us your children and grandchildren enormous pleasure, pride and honour to celebrate your distinguished and unsullied career that is so worthy of celebration and emulation.

Congratulations, Mummy!!!!
We love you and are so proud of you!

Dr Adaeze Oreh MBBS, FWACP, MMCfM, FRSPH, FRSTMH

**Engr Onwuka Oreh FNSE COREN
Justice Chinelo Odili MICMC ACI Arb
Sir Peter Odili Jnr KSJ BSc (MMcb) ISTEP(KOR)
Justice Njideka Nwosu-Iheme LLM MCI Arb
Barr Uzoma Nwosu-Iheme
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Mary-Jayden Nnam-Obi
Alicia Nnam-Obi
Michelle Nnam-Obi
Adaeze Nwosu-Iheme
Chioma Nwosu-Iheme**





FIDA AFRICA SALUTES & CELEBRATES AN AMAZON, HONOURABLE JUSTICE MARY UKAEGO ODILI JSC, ON HER RETIREMENT

We salute and celebrate Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Odili JSC, a global champion, on the occasion of her retirement from the Supreme Court of Nigeria, after several years of meritorious service.

Honourable Justice Ukaego Odili JSC, has made giant strides in the temple of justice, expanding its realm for vulnerable people, especially women and children.

A paragon of virtue as authenticated by numerous accolades from both personal and professional platforms, Honourable Justice Mary Ukaego Odili JSC, truly represents the blessings in the holy Scriptures to the effect that Her Lordship has been blossoming, budding and bearing fruits that transcend the shores of Nigeria.

Thank you My Lord for being a model of excellence.
Thank you My Lord for being a global phenomenon.
Thank you My Lord for being FIDA's role model and Amazon.

May My Lord enjoy her retirement in good health and great spirit.

Joy Ezeigbo
Regional Vice President, Africa

Laura Nyirinkindi
Regional Vice President, Africa



FIDA ANTHEM

1. FIDA Serves to bring liberation
To All Men in Contemplation
To enhance our World together
Is our noble goal for richer Life.
2. We bring light through education
To dislodge deeds of ignorance
With the tools of right Conviction
By the law and equity combined
3. FIDA Stands for all the Children
FIDA Stands for equal justice
FIDA Stands for all our Women
Who will rise to have their best for all 2×
Who will rise to have their best for all!



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYER (FIDA) NIGERIA, RIVERS STATE CHAPTER

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