



A TRIBUTE TO MRS OBY NWANKWO

LEDAP- Legal Defence & Assistance Project joins the international community of Human Rights Activists and Civil Society Organizations to mourn the passing away of a beloved sister, mother, and dear friend, Mrs Oby Nwankwo who died on the 11th of December 2017. From our relentless campaigns for justice and women's rights Mrs Oby Nwankwo was a dedicated activist, a mother to all and a dear friend.

She was until her death, a very active and much respected human rights activist, who was in the forefront of the campaign for the respect of women's rights, gender equality, good governance and international justice in Nigeria, across Africa and the world. A priceless jewel from Awka in southeast Nigeria, and was well known for her deep commitment to grassroots defence of the gender justice and women's human rights

Called to the Nigerian bar in 1980, Oby was an astute magistrate in the Anambra State Judiciary where she excelled in using her judicial office to protect the rights of indigent persons and to expand the frontiers of the rights of women. She voluntarily retired from the bench at an early age to pursue her passion for the defence of human rights. She was the founder and executive director of the Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC), a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC)'s Gender Justice Team and an advisory board member of Global Fund for Women. She also served in the steering committee of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC), a global network of over 3500 civil society groups in 150 countries working to promote international justice and the ICC.

Late Oby Nwankwo was a globally recognized champion for human rights and women's empowerment having served as a member of the United Nations CEDAW Expert Committee for a four-year term from January 2013 and subsequently reelected for another four-year term in 2016.

She played an inspiring role in the campaign for the domestication across Africa of United Nations Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and personally initiated and drove the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill in Nigeria through which the National Coalition on Affirmative Action (NCAA) which she founded in 2001, bringing together more than 250 activists in Nigeria to advocate for the passing of the bill at the National Assembly and several state Houses of Assembly. She led the passage of the Child Rights Laws and the Widows protection laws in many states of southern Nigeria and pioneered

the community paralegal initiative through which CIRRDODC build a broad network of paralegals in more than 200 rural communities in southeast Nigeria.

Late Mrs Nwankwo was an extra ordinary activist who displayed energy and passion towards the fight for gender equality and gender justice in Nigeria and across Africa. She mentored several female human rights defenders and advanced affirmative action to increase the participation of women in politics and in governance in Nigeria. She supported the building of grassroots civil society movement in the southeast Nigeria in the 1990s with her founding of the Southeast Coalition of NGOs, and thereby increased the independent Civil Society voices in Nigeria. She was also a founding member of the African Network for International Justice and a pioneer convener of the Human Rights Agenda Network, among other civil society initiatives she initiated or actively participated in order to promote gender justice and the rule of law in Africa.

Her passion and commitment to human rights have inspired countless people in rural communities and urban poor in Nigeria and across Africa to take action to improve their lives, and to understand, defend and assert their human rights. LEDAP and indeed the entire human rights community across Africa will miss her great leadership roles and indomitable spirit but all those she had mentored will keep her vision alive through each small action they continue to take toward a better world. Oby was indeed the Amazon of women's human rights and will forever be missed.

Her legacy will always remain with us. The deep sympathy of the LEDAP is hereby conveyed to her family, close friends and colleagues.

Adieu Oby, Adieu the great star of our time. Rest peacefully.

FOR: LEDAP-Legal Defence & Assistance Project

Chino Obiagwu

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