

## *First Year in Memory...Sissy Kai*

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A year today my mama took the one-way flight to heaven. My heart froze. My whole world sank. I knew that Sissy Kai wouldn't have hopped on that flight if there were any options. I knew she had none left, because she so wanted to be with her boys and to hum lullabies to her grandkids. But it was a divine summon which no woman born of another has dishonoured.

I had a special bond with my mom—I was neither her first nor her last but I was the child who mirrors her personality. I was always by her side—when she went to the stream at the break of dawn to launder our things; when she went all the way to Portee or Lowcost market on foot; when she stayed up at night to fill up the sachets with Kool-Aid or water and refrigerate them for sale; when she prepares]d meal for the family. I was always there to listen to her never-ending stories about her life, family and experience. I sat beside her many nights when she would cry after any clash with our dad. I vowed secretly that I would make her happy. I vowed to pursue excellence to end her poverty and misery. These are some of the vows which sustain my activism because there are many more Si'Kais bearing the brunt of social crises and ineffective leadership.

Earlier this morning, I listened to dozens of her voice notes (vns) to me. Back then, I cringed at her never-ending vns; today I realized they have become very serviceable in preserving and immortalizing her witty utterances. I've come to full realization that I am the full image of my mother. Fierce, vivacious, audacious, witty and smart. She was a genius in dishing out monikers. While our father manned the territory of humourless discipline, our mother fertilized us with affection. She was a gifted storyteller; proficient in several native languages and adept at cracking jokes. She even joked about her chemo sessions, the nurses and other attendants and often laughed other women who were ravaged by the treatment. She brightened the cancer ward with her undiminished spirit.

My mother stood out wherever she went—she was daring, unafraid and always eager to speak her mind. Despite her little education, she dedicated her life to teaching boys and girls in primary education in the morning and grown-ups in adult literacy program in the evening. She couldn't have felt fulfilled anywhere than in the teaching profession. It wasn't something she and our dad did to survive; it was their passion. They were both teachers and givers. I always tell people that our parents gave us two things—God and Books in that order.

Like many mothers back in the day, she wrestled with all the shortcomings to raise her kids with our father. Sadly, most of those struggles still persist to this day. It is for her and all women especially that I commit to echo demands for good governance, honest and sound leadership, independent judiciary and a thriving economy. It is so that women would not spend their entire lives navigating the artificial barriers posed by the dereliction of political duties.

Death empties us but love refills us. Death demoralizes our humanity but memories flourish it. Si'Kai lives on in our fertile memories. Because love is stronger than death, her death is already surmounted by the unceasing love for her memories and the commitment to her spirit.