

Mothers' Rest? Why we all should be angry!

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Today is exactly halfway a ninety-day willful break from fierce activism. My comrade and brother, Chernor Bah aka *Ceebah*, believes there can be no vacation in social activism. It would think so too but for some personal reasons I decided to court the unconventional. But I need to write about this but since I'm still on vacation I would resist every temptation to go prolix.

The tiny signpost, *Mothers' Rest*, at Korle Bu Teaching Hospital, Accra, slightly stooped, stands perpendicular to me. Women of all ages, differing figures, shapes, and speaking different languages are squatting on the parallel edges of about a fifteen metre stretch of corridor leading to this hostel, one of several, which houses, female patients all of whom are called referred to here as mothers. Maybe, it is the unique ability of women to mother human beings from the divine realms into the terrestrial.

In this hostel are throngs of Sierra Leone women, one of them my mother, who have been here for at least several months to seek medical care. Their ailments may be dissimilar but their journeys and hopes, mutual. They have come to Accra in search of medical assistance which the health facilities in their land of birth cannot guarantee them. But it is not only in this hostel that you would find Sierra Leoneans. The proprietor of one of the guest houses abutting the expanse on which the Korle Bu teaching hospital is perched, says to me that he has largely been kept in business for about a decade now by the steady streaming of guests from Sierra Leone who come to Korle Bu. The apparent wave of medical tourists from especially small nations in West Africa, has prompted the Ghanaian government to launch perhaps West Africa's largest healthcare project, the construction of a 40-acre Eco-Medical Village, for about half a billion dollars. The experts say that upon completion, Ghana would be positioned as a leading medical tourist destination on the continent in few years.

The medical liaison officer at the Sierra Leone High Commission in Ghana says he's worked with presidents, ex-presidents, ministers and ex-ministers and indeed Sierra Leoneans from all stations of life for over fifteen years. He jokes to me about his marriage coming under slight strains due to his twenty-hour

round-the-clock over-devotion to his Sierra Leonean patients. For him, it is a vocation and not merely a job!

From this community of women—mothers, girls etc. I have seen what has sadly become a rarity back home in Sierra Leone—the spirit of community. In this hostel, there is no Mende or Temne, neither APC, nor SLPP, there is just a common enemy, sickness! The singularity of purpose and the great length to which these folks go to look after one another tells me our national value of unity has been eroded by the scheming devices of politics. One of the women, who appears to me a prayer-warrior, prays for everyone for divine healing including the medical personnel nurses for wisdom to help them out. As rage and pity compete to occupy every space of my inner-man while these women recount their journeys about medical negligence and hopeless absence of healthcare in Sierra Leone, my attention sauntered off to Umaru Fofana's report on the BBC about the torrential rains which swept houses in the Wellington community. It's now two years and two days today, but I vividly recall the elderly mother, who sang *Kumbaya my Lord Kumbaya*, after losing her daughter in the infamous mudslide incident at Motormeh, Regent.

Whether it's healthcare deficit and its concomitant medical negligence, maternal mortality, Ebola, mudslide, flooding etc., our women are always the worst hit. Hence our mothers cannot rest from their wails. Through the oppressive machinery of political patriarchy, they have not been spared any time to ever rest. Regimes have changed but their plight remains unchanged. Maternal mortality. This is why we should be angry!

We all should be angry when they play politics with our mothers' lives and livelihoods. We should be angry to demand better healthcare, conscientious justice system and livable standards. We should be angry at every attempt to politicise our healthcare; angry at the politics of justice and angry that our mothers can neither rest in life nor in bringing life. Our mothers have been rendered restless wanderers in search of medical solutions caused by problems of our politics. To these women, man's enemy—sickness has come knocking and as usual political leadership is nowhere to be seen at this place, where the mothers are expected to find rest.

As tears welled up my eyes, triggered by the visible defiance of these women to beat their common enemy, I realised that these spectacles fuel my passion for social justice and activism. When we let down our mothers, our women and our girls, we let down the most important constituency in our society and only expose our society to even more decadence.

About the author:

Augustine Sorie-Sengbe Marrah is a leading human right practitioner, democracy enthusiast and a rule of law activist. He is regarded by many as an anti-establishmentarian, a constructive social deviant and a dogged non-conformist to the political sterility of the day.