

Why we should all be “Edmond Nonie”

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This past weekend, the nation flared up in furore when a group of educated men and women decided to coalesce into a union of SLPP lecturers. Don’t get me wrong, they did not commit any crime or violated the country’s constitution. But they were simply out of sync with the political and moral order of the day. Scripture says that all things are lawful but not all things are helpful. In unison, civil society activists and ordinary citizens denounced the creation of the entity as a recipe for politicization of learning in the University of Sierra Leone. The majority sentiment was that the nation was grappling with divisive politics and so the creation of a gang of SLPP Lecturers Union was going to be a handy fuel to burn the neutrality of academia in the body politic of our nation. Notable among the antagonists of the nascent union was the son, yes the son of the first elected chairman of the Union—Prof Samuel Edmond Nonie. I assumed he would have privately remonstrated his father’s decision to be a part of the formation of the union but that did not stop him from stating his unequivocal opposition on Facebook. In his own words, he wrote that “The creation of the SLPP Union of Lecturers is wrong”. Earlier, as a friend and comrades of the Auradicals fraternity, he had sought clarification on the legality or otherwise of the union. In my typical uncompromising forthrightness to my friends, I explained the legal position and the legitimacy argument against the said creation. But he only needed that note of clarity for his unambiguous outrage for his father’s union. His Facebook post was, before one could utter “Jack Bockarie”, viralised. Many in the upper echelons of society applauded the courage and honesty of the young man. In less than 24 hours, in a notice signed by his father, the union was dissolved with a public apology to the nation. It seemed like a speaking son, there was a listening father.

And so yesterday, while the nation was enthralled by the revelations of another young man—Chernoh Bah—who has embarked on a cause to exposing corruption in the current regime and the Press Release of the ACC on the investigation of the Office of First Lady going back 14 years, my mind was fixated on Edmond Nonie. This is because as a young person my loyalty to friends and allies has been questioned every so often just because of my private and public views on some of their transgressions in public office. Edmond was not telling off his friend for doing something wrong. He was calling out his own father. That was for me the height of honesty. He is not a public servant—he did not owe us any obligation—but he chose to stand for the public good. It seems to be we need many more ‘Edmond Nonies’ not only to stand up against

public misdemeanours but also to have the courage to look at our loved ones and call them out for the sake of love of country. To put nation above self is not for the lips, it is for moments when loyalty to nation is summoned. It may be justified to be loyal to your family and friends, but it is more noble to stand on the aisle of the common good. This is the honesty creed that should be emblazoned on the conscience of every public officer especially young people. I don't care how many young people are failing us and breaking our hearts in public service. For now, I'll celebrate Edmond Nonie and pray for multiplication of his kind.