

## **Mrs. Njideka Ojukwu (1933-2010)**

### **One of Biafra's Unsung "Sheroes"**

Mrs. Njideka Ojukwu (Aunty Njideka) was the wife of late General C. Odumegwu-Ojukwu, leader of the former Republic of Biafra. She stood by her husband throughout the entire Nigeria-Biafra Civil War and died in March 2010. How many of us were aware of this? How many pro-Biafrans and Biafran organizations celebrated her life and death on any significant level? Try to find images and reports about her Online. There is little or nothing. But who was she and have we failed to give her the recognition and tributes she rightly deserves? For those of us who flaunt ourselves as champions of the Biafran cause, have we been hypocritical in our disregard for the achievements of our Biafran "Sheroes"? I think so and in this regard I am also guilty.

When the male "heroes" of Biafra were confused, scared and distraught, who gave them the emotional support, strength and encouragement that they needed badly? (And, yes, as human beings there were times they were scared to death.) It was their wives. When they were in hiding and/or absent from the home for weeks at a time, who sustained and held their families together? It was their wives and sometimes their mothers too. Who cooked and took food to the warfront? It was these wives and mothers, the unsung heroines of Biafra. On the average, Biafran males from ages 13 and up were in one way or the other involved in combat. This meant that Biafra's various directorates, refugee camps, hospitals and homes were heavily dependent on the managerial and sacrificial efforts of women. Is it not true that these institutions and facilities were immeasurably crucial to Biafra's survival? So, why would someone like Aunty Njideka pass on and hardly receive any acknowledgement?

After the war when the men lost their military means of livelihood, who sustained (or helped to sustain) their families through any and every form of business? My own mother sold *moi-moi*, soft drinks and beer from our home, and also sewed dresses in our front veranda in Enugu. Would the men want to engage in such "petty" though quick and practical money-making businesses?

I searched for online images of Aunty Njideka and other women like Mrs. Rose Njoku, Mrs. Joan Eze and Mrs. Madiebo, but couldn't find any. I was going to post the images of these "Sheroes" and hopefully facilitate a renewed focus that would begin to give them the recognition that they have long been denied. Of course I have my mother's photos, but she is not the only female who served in Biafra. Along with my current

efforts at also researching and honoring former Biafran Boy soldiers, I have resolved to start paying detailed attention to these women. If anyone has information and/or images on this subject, please share them with us.

May Auntie Njideka continue to Rest in Perfect Peace!

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