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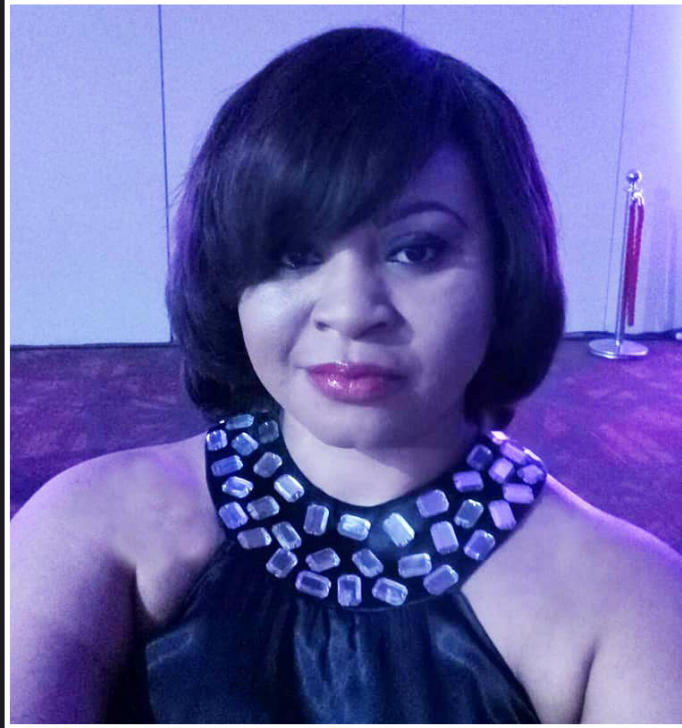
A Lifestyle...Expanding Possibilities

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Fateema Aduke Mohammed
A political non conformist

From the Desk of Editorial/Lifestyle Director



There are many sides to Fateema Aduke Mohammed who is fondly referred to as FAM, an acronym of her names. She is a politician, a business woman, a philanthropist, a socialite, the Director-General of Atiku Nation, whose life is like an open book. From Maiduguri, Borno State, the very bold, boisterous and passionate tough talker opens up to the Editorial Director, Style, Nkarenyi Ukonu about her life in the political circuit as well as her decision to vie for a seat at the House of Representatives come 2019.

Enjoy.



Fateema Aduke Mohammed

A political non conformist

You are a well known politician down South having been a loyal associate of former Lagos State gubernatorial candidate, Jimi Agbaje and also nursed a political ambition.

What happened to your bid to run for elective position?

I was the PDP candidate for Ifako/Ijaye Federal constituency for the House of Representative but I was robbed of victory. My name was removed from the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC list. It was an attempt to shut me down for being a woman as I won the primaries.

Did you take it up with the appropriate authority?

I just let it go. It was the purest election ever recorded in the history of electioneering in that constituency and for me, that was more than enough vindication. I look at those people who robbed me of victory clamoring to be known today and I just wonder. I mean, you cannot clamor for justice. He who must come to equity must come with clean hands. Their hands have been soiled because they collected money, removed my name from INEC and today they are shouting that they wanted to be this, they didn't make them that. It doesn't work that way.

Do you still intend to run again?

Of course. For the same House of Representative to represent Ifako/Ijaiye local government area of Lagos State.

You are currently the Director-General of Atiku Nation. What is it all about?

The Atiku Nation; One Man One Nation, is an independent campaign group formed by people who are passionate about seeing this country become a success story. It is about people of like mind coming together and saying this is what we want. We are change agents and we believe in change. I have a track record of believing in people

and supporting them. I have paid my dues as well. So being the Director-General of Atiku Nation is me saying, this is the person that I believe in and this is the person I chose to support.

What inspired this movement?

Because Atiku Abubakar is someone I believe has what it takes to change the face of governance in the country. He is a man who has taken out time to study every facet of government and compiled a blue print of what he plans to

do if and when he becomes president. That is why he has been clamouring for restructuring. The long and short of the National Conference was restructuring because therein lies the solution to the problems plaguing this nation. So if he now wants to come forth as a public servant, why not. Even if he doesn't want to, we will compel him to.

Compelling Atiku Abubakar to run clearly means that you are dissatisfied with governance in Nigeria today

To the common man, governance doesn't look achievable. Until a gov-



ernment makes governance able to affect the poor electorate on the street, where the common man can live above a dollar per day, then that governance isn't achievable. If you

cannot take people to the first rung of the ladder of development, then there is nothing moving forward in the government. The current president

is a very good man but governance is beyond being good, it is beyond being dictatorial. Governance in the democracy is sitting down, rubbing minds, coming to agreement and making effective, electoral promises. It is not about using the first two to three years to take us for a ride and using the last year to right every wrong. I have seen that the Nigerian youths are getting wiser and I pray that we don't get on the brink of a revolution because you can see screaming frustration on the faces of the youth.

So with clamour for youthful representation in governance, don't you therefore think it would be better to get a credible and youthful person to give all the necessary support to, rather than recycled politicians?

I don't have a problem with youths clamoring for representation. But I don't think there is any youth that can truly stand shoulder to shoulder with the leaders and the elders that we have today in the political space and slug it out with them. Except we want to fool ourselves, electioneering in Nigeria involves spending a lot of money. Making the rounds in 36 states alone during your campaign is not a walk in the park. So when the youths say they are not too young to run, I don't disagree. But Atiku Abubakar remains the only person who is going to pave the way for the youths to take over. I am not saying I don't have what it takes to run a nation. I do. A Johnson-Sirleaf had a dream like me and got into politics like me. Since she eventually became president, what stops me from being president? It's not about being over ambitious but about knowing my capabilities, knowing that I can make a difference as well. But the only person for now, among the players on the field, who can make me actualize that dream is Atiku Abubakar. If you listen



to him speak, you will know that he is not a man given to frivolities. Like I said, he is a firm believer of restructuring. He doesn't believe you should put power at the centre, it should be spread out. Take for instance the Minister for Works and Housing. Do we actually need one? We do not. Why do you think we have a lot of roads that are not completed? Because there is always a conflict of which road is Federal, State or Local Government. But if what we have is a Commissioner for Works, the Commissioner will hold every local government chairman responsible for roads undone. Don't forget that every local government has a Ministry for Works. That way the person in charge will ensure that what needs to be done is done. This is all the more made easier as a law has just been passed for the local government funds to be passed to them directly rather than to the state coffers.

Many women are interested in politics but are put off by how it is played? What would you say has kept you on the grid all these years? Consistency. I will advise that women stop not liking how politics is played. They should stop complaining about it or the players. They should come on board and show them how it is done. I really don't know what the fear is all about because every profession has its risks. You can't say because there are air crashes, there shouldn't be female pilots anymore or because people die in hospitals, there shouldn't be female doctors anymore. I suffered a setback in 2015. I was shot at while on a campaign rally. I nearly lost my life but it didn't deter me from continuing with politics. I know there are cultural and religious inhibitions and that

is why the first thing I started doing was to create awareness to change the mentality of women. I look forward to 2019 when we will have 10 female governors. It is achievable.

But money plays a huge role in politics and most women do not have the volume of money required

I agree that money is an integral part of politics. But you don't have to have large chunks of money stashed somewhere. You can have goodwill. During my election, I didn't have so much money. I barely had N2million in my account but by the time the election ended, I didn't spend less than N60/N70 million. It all came from goodwill. So as a woman, be bold, be assertive, let them see that you know your onions and you will find men who will willingly support you. However, do not let anyone help out and end up dictating the pace for you. I was told that by several people who promised me the ticket on the condition that they will dictate how I do my job. I simply told them to hold on to their ticket. Many of the political leaders

were very uncomfortable with me, they said I was too full of myself because I wasn't making the rounds paying



obedience to them. They told me to my face that they will see how I will win the elections. These 'dealers' as I like to call them

don't leave their homes on the day of election after collecting so much money. I didn't mind them; I concentrated on the electorates because they

were the ones who voted for me anyway. They were surprised I even won the primaries. So once you know what you are doing as a woman, you don't really need any one to tell you what to do. I am not against 'godfatherism' but I won't have a god father that will sit on my neck. If you believe in me and want you to support me, fine. But do not tell me how to run what I am doing because my allegiance first and foremost is to the electorate and on how to give them a better lease of life not how to siphon funds back to a godfather.

As a politician have there ever been times you felt that being a man would have made things much easier for you?

In Yoruba they call me 'Obinrin bi Okunrin', that is, a woman that is like a man. I am not limited by my gender. I am not someone you can easily trample on, I am a woman who knows what she is about, what she represents, what she has on the inside of her. They say female politicians sleep around. I am not of that school of thought. Why would I sleep with you for gratification of what you actually need from me? The bible says that a man's gifts and callings maketh a way for him. So the moment you know what your gift is, your strong point is, then it will make a way for you.

You have again declared your intentions to run again for political office, to represent Ifako Ijaiye constituency at the House of Representatives. Do you think you stand a chance? Ofcourse. The rate of poverty in that constituency is disheartening. Poverty is walking on the streets of Ifako Ijaye. The person there has occupied the seat for two years yet there is nothing the people of Ifako Ijaye have to show for it, no single constituency project. Meanwhile it is the second largest local government area in Lagos. But with me, Ifako Ijaye will get a new lease.

How do you balance your role as a mother and a politician?



I began politics when my children were quite young but thank God today, my youngest child is 16 on her way to study Medicine in the University. It was rough at the initial stage, trying to juggle my role as a mother and as a politician. But today it is a lot easier as they are all grown.

Would you say your childhood prepared you for a life of politics?

No really. My father is a military officer while my mother is a business woman from Delta State. I grew up in the barracks. My mother was very strict

with her style of upbringing, ensuring I was prim and proper. My mother was quite stern and I have taken that after her with the way I handle my children. I think it is better to be difficult in order to straighten your children especially if you have a partner that is very soft.

What drives you?

The crave for success. I don't give up easily even if I am the only one standing

What determines your fashion choices?

I love to be in native attires. I only wear jeans when it is time for rally or when I am out of the country.

How do you let off steam when you are not politicking?

I like to unwind with my children and I read

