

SPEECH BY HON. JUSTICE E. F. IKPONMWEN THE CHIEF JUDGE OF EDO STATE, AT THE VALEDICTORY COURT SESSION HELD THIS 29TH DAY OF JUNE, 2018 IN HONOUR OF THE HON. MRS. JUSTICE EDODO- ERUAGA.

It gives me a deep sense of honour to preside at the valedictory court session marking the exit from the High Court Bench of Edo State of the Hon. Mrs Justice Alero Edodo-Eruaga. I feel so because it is not difficult to speak of a refined, gentle and quintessential Judge. Without any measure of exaggeration I wish to put on record the fact that Edo State Judiciary is going to be devoid of one judge whose presence exudes the qualities of a responsible judicial officer, one not given to frivolities and not to be seen with people of questionable character.

This day we celebrate the exit of another Brother Judge this time my Lord Hon. Justice Edodo-Eruaga from the High Court of Edo State Judiciary. This is coming up a month and seven days after the celebration of the retirement of the Hon. Justice J. U. Oyomire on the 22nd of May 2018. It is a thing of joy for me to preside at this ceremony/celebration as the Chief Judge of Edo State in that their Lordship retire in good health and without blemish which is a great feat. Before I continue in my speech I would like to give a brief profile of His Lordship, the Hon. Mrs. Justice Edodo-Eruaga.

Hon. Justice Edodo Eruaga was born on the 29th day of June, 1953 to the family of Chief Oritsegbiten Popo Edodo and Diana Eyewumi Edodo. Her late father was a well respected produce inspector and a lawyer while the mother was a London trained dress maker and business woman. My Lord is the first child of seven children.

His Lordship attended Nana Primary School Warri from 1960 – 1966, then proceeded to Our Lady's High School, Effurun, Warri from 1967 – 1972 for her W.A.S.C and Idia College Benin from 1973 – 1974 for Higher School Certificate (HSC). Later she proceeded to Bedford Tutorial College, Bedford England from 1975 – 1976 then to the famous University of Buckingham, Buckingham England for her University Education from 1976 – 1979 where she read law and came out in flying colours and was called to the Nigerian Bar in 1980.

His Lordship started legal practice by being in private practice for about four years with the Law Firm of Abdullahi Ibrahim & Co in Kaduna and later relocated to Warri to join her father and his bossom friend Mr. Nelson Akporiaye in the Law firm of Akporiaye, Edodo and Associates. Private practice entailed a lot of travelling from one town or state to another. His Lordship met her lovely,

caring husband, Dr. Marcus Osiye Eruaga during this period and they got married in 1984.

His Lordship joined the Magistracy on the 5th of May 1985 as Magistrate GD 11.

His Lordship journey through the Magistracy was long, tedious, interesting and challenging. The slow rise in the Magistracy for her, continued with the embargo on promotion until 1999 when Hon. Justice C.A.R. Momoh, the then Chief Judge of Edo State appointed her as the Chief Registrar of the High Court. She also doubled as the Probate Registrar of the High Court where she performed excellently well.

On the 22nd of September, 2004, His Lordship was appointed with three brother Judges, Hon. Justice Efe Ikponmwonba, Hon. Justice Anthony Erhabor and Hon. Justice Emmanuel Ahamioje as Judges of the Edo State High Court. As a Judicial Officer she learnt patience, hardwork, perseverance, diligence as the fate of other humans were placed in her hands.

As a Magistrate and a Judge, His Lordship served in various jurisdictions of Bendel State (Edo and Delta States.) His Lordship served in Sapele, Auchi, Igarra, Ekpoma, Abudu and Benin respectively, spending thirty-three years on the whole in public service.

His Lordships mastery of the law and her duty as a Judge can be seen in the recent case of:- **MOSES IGBINOGHODUA AND FIRST BANK OF NIGRIA PLC & 2ORS** unreported Suit No. B/812/2010 delivered on Wednesday 14th of March 2018 which was a claim for ₦20,000,000 (Twenty Million Naira) general damages for false imprisonment by First Bank for three(3) hours at its premises leading to the arrest to Ugbowo Estate Police Station where he was detained in Police cell for (3) three days over the involvement of the claimant in fraud and stealing of ₦32,000,000, His Lordship relying on the decision of the Court Otisi JCA in Atakpa V Edebor (2015) 3NWLR (pt 1447) 549@573 where the Court held that “that a report made to the police does not, without more, amount to instigating the police in any way” and **EZEWIDUKWA V MADUKA** (1997) 8 NWLR (pt 518) 635 where it was held that the liability for false imprisonment does not lie against a private citizen who merely named or indicated a suspect to the police.

His Lordship held thus:- “The Bank having not done anything more than report an alleged fraud to the Police for their investigation cannot be found liable for the actions of the police in detaining the claimant while they carried out their investigation”.

On a personal note permit me to state that inspite of the closeness of our ages, His Lordship never for once showed any disrespect, rather I found her to be a leader in her own right as a Judge and also very respectful. His Lordship is honest, trust worthy and above board in all her dealings. There is no adverse report that would make nonsense of this ceremony. His Lordship's sterling qualities professionally reflect the high standards expected of all judicial officers. To the best of my knowledge I consider his Lordship a woman of character who lives according to sound moral principles. Quoting Mr. Governor, Godwin Nogheghase Obaseki recently at the condolence visit to the family of our deceased brother, the Hon. Mr Justice T. U Oboh, that "Our Judges are our jewels". I agree that he was very right as the Hon. Mrs. Justice A.E. Eruaga is a "gem".

His Lordship is a committed mother and wife, she is a devoted Christian who no doubt would happily return to the Church for her duty to God, her family and mankind.

May I use this opportunity to thank the wonderful spouse of our retiring brother judge. He has been very supportive for all and sundry to see. We also acknowledge the important supportive role of the

children and families of Edodo and Eruaga in making the service to Edo State nay Nigeria of his Lordship a success story.

On behalf of my brother Judges and the entire Edo State Judiciary, I wish my Lord a happy retirement. The scripture assures us in Psalm 128:2 that "When you eat the labour of your hands, you shall be happy and it shall be well with you"

Thank you, your Lordship for the hardwork and diligence in the Edo State Judiciary. God Bless You.

HON. JUSTICE E. F. IKPONMWEN,FCJEI
Chief Judge
Edo State.