

TRUE "NDOLO"

From: emonjimbo [mailto:emonjimbo@msn.com]

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To: 'exsa_usa@yahogroups.com'; 'exssa_mal@yahogroups.com'

Subject: TRUE "NDOLO"!!

If you were in SBC circa 1978 and did not have your head still buried in your puff-puff and pap, you just might remember hearing Roseline Efamba recite the LOVE chapter (1Corinthians 13:1-13) during one of our Saturday morning devotions. Few of us paid close attention and many of us giggled (just as we did the morning Mr. Ntonifor read from Philippians 4:8, most probably because of the emphasis he placed on the word "whatsoever" which occurs 5 times in that 1 verse.)

Well, I wasn't giggling as I read through the same scripture this morning: I stopped to think long and hard about what it says TRUE LOVE really is and all I could come up with was a big "Chai!! Ah go fit so??!!" It is quite a tall order to be patient, kind, not envy, not boast, not be proud, not be rude, not be self-seeking, **not be easily angered, not keep a record of past wrongs, not delight in evil**, rejoice with the truth, always protect, **always trust**, always hope, and always persevere!!! (NIV) Don't y'all dare sit there and act as if you are not just as guilty as I am of remembering every "sister" who violated your privacy by delving into your trunk and confiscating your garri, of saying "ee sweet" when a "slow water runs deep" kind of sister was found to have committed the terrible "infraction" of going to "Sansui", "Summer", or "Bay Saloon" over the long holidays, of chasing your kids with a raised cutlass screaming "you go die for ma hand today" and even of "charching" Oga's briefcase, pockets, cell phone and email at least twice a week!!

I do understand that Valentine's Day - especially the way it is marketed - is predominantly about the brighter, sunnier, flamboyant, lingerie, long stem roses and chocolate side of things with greeting cards, serenades and balloons to match. (Even I have already secured my "boot leg" Barack & Michelle-in-the-freight elevator card to which I have generously added a "ready-made" one (costing a whole 5.99!!) that has a flawless dude and an impeccable "dudette" on the cover who look nothing like any **real** couple I know!! However, after a closer look at my Bible, I feel obliged to recognize and honor the kind of love that doesn't quite fit in the Valentines Day "hoopla" kind of mould. I am talking about the love shown by:

- All you sisters who, back in your SBC days, shared your Visitors Sunday food with friends whose relatives either lived too far away to

- visit, or could not afford to bring anything substantial when they did visit.
- All of you who took food up to the Sick Bay to someone who was not your "intie" and sat there long enough to cajole them into eating the food you brought even if there was not much more on that chipped aluminum plate than the driest planti and the worst jolloh-jolloh ever seen. (To make matters worse, you were not even "forgiven" if you ended up late for "Siesta")
 - All you sisters whose cars permanently smell of njangsang (no matter how much Glade, Febreze and Oust you spray) because you are forever carrying pepper soup and "burning" fish to sick friends and die houses.
 - All of you who pay your friends' dues and airfares to Convention after Convention and do deeds of sheer kindness like the simple yet profound one "little" Genevieve Takusi Makia did for me, my kids and 2 other Sisters who rode in the same cab from the Pier back to the Four Seasons last summer in Chicago. We felt like we had won a million dollars on Wheel of Fortune when the cab driver told us upon our arrival that she had paid all our cab fares.
 - The Pearly Mekangs amongst you who have literally put your lives on hold to take care of loved ones who are incapacitated.
 - The Sister Ruths amongst you who have selflessly sat by a loved one's bedside and nursed them till they breathed their last.

At this point, I cannot help thinking about 2 good girlfriends (Pauline and Debra) who I know will not be demanding roses and diamonds tomorrow from their husbands. That's because the little colorful wool hats Debra's husband buys for her in TJMAXX so she can keep her bald-from-chemo head warm are worth much more. And as for Pauline, the fact that her husband holds her hand as she throws up, cooks, cleans, does the laundry, and guides the children through ballet practice and homework (while still paying the mortgage and holding the job that provides the Insurance she so badly needs) is more than enough!!! Obviously, wrinkles, wheel chairs, surgical stitches and bed pans will not look good on greeting cards but many a time, they are the stuff of which true love is made.

In conclusion, how can I fail to think about the LOVE of a God who considers me the APPLE of His eye, who has numbered each hair on my head (that has to be an up hill task with my Kanekolon mèches, dandruff and rapidly increasing number of gray hairs), and who loves me enough to readily lay down His very life for me – with or without the 50 air brushed pounds! That's what I call TRUE "NDOLO"!! "Greater love hath no man than this" in deed!

Have a splendid – and thoughtful Valentines Day!

In LOVE, Unity and Sisterhood,
Egbe Mbiwan Monjimbo.