



**JULIUS AFTER HIS BACHELOR OF ARTS IN EDUCATION DEGREE AT THE JERSEY STATE UNIVERSITY**



**JULIUS AS A STUDENT AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY**



## **JULIUS ON THE RIGHT WITH HIS FRIEND THE LATE PROF. FESTUS MUTERE AT HIS HOME IN EBUSIRALO**

### **LIFE HISTORY/EULOGY**

#### **Birth**

Julius Meshack Paul Omunye Opijah was born to the late Paul and the late Deborah Nziwa Opijah on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1928 at Ebusirallo Sub location, Luanda Location of Vihiga County. He was the second born in a family of six children, Priscillah Nganyi, Nelson Onyango, late Truphena Hoka, Jane Enoch, and late Zablon Okiya. He was step brother to Samson Opijah, Benjamin Okinda and late Hannah Osaka.

#### **Marriage and Family**

Julius met and befriended Margaret Mary Ongochi in the late 1940's. Their love grew leading to their wedding in the Church of God (BKKB) in 1954. Together, they were blessed with seven children, Allan Lennox- Boyd, Diamond Pamela Emitewa, Griffith Calvin Ingati, the late Cynthia Catherine Olesi, Vincent Paul, Franklin Joseph Omutsani, and David Bulasio (Bully). Julius was grandfather to Geoffery, Steve, Winstella, Melvin, Pauline, Patricia Mercy, Derrick, Cynthia and Desta. He was great grandfather to Ivy and Julius. He was father in law to Alice Nyagoha, Rebecca Ingati, Caroline Wasonga and Roselyn Lidiolo. Mzee was a loving father and strict disciplinarian. Julius has been the patriarch pillar and core participant in all his family undertakings

#### **Education**

Julius Opijah joined Ebusirallo Sunday school in 1932, before proceeding to Ebusirallo day school (1936 - 1940). In 1940 – 1946 he studied at Maseno Junior School after passing with what is commonly called 'Flying colors' the competitive entrance examination (CEE). He joined the Government African School, Kakamega in 1946 – 1949. He studied for his Cambridge school certificate in the present Namilyango College, Uganda (1949 - 1951). After his secondary school education he joined Kagumo teachers training college where he came face to face with danger during the liberation struggle for Kenya's independence.

In 1972, Mr. Opijah proceeded to the United States of America where he acquired a Bachelor of Arts degree (Jersey City State College) and a Master of Arts degree (Educational Psychology) at the prestigious Rutgers University. In 1976 he registered for a PHD degree, but was forced to abandon it because in his own words, "I learned about my spouse's ill health, capped by lingering painful illness incurred at Lunyerere Bridge. She wrote and bade me goodbye and I had to hurry back to Kenya never to go back to resume my doctoral studies."

He liked quoting the American Educationist John Dewey and many others.

Julius was an excellent teacher and researcher. He was an outstanding communicator and many who worked under him marveled at his oratory and humorous skills. He was once promoted while in Bunyore Girls from the grade of P1 to a graduate teacher on basis not of an interview but by what the then Education Inspector's judgment. He was an avid reader of the written word ranging from history, politics, religious education and language and his favorite subjects were English, Kiswahili and Geography and his favorite literature was Shakespearean literature. Indeed few weeks before his death he asked his son to rebind his copy of 'The complete works of Shakespeare' by William J. Graig (1954). He was a master letter writer in all his genres – personal, official, etc.

It was due to his hardwork, dedication and integrity that a unanimous decision was made to name a dormitory in Bunyore Girls – Opijah dormitory. He was a brilliant educator, an unpretentious man and a responsible leader.

He however valued and respected traditional African beliefs to the extent where he reminded his children of the power of '*tsisila*'(taboos).

He detested repugnant beliefs and practices. For instance when his daughter died, some ‘Abata’ told him not to pass the body through the normal gate as this would be abominable. He flatly refused and asked them in turn if he had accepted, the body would then be made to pass through a newly created door when it enters the house as it is customary.

Just before he left for his higher education, he wrote official letters to the high schools he had attended thanking them for shaping his character.

His favorite poetic verses from Shakespeare

### **Act I Scene III**

Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar. Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel; But do not dull thy palm with entertainment Of each new-hatch'd, unfledged comrade. Beware Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in, Bear't that the opposed may beware of thee. Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice; Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.

### **Act III Scene I**

Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.

### **Act III Scene II**

O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

### **From Thomas Henry Huxley**

True science and true religion are twin sisters, and the separation of either from the other is same to mean death of both.

Among his schoolmates and contemporaries with whom the latter forged personal friendship include Prof. Festus Mutere, Dr. Albert J. Maleche, Mr. Hannington Awori (brother to hon. Moody Awori), Hannington Ochwada former M.P Funyula constituency, Reuben Abasa Omwoha, Crispus Ombwara, Arthur Lijembe, Gamaliel Walobwa, peter Itebete, Peter Kareithi (author of kaburi bila msalaba) Paul Erulu, Lucas Ngureti, all people including him who have contributed much to the development of Kenya.

Some of his former students include Justice Effie Owuor, Prof Hazel Ayanga, Mrs Hazel Kubebea, Dr. Lydia Omwoha, Prof. Ruth Otunga, Prof. Mable Imbuga (V.C Jomo Kenyatta University), Norah Lydia Masinde, Mrs. Rose Amateshe, Mrs Noel Chavangi former deputy director of Agriculture. Julius Likokele, Mable Khaliongo, Dr. Zachariah Maleche (of University of Nairobi), Patrick Nandi Olonyi P.P.O Iten, Patrick Musichi under secretary ministry of public works. Fred Masaba, Ministry of water, Nairobi. Jairus Namuto, - KPA Mombasa

### **Vocational Work**

Mr Opijah taught in many primary and secondary schools where he left an indelible mark. These include:- Emusire Intermediate School, Ekambuli Primary School, Bushiangala Primary School, the present Bunyore Girls High School where a dormitory was named after him.

After his studies abroad he came back to Kenya and was posted to Cheptais High School (1976 - 1978); Emusire High School (1978 – 1979); Butere Girls High School (1979 – 1989) and Ebusakami High School (1989 - 1990) where he retired.

He also taught briefly on part time basis at Kima International School of Theology.

During his teaching career he was a National examiner in Geography (K.J.S.E).

He was consulted by many – some to write speeches to be delivered in Educational Institutions.

In May 2007 he gave a sermon in church on 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:1-7 and emphasized these points.

1. The churches in Macedonia – Philippi Thesalonica and Borea – gave money even though they were poor and they gave more than Paul expected. This was sacrificial giving – they were poor themselves, but they wanted to help.
2. The point of giving is not so much the amount we give, but why and how we give. God does not want gifts given grudgingly; instead He wants us to give as the churches did out of dedication to Him.
3. By joining with other believers to do God's work, you increase Christian Unity and help the Kingdom to grow.
4. When you love someone, you want to give him/her your time and attention and to provide for his needs.

## **Legacy to the Family (Family Tribute)**

Papa was many good things to many people, but perhaps three things stand out to his family: He was an educator, a mentor and a counselor.

As an educator, papa took every opportunity to instruct people about the values of life and how to get the most in life. He taught us to fear God, requiring us to put God first in everything we do. He taught us the value of hard work and abhorred idleness; he fetched fodder for cows from Maseno School his Alma Mata every day, except on Sundays when he never missed going to church one would mistake him for being a member of staff of Maseno School. Indeed a member of staff of Maseno School confided in us that nobody on the school staff knew the history of the school more than papa. He taught us the value of cleanliness and personal hygiene; he personally cleared animal waste in the compound every morning and would not sleep without taking a bath. He taught us to respect everybody without segregating against anyone. He himself was respected by all. To him, there was no big or small person. He related well to people from all walks of life. He gave on a one on one basis honest advice and ideas to solving problems making no difference between the educated and uneducated, the young or the old, female or male. He treated everyone equally; he was down to earth to a fault and yet he commanded respect. He taught us to be grateful, kind and humble; he was a master and insisted on the use of his three favorite words of linguistic politeness, "Please" '*noyanza*', "I'm sorry" '*mbeela*', and "Thank you" '*hembwo*'. He also taught us that when called/summoned we ought to respond with *endiho* and not merely yaah! He taught us to live within our means and avoid being wasteful with time and resources; he taught us the value of punctuality and time consciousness; he taught us to be patient with difficult people; he taught us to respect authorities; he taught us the value of orderliness and unity; he taught us to love one another and to be united; he taught us to pursue excellence; he taught us to love God.

As a mentor, he was there for all; he did not withhold guidance to those he felt needed it. As a counselor he offered instruction, advice and mediation on a continual basis.

Papa had many hobbies, but perhaps what he liked most were current affairs of late he never missing parliamentary debates and reading. He liked listening to both local and international news. He devoured magazines, newspapers, literary books, and the bible; His favorite poetic verses are for instance:- his favorite bible book was Proverbs. He came to love the church.

## **Service to the community**

Papa was the chairman of the finance and development committee of Ebusiralo Church of God. He also spearheaded numerous fundraising meetings for the same church. His last gesture was the donation of a key board instrument to the church in January 2012.

Together with others, Papa contributed immensely to the writing of the first Lunyore Dictionary. He was consulted by many to write speeches to be delivered in educational Institutions or in Social gatherings.

### **Illness**

Papa was physically strong to the extent that, even when not feeling well, he never showed signs of lethargy. However, some time in 2011, Papa began feeling pain in his legs, which was diagnosed as due to a “weak heart” and was put on a dose for high blood pressure. However, it later emerged that the problem was caused by Diabetes. At the end of last year, he developed a swelling below his chin, which was surgically removed in a successful operation. Biopsy showed that the swelling was due to cancer of the blood vessels (Non-Hogkins Lymphoma) that had spread in his neck region. He had difficulties swallowing food and talking. He died while undergoing chemotherapy.

### **Death**

Papa was very philosophical about death. On three occasions he was nearly killed by vehicles on the road. When his children advised him to stop going to Maseno School to fetch grass, papa retorted:- death can claim one anywhere, at any time, in any way

Throughout his sickness, though with excruciating pain, Mzee Julius maintained a high sense of humour. He once told his son that he had not gone for *haja* number 2 for two days. His son advised him to stop taking anti diarrheal drugs. During the weekend of 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> May 2012, papa’s pain had increased to unbearable levels. On Monday, 14 May 2012, he had lost appetite for food. On Tuesday he lost his speech, before passing away the same day in his study room around 09:30 p.m. He was 83 years 9 months, 2 days old.

### **Appreciation**

The family feels indebted to everybody for their contributions and assistance. We are indebted to Dr Juma (Kisumu), the doctors and nurses of St Monica Hospital, Kisumu, particularly Dr. David K. Koech, Dr. Naftali Busakhala Dr. Awuor, and the doctors and nurses of the Eldoret Hospital, Eldoret. We wish to express our gratitude to Griffith and Rebecca for their tireless efforts in making sure that our father was as comfortable as possible our heartfelt appreciation goes to all those who came home on various occasions to comfort and pray with him. We wish to thank Lincoln Ananda for providing transport to the Mortuary. We also wish to thank all those who have provided assistance in various ways, including cooking, splitting firewood, digging the grave, sitting on various funeral committees, and offering their donations towards assisting the family in cash and in kind. May God bless you all.

### **Quote**

“For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable. But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep.” 1 Corinthians 15: 16-20 (The Holy Bible, American Standard Version).

May the Almighty rest Educator Julius in Eternal peace.