

Tribute to Professor Ama Ata Aidoo

From

Takyiwaa Manuh

Dear Ama,

It has not been easy trying to compose a goodbye message to you. Kinna had called, I had visited you in hospital and knew that you were gravely ill. And then she called again early that morning, and my heart sank as I answered the phone.

Where do I begin? From 1971 when I set out one Saturday morning from Wey Gey Hey with my friend Abena Oteng for the UCC Bookshop, to buy the 'Anthology from Ghana' in which you had a short story, or later from around 1972 when you would come to visit me at Sarbah Hall? Or much later, when I also became a 'grown' woman? -I remember the scolding I received from you in 1984 when you asked me where my infant daughter was, and I told you she was in the vehicle at the car park.

In the ensuing 50+ years, we have shared many friends- still living or gone to their rest; visits, meals, conversations in person or over the phone; some moments of joy and exhilaration (never enough); and continuing anguish over the state of our nation and continent, and especially of its women and girls. There has been little or 'no sweetness here,' to quote you, as 'those for whom things did not change' have continued to multiply. The 'black-eyed squint' captured all this and more in her prodigious outpourings as she shouldered the defiance and loneliness of often being the lone sister among the brethren.

But things would get better as an expanding circle of women who were not afraid to identify as feminists emerged, and sisterhoods developed and expanded with the birth of NETRIGHT, MBAAS3M, and The African Feminist Forum, among others. Kinna became more of our friend and one of us, and less of a daughter.

Age was never a barrier with you-you were always Ama, aunt, sister, friend, fellow-traveler. You were open-hearted, simple, and generous, with few pretences, although you had travelled the world and rubbed shoulders with the high and mighty, as well as with the wananchi and mmobrowas, and you could

Speak with whichever accent you chose. But throughout you remained yourself, principled and not afraid to speak your truth, to choose your friends and the side you were on and bear the consequences.

We would have wished that voice to remain with us a little longer. But it was not our choice. You have exited in glory as the tributes that have poured in from across Africa and the globe testify.

We will continue to walk with Kinna and keep her and the grandchildren close.

Dear sister, friend, old girl, aunt, sleep on and rise in power- we will see you on the other side. And give a warm hug and that laugh to all our friends who have passed on.

Aunt, Nantsew yie! Onyankopon onfa wo nsie!