

Written by Ernest Kanjo

Thursday, 02 October 2014 00:40 - Last Updated Thursday, 02 October 2014 11:56



*Cloned with inert passion for movie acting, **Merlisa Determined** has unstoppably been determined to contribute enormously in putting a much-needed smile on the faces of less privileged girls and women around the globe. This unending urged has always put her on the*

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road to showing this love and commitment whenever she has had the chance to do so. An anti-HIV/AIDS university and college tour (not too long ago) that emanated from a film project to that effect vividly comes to this writer’s mind. The impact of this outing has remained very strong on whom it was destined for.

The international actress’ advocacy role for women and young girls from a not-too-favourable background and her endless desire to step in has fortunately not gone unnoticed. Someone, somewhere had been keenly observing and it was a matter of time for them to speak out.

Enter the UN

Then came September 18, 2014! From the office of the UN Strategic Alignment of Like Minds, Inc., the news broke: “I am very elated to include you on our panel of UN Ambassadors.”

***Dr Delphina Chikamele Amuneke-Samuel, Chief Envoy UN Strategic Alignment of Like Minds,** writing to the international actress, praised Merlisa Determined for her desire in helping women and girls from a disadvantaged background. It is this goodwill that fetched the movie icon the new diplomatic status she now possesses.*

*According to the UN diplomat, Merlisa, now one of the Accredited Ambassadors to the UN office in Geneva, Switzerland, will set to work upon receiving her official appointment letter at her installation. Her first outing is billed for Geneva from November 17 to November 18 this year when the movie actress cum UN Ambassador will take part in the second session of the **Preparatory Committee of the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction** at the **Palais des Nations***

***TIPTOPSTARS** and **Afrikka Radio’s African Cocktail** spoke with the award-winning actress who is quite prominent in African movies and it was a very elated and excited Merlisa Determined we found this time. Excerpts of the interview she had concurrently on print and radio with Editor Ernest Kanjo!*

Ernest Kanjo (EK): Merlisa Determined, you are the latest from the movie world to be appointed as an Accredited UN Ambassador to Strategic Alignment of Like Minds - Insurmountable Woman. Let’s begin by congratulating you on your appointment. Did you expect this at this time and what was your immediately reaction when it got to you?

Merlisa Determined (MD): Thank you Ernest! First let me say I've been praying and working hard in my career to get to this point, asking God, in the process, to enlarge my territory so that that I can reach people on a wider platform. However, I didn't expect such appointment at this time - so early in my career. I received a phone call from Chief Envoy UN Ambassador, Dr Delphina Chika Amuneke-Samuel to announce I would be appointed to the panel of ambassadors and be given an official letter of appointment as one of the United Nations Accredited Ambassadors to the UN office in Geneva, Switzerland. I was filled with joy, filled with praise and worship because this moment is not just about me becoming a UN Ambassador, but

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more so about being placed in a position to where I can reach more people, helping, sharing, and empowering the less fortunate.

EK: In your appointment letter, the UN Envoy says she is quite impressed with your desire to help women or girls that are less privileged. How precisely have you been doing that and what was your motivation?

MD: Well, having compassion for others and always wanting to help them is something that was instilled in me as a child. I come from a lovely family of ten and my mother always taught us that we were and had to constantly be our brothers keeper. She always reminded us that if your brother or sister was down, you had to be there to help lift them up. I've witnessed my mother with ten children to cater for, open her door for many who came knocking, never complaining. She never turned her back on anyone – not even a single time. So, being raised in such a loving environment was a great inspiration to me. I have been part of **Insurmountable Women** since 2011. It's a non-profit organization based in the US, empowering women worldwide and creating a synergy of like minded women here in the United States, Africa and The Caribbean Islands. The organization's development goals are to promote gender equality and empower women, eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, consolidate human rights of women, create programmes against trafficking of women and girls, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other issues. To find out more about the organization, you can log on to insurmountablewomen.org.

EK: You and I understand that such an appointment comes with huge social responsibilities – are you ready to face the herculean task?

MD: I believe God wouldn't have placed me in this position if I wasn't ready. There is power in your tongue, you pray and ask God for what you want and at his timing, He will move and Ernest, He is moving. I'm poised to empower women and girls more.

EK: You will certainly be given guidelines on how to operate as a UN Ambassador in this specific domain. However, you may be expected to display a sense of initiative. Are you already reflecting on some social project you may eventually be conceiving?

MD: Most definitely, as I shared with you before, I took part on a university and college tour public speaking, educating students on HIV and AIDS awareness. I want to continue focusing in that direction as well as tackle other issues. Also, come October 11, 2014, we will be dealing with breast cancer through a humanitarian stage play. I'll be performing alongside well-known Nollywood actors in the humanitarian stage production title **One Quiet Voice**. It will be directed by Lancelot Imasuen Oduwa. The play tells the true life story of eight women from different walks of life, surviving and overcoming breast cancer. It will be portraying their extraordinarily courageous struggle, strength and challenges they faced and overcame.

EK: Your first assignment will be attending the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction from November 17 to 18 this year in Geneva, Switzerland I guess you are excited as the time draws near Merlisa.....

MD: Sure I'm excited! My first visit to Switzerland - I couldn't have imagine this Ernest. I simply

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ask God to allow my talent flow - He has blessed me by opening up new avenues through which I can help and touch the lives of others people worldwide. Things are beginning to come to pass.

EK: Angelina Joile is also a Chief Envoy UN Ambassador. This honors seem to be vehicling a message about women in movie world. What could be the meaning of this? I believe it simply means when God has blessed you and place you in

MD: I believe it simply means when God has blessed you and place you in a position to use your talent for greater works. You simply just do it. Angelina Jolie is a woman of power. She inspires me a great deal.

EK: Your fans may begin to nurse fears that with this new position and with a divided mind, Merlisa would not have enough time to do movies as before. Do you entertain such fears as well?

MD: Hahahahaha! My fans would surely not have such fears. Keep in mind Ernest that extending my hands to help others isn't something new. Perhaps what is new is the title of UN Ambassador that I have now been blessed with. I'm grateful to have such title to my name because I can now empower women and girls on a much larger platform. Acting is a gift from God and I will continue using my talent.

EK: We will be attending the Golden Icons Academy Movie Awards on October 25, 2014. You are nominated for Best Lead Actress in Diaspora 2014 category. What are your expectations?

MD: Yes, I was nominated for Best Lead Actress in Diaspora category for the movie **Brides War**

directed by Obed Joe and produced by Perfect Production.

Brides War

received three nominations in Diaspora category, Best Film, Best Male Lead Actor and Best Female Lead Actor. We thank God.

EK: Merlisa, thanks for talking to us and congrats on your new status.

MD: Thanks a million Ernest, it's a pleasure as usual!