

## Remembering Everjoyce Jeketa Win (EJ)

**Dzodzi Tsikata**

On 9 March 2025, a day after International Women’s Day, Everjoyce Jeketa Win, best known as EJ, became an ancestor, leaving us heartbroken and in deep mourning. EJ, a much-loved comrade, sister and friend to many, nurtured a generation of feminist activists and did so very much in her time with us to advance the feminist causes of African women. This colossal loss could not have come at a worse time for the feminist causes EJ spent her entire professional life defending in national, African and global spaces—at the Women’s Action Group, Women in Law and Development in Africa, ActionAid, Association for Women’s Rights in Development, the African Feminist Forum and JASS (Just Associates).

As recently as 3 March 2025, EJ’s reflections on 30 years of the Beijing Platform for Action were quoted in an article in *The Guardian*. As she said, in typical EJ style: “It is a worrying moment. The question is: are others going to mimic the orange tyrant—I refuse to use his name—by doing what he does or are they going to counter him?”<sup>1</sup> We all know what EJ was gearing up to do.

Everjoyce was a consistent, reliable, passionate and principled voice and leader. She wrote beautifully and spoke eloquently in different formats on a range of subjects. These include Western paternalistic assumptions about African women (2007), the dangerous implications of stigma (2020), and violence against women. She did not spare anyone from scrutiny—whether it was well-meaning liberals blind to their own prejudices, tyrants, misogynists or others who pose any form of threat to the emancipation of women. She had no qualms about calling out Aung San Suu Kyi for turning a blind eye to the suffering of the Rohingya refugees, after she paid a harrowing visit to Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh, where over 900,000 Rohingya had moved to escape persecution by the army in Myanmar. Everjoyce was a consequential African feminist voice on X, where she described herself as “Defender of Secular Spaces. Feminist. Sometimes a writer. Sometimes a reader.”<sup>2</sup>

*Feminist Africa* was extremely fortunate to have EJ as a leading member of its community. In the journal's years at the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town, EJ was an active debater on the GWS listserv, a platform famed for cutting-edge discussions on any subject that concerned feminists. One of her contributions to that vibrant epistemic community can be found in the Standpoint section of *Feminist Africa* Issue 3 (2004): National Politricks, as an "Open Letter to Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Other Women in the South African Cabinet."

More recently, EJ contributed to *Feminist Africa* Issue 22 (2017): *Feminists Organising—Strategy, Voice, Power*, edited by Charmaine Pereira. EJ took part in a plenary discussion at the 4th African Feminist Forum in Harare in April 2016, which was published as a conversation on Faith, Feminism and Fundamentalisms.<sup>3</sup> In EJ's opening submission, she criticised the collusion between state and church to re-inscribe and reinstate traditional values that rolled back decades of gains made by women. She also critiqued the prosperity gospel's individualistic message that blamed the poor for structural inequalities, while drawing attention to liberation theology's alternative message of Christian solidarity with the oppressed.

The Feminist Centre for Racial Justice leadership series, a podcast founded and hosted by Awino Okech, has featured EJ in her own words in a four-part conversation.<sup>4</sup> It is comforting to hear EJ in all her clarity, irreverence, wit, and thoughtfulness. More than that, the series represents a veritable soundtrack to African feminist activism spanning some of the most crucial decades of our continent's post-colonial history. It explains EJ's own arc as a feminist, chronicles Zimbabwean, African and global campaigns and struggles, sets records straight and speaks directly to a new generation of African feminists.

EJ brought all her grace, courage and stubborn persistence to her fight against sickness in the last three years. In intermittent WhatsApp messages, she spoke of health challenges, but of much more—of family, friendship, and of returning to the School of Oriental and African Studies as Professor of Practice, a position she had not used much because of the pandemic and ill health. On X, she continued her commentary until the very end on all the things that were wrong with the world.

May EJ rest from the pain of sickness and the suffering that accompanied her last few years, and may she continue to watch over her beloved African feminist movement as she did her whole life.

Hamba Kahle, EJ. You fought the good fight.

## Notes

1. EJ quoted by Isabel Choat in “‘We Had All This Energy’: The Landmark Gathering of Women That Unnerved the Chinese Government,” *The Guardian*, 3 March 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/mar/03/we-had-all-this-energy-the-landmark-gathering-of-women-that-unnerved-the-chinese-government>
2. @everjoicewin. X post. <https://x.com/everjoicewin?lang=en>
3. Theo Sowa facilitated this plenary discussion with Everjoice Win, Fatou Sow and Musimbi Kanyoro.
4. Awino Okech. “Legacy Series with Everjoice Win. Episode 15, Part 1.” *Runway to Feminist Justice*, 9 September 2024. Podcast, Spotify, 43 min 27 sec. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/6yLGtT0kxIN4GWs34MScnc>

## References

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