

SPEAKING OUT: PRINCESS OBIAJULU UGWU ON STANDING FOR ELECTION

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Figure 36 Princess Obiajulu Ugwu, 37, ran for a seat in the Enugu State House of Assembly at the 2019 General Election
Credit: Princess Obiajulu Ugwu

'In the 2019 elections, when I was 35, I contested for a seat in the Enugu State House of Assembly under the United Progressive Party. There was no sponsorship from the party aside from giving free nomination forms to women and youth. Most of my support came from family, friends and colleagues who have seen my passion and believed in my ability to handle leadership positions and deliver change.

I contested as a form of protest to the existing leadership, in which nothing seems to be working out. It wasn't an easy feat especially as a young female candidate. Some in society saw me as a deviant and called me a prostitute. Even some family members said I was overstepping my boundaries and should be stopped before I disgraced them. Men who were in the race tried to discourage me. I was sold out by a member of my party who felt a male candidate from another party, contesting the same position, was a better option. He asked me to step down and, when I declined, he started campaigning against me. One of the other major challenges I faced was finance. During the campaign period, we went out to speak to people, but they wouldn't listen if we had nothing to put on the table.

I do not intend to call this my biggest achievement in politics because it was just a foundation and, by God's grace, I will keep trying to find a space to dish out all that is deposited in me to help humanity. But I will say I have gained visibility and also insight into how the system is run, which is unpleasant.

I am sharing my story because I believe it can reawaken sleeping giants in some of the female folk around Africa and the globe into realising their full potential, especially as it concerns leadership and politics.'