

## *Opening Power to Diversity*



**Tonye Olatunde**

**Placed with Robert Troy TD from April 2013 to December 2013**

### **Biography**

Originally from Nigeria, Tonye is now an Irish citizen living in Maynooth. She has extensive experience of working with people with disabilities and is currently working as a relief support worker for Dara Residential Services in Kildare. Tonye is also currently completing a Masters in Social Science from NUI Maynooth and has an MA in Law and Diplomacy from the University of Jos in Nigeria. Since coming to Ireland, Tonye has also received qualifications in Community Development and Leadership, Therapeutic Counselling, Childcare and Job coaching.

### **Diary**

*“I would never have imagined that politicians invest so much time, effort, passion, intelligence, selflessness, and hard work into representing their constituents and managing the country.”*

On my first day at Leinster House, I had the fastest bus ride into Dublin; or so it seemed. Maybe because I wished that the bus went slower than usual to allow the butterflies in my tummy to reach the inevitable completion of their life cycle before I got into town. As I walked towards the stately gates of Leinster House, I wore my badge and walked through the secured gates uninterrupted; I felt

very privileged. Although the butterflies had apparently met their demise in the lava in my tummy, some drumming going on in my chest took over my attention. This time, I made the decision to use it as accompanying music on a catwalk. So I walked the grounds of Leinster House as if with springs in my heels. From that moment, I felt like every step I took was one giant step for all those I will represent in Leinster House. I felt empowered. At lunch time that same day, I found myself dining in the company of Ministers and TDs all around the restaurant in Leinster House. I felt privileged indeed. Nowadays, I have gotten used to seeing and interacting with people I previously saw only on television, but I never take it for granted. I still know that I am privileged.

These days, I can't wait for the bus to get into town so that I can get into the office in time to start tackling the day's tasks. So far, my main tasks revolve around research, drafting documents, and representations. This, simply put, is advocacy on behalf of the constituents who are demanding their rights or expressing their ideologies through various channels. This is quite challenging and time consuming but it brings home the true meaning of 'public servant.' Irish politicians are indeed public servants.

I would never have imagined that politicians invest so much time, effort, passion, intelligence, selflessness, and hard work into representing their constituents and managing the country. From the early hours of Tuesdays to very late on Thursdays when the Dáil is in session, I could almost vouch that Deputy Troy functions round the clock in a sleepless mode around Leinster House. He is there when I arrive in the mornings and I leave him behind at about 6pm. Sometimes he is in the Dáil chambers when I leave or just going to the chambers for long hours of debates and deliberations. There is committee work to do as well. His phone rings nonstop and he takes all calls. He receives hundreds of mails every week and he responds to all. He has other functions to attend to outside Leinster House in between all these. I can only imagine the amount of work he has to do in his constituency office the rest of the days. To sum it up, he is a hard working man. I believe this kind of schedule to be the same for all other politicians – tireless working men and women.

My experience in Leinster House has turned me into a bit of an advocate. When I hear people say politicians sit in their comfy offices and do nothing, I don't let it go; I just have to correct that misconception. My experience has also given me hope in the recovery of the economy. I believe that all the hard work will surely pay off some day and I hope soon.



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