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Unveiling the Power of Egedege: *The Story of Queen Theresa Onuorah*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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UNVEILING THE POWER OF EGEDEGE

Unveiling the Power of Egedege: The Story of Queen Theresa Onuorah

By Chukwunwike Ossai · Cultural Heritage · Ozikoro.com

Theresa Onuorah is a big name in the Igbo land, both in music and culture. She's a Nigerian highlife musician, dancer, and songwriter who has carried the Igbo tradition to far places.

She was born on the 9th of January, 1942, in Unubi, in the town of Nnewi South Local Government Area of Anambra State; Theresa is the true daughter of the soil that uses her talent to shine light in Igbo land. She is not just a singer; they call her Queen of culture," "Queen of Unubi," and even in "Onu Ejiri Mara Mba" (The voice that shakes the nation) because her voice carries power that cannot be hidden.

Theresa started the famous Egedege Dance Group, a dance company that mixes half-life music with the Igbo people, the Ogene sound, and stylish moves. Her life is a story of passion, strength, and love for her people, and she left a remarkable legacy that generations will never forget. How did she start Theresa Onuorah grew up in Unubi, Anambra state, where her father was a local musician playing "egwu ekpili," one traditional Igbo king music. So she took it up from there as her music career started. Her father's voice and drumbeats had been ringing in her ear before, and she started to sing and dance with her group as a child. Early life with music made her popular.

She was not too serious with school because her heart beats in music and dance; she followed her father to perform at village events. By the time she reached the teenage stage, Theresa had been traveling to places, singing and dancing for people. She did not have training for booking people down, but she had a natural talent—it came from the

soul. In 1976, when she was 34 years old, she dropped her first album, and that's when she became famous. Later, in 1985, she formed the Egedege Dance Group, which made her go viral.

What "Egedege" means is the language oIgbobo, which means "richness" and "bravery," and that is the reason they play a role in royal houses or even prominent families that have money and class. The dance is not an ordinary dance it is mixed with highlife with the ogene sound (metal gong) the sound, udu (clay pot drum), ekwe (wooden slit drum), and Theresa's incredible voice that is calling and answer. The dancers move with their style, wearing colorful clothes with small mirrors and feathers, and Theresa leads with no big fan (akupe egwu) that she's using like a queen. In the 80s and 90s, Egedege met everyone in the Igbo land waiting to see. If Theresa and her groups perform at a wedding, funeral, or festival, that's a big event. Her music is not just entertaining. It carries messages about life, culture, and their ancestors, making people know who they are.

Theresa Onuorah released many albums that are still fresh to listen to. Some of her songs are: "Oba Egwu": she hails as the power of music and dance." Onwanwa Mu Na Chimo": This song talks about spirit and unity. "Ogene Ekwubego Mu Na Onye Ge-Agba Egbu" is one of her strongest tracks mixed with ogene sounds and deep lyrics." Ebelebe Egbuonu O" Is a melody that calls people to listen and feel the vibe. Her voice is something else; it is ancient but so sweet, as though she has been singing during the time of her ancestors. She uses the flute, ogene, and the help of drums to make her songs different from others, and that's the reason she's standing out today. In October 2021, she blew people's minds when Larry Gaaga featured her in the song "Egedege" With Flavour Phynophyno. That track brought her back to the spotlight, and people who didn't know her before started recognizing her. What makes her an Iron Lady? Theresa is not just a singer, she is a warrior in culture. So they called her an "Iron Lady" because she doesn't shake. She faced so many trials, but she's still standing. A rumor went viral: she was a river goddess, her face did not show on camera, and she could not marry a mortal human. But she does not care. She married Mr Godwin Igboebisi from Unubi, and they

gave birth to children together, even though she does not publicly talk about her family.

Her strength shows in how she leads her group. She wears a unique costume, bright clothes with mirrors, a crown of feathers, and a big hand fan that makes her look like the queen. Photographers in the '80s and '90s are complaining that they could not capture her face very well, that she was blocking it with her hand fan making the picture look blurry. But now, with the help of a phone camera, everyone can see her face clearly, and she's still shining.

Theresa Onuorah has lived long. On January 9, 2025, she clocked 83 years and is still strong. She celebrated her 80th birthday in 2022 with a big party in Awka, showing she is not tired. Even as she's old, her voice does not crack, and her spirit is still high. She lives in Unubi with her husband and enjoys the love of people.

She performs in significant events that cost much money. She does not flaunt her wealth like modern artists, but her real wealth is the respect and legacy she has built. Theresa is a goddess in Egedege music and Igbo highlife songs. She has performed at weddings, funerals, and festivals across the Igbo land and beyond, and her dance group carries her name to places. In churches and hospitals everywhere, most people still call her when they need a cultural touch in their event. How she is Today For now, on March 12, 2025, Theresa Onuorah is still alive and kicking. She does not perform like before due to her age, but her music is playing everywhere: on the radio, and even online, Young artists like Larry Gaaga, Flavour, and Phono are bringing her sound to new ears, and in 2021, her "Egedege" song proves she cannot fade. In Nollywood, they mostly show her kind of character; sometimes, they will do even more than her, but it keeps her vibes alive. T (@officialqueentheresaonuorah), who has over 35,000 followers. Theresa Onuorah is a true Igbo legend, the Iron Lady who uses her voice and dancing steps to take the Igbo people to another level. From a little child singing with her father in Unubi to the Queen of Egedege shaking the world, she has lived a life that has meaning. Her music bridges the old and new, and her strength is a

lesson to anyone who wants to follow their heart. Even at 83, Theresa still proves that true Iron does not rust. Her legacy will continue to ring in Igbo land and beyond forever.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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An enthusiast in tech with deep passion for studying and showcasing the vibrant cultural heritage of southern Nigeria . Combining my skill with my obsession towards African history and traditions to create contributions that impacts the digital space.



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