



A letter to the Girls of Rwanda

Abakobwa bacu,

Today we celebrate the 'International Day of the Girl Child' A day that the whole world has dedicated to you; day that will promote your rights as girls, highlight gender inequalities that remain between you and your brothers and look for ways to correct any discrimination and abuse suffered by girls around the globe. We in Rwanda for the first time are celebrating 'International Day of the Girl Child' and as a nation we honour our young girls and prepare you to become women of integrity in your own right.

I would like to remind you of the strength that you carry within you. Rwanda continues to do its best to create a level playing field for you and your brothers. Opportunities have been laid forth for you; schools, programs, scholarships to mention a few. It is now up to you to step up, claim what you have always had the right to have, join the boys and show that you are also capable. We are behind you all the way. So seize every chance and do so with confidence!

As I am sure your parents, guardians and mentors have told you, it takes more than a good education and the right opportunities to become a woman of strength. I urge you to also cultivate your character by asserting yourselves, recognizing the talents and importance of others but most importantly discovering your self-worth – the Rwandan "Agaciro". Learn to love yourself and build yourself both from self evaluation and accepting constructive criticism from others. Maintain your core values of honesty, integrity and loyalty, in order to stay true to yourselves and lead others. As they say, great leaders are those that lead by example. So start now. Wisdom will come with age, but you can start to acquire it through open-mindedness and self discipline.

Young girls, our futures are defined by our choices we make along the way. Believe in yourself and in your dreams, always have hope and your dreams will most certainly come true. Most importantly, there is no doubt whatsoever that you are all valuable, so never ever settle for less than what you know you are worth.

With love
Mrs. Jeannette Kagame
First Lady of Rwanda