

A heart-broken mother's tale

• School keeps mum on missing girl

Unable to bear the sudden disappearance of their two-year old daughter, Adeola, her parents, Mr and Mrs Akinwunmi Akinware, as well as concerned parents of the Saint Saviour's Nursery and Primary School, Ijegan, Lagos, took the case to Alausa, the seat of government of Lagos State. **ESTHER OREJIMI** who visited the school and parents of the missing girl writes on the shock and grief stirred by the incident.

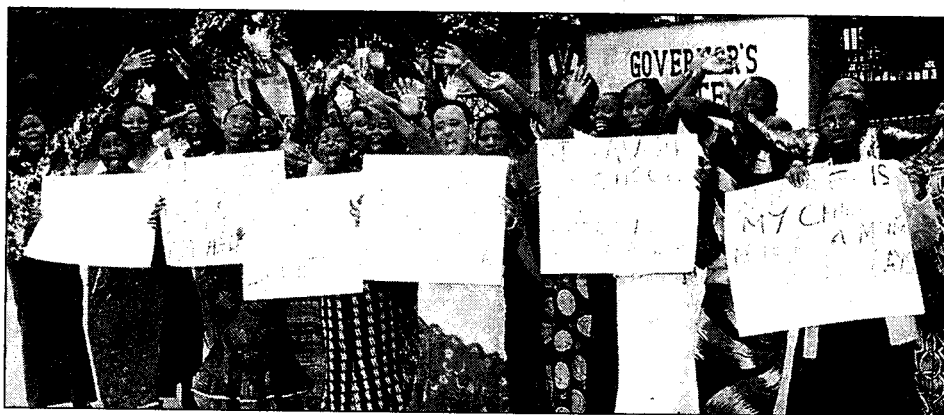


• Mr Akinware holding a photograph of the family, while his wife, Josephine, carrying a placard



• Mr Akinware carrying the missing child... before the incident

'They told us that maybe the child's 'second father' took her away. We were even more furious at this time. Later, they said maybe it is the child's grandmother (my mother in-law) who took her away. We told them that our mother had travelled two weeks before the incident happened. They did not listen to us any longer'



• The Concerned Women Association of the school with various placards at Alausa

PHOTOS: MOSES OMOSEHIN

mysterious things have been happening in this school.

"There were days we came to school and noticed some salt sprinkled all over the compound. This is not the first time a child will be missing in this school. A nine year-old girl got missing some time ago. Lots of other strange things do happen here too," Mrs. Akinware further alleged.

On whether the matter is in court, Mrs Akinware said she was not aware as she has not been served by anybody neither had she directed the police on same.

Visits to the school to get reaction from the proprietress yielded no positive result as she was always said to be away. Further efforts to get top administrative members of the school to talk also proved abortive. But *The Comet* will continue to visit the institution till the authorities there speak up on their own side of the matter.



• IGP Sunday Ehindero

ON Friday, June 2, 2006, Mrs. Josephine Akinware, 40, as usual, took her two daughters-Adeola and Adedoyin – to Saint Saviour's Nursery and Primary School, Ijegan, on the outskirts of Lagos.

Two-year old Adeola was, until her disappearance, in kindergarten (KG) class 1. Her elder sister, Adedoyin is a nursery two pupil.

On the fateful day, Mrs. Akinware, who has worked as a counsellor in the far-flung secondary school arm of the institution in the last 13 years, reported for work and went round to greet those taking care of her children. She also exchanged pleasantries with the school proprietress, Mrs. Beatrice Buwah.

But when she returned later in the day to pick up her two children, Adeola was missing. Thus began the battle to unravel the whereabouts of her daughter.

The Akinwunmis and some concerned parents said they believed that the school authorities have questions to answer concerning the disappearance of the child.

According to Mrs. Akinware, who spoke to *The Comet*, Adedoyin said she saw Adeola being driven away in a vehicle before closing hour by the school driver, simply identified as Mr. Sunday.

She said: "I have been working as counselor with the school for the past 13 years. This was why I decided to send my children to the school. On June 2, when the incident happened, I went to the school as usual at the closing hour to take my children. My two daughters usually stay with their supervisor, Aunt Funmi, after closing hour. "It is from there I take them home. Immediately I entered the school that day, I peeped through the windows of the proprietress' office to greet her. She asked me if my daughters were in school that day. "I was surprised by the question because she saw me and the two girls in the morning when I brought them. I'd even greeted her that morning. However, I replied in the affirmative."

Mrs. Akinware said the proprietress then beckoned to her to come into her office; she did. Mrs Buwah allegedly requested to know why she has just two daughters. "I told her it was the family's decision for now. But she said we should think twice. She also advised that I should use the weekend to make love twice with my husband and let her know our decision," she said.

Mrs. Akinware said she told the proprietress that she was in a fast that

weekend, alleging further that Mrs Buwah advised her to forego the fast and carry out the advice just proffered.

"I thanked her for the advice and went inside the school to take my children. When I got to their class, I only met Adedoyin. Then I enquired from her about the whereabouts of her sister, Adeola. She replied that she saw her with her school teacher, Aunt Dupe Oni playing under the tree and later driven away by the school driver", Mrs. Akinware said.

According to the grief-stricken mother, when she enquired from Adeola's supervisor, Aunt Funmi, the latter told her that she taught that the child did not come to school that day.

Mrs. Akinware who said she was at this point furious and perplexed, stormed out of the room to enquire about the situation from the school proprietress who allegedly replied in Yoruba... "Se ara omo lo nta ebayi ni?"

(Is it because of your child you are behaving like this?)

Mrs. Akinware said she quickly informed her husband of the development and they both reported the incident to the nearest police station.

She said the police said they needed two weeks to investigate the matter.

Two weeks went past; there was no news about their missing daughter. The police later told them that there was a dispute over the missing child, she said.

"They told us that maybe the child's 'second father' took her away. We were even more furious at this time. Later, they said maybe it is the child's grandmother (my mother in-law) who took her away. We told them that our mother had travelled two weeks before the incident happened. They did not listen to us any longer", she said.

She said the police also alleged that her husband who has lost his job took the child away for rituals.

The couple was therefore forced to mobilise sympathisers, the Concerned Women Association, with whom they marched on Alausa, the seat of the state government, to intimate the government of their plight. Their demand: "That the school produces our daughter hale and hearty."

The couple also wants the state government to carry out thorough investigation into the activities of the school.

"The state government should investigate the activities of the school. Lots of