

Alaba trader murders apprentice

•Family demands justice

Stories by LUKKEY ABAWURU

WHEN 24-year-old Ikechukwu Idoko left his home town in Umuoma autonomous community in Igbo Eze north local government Area of Enugu State, to live with his master in Lagos, little did his mother know that he won't return home alive.

Her mother, Ma Benice was expecting the day her son would return to embrace her. She looked forward to seeing her son after his apprenticeship, but that would not happen again except miracle happens.

Ikechukwu Idoko is dead. His corps is lying at a public mortuary in Lagos following alleged beating by his master, identified as Mr Sunday Asomogha.

The master has been arrested by the police and is cooling off at State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) Panti, Yaba, where homicide detectives are drilling him on the incident.

Ikechukwu was apprenticed to Asomogha from Nnewi in Anambra state for a period of six years. The initial agreement was that Ikechukwu would serve Asomogha (34) for six years after which the later would settle him but after the expiration of the six years, Asomogha came out with stories and requested for the extension of the years to 10, implying that the boy would serve him for another four years before settlement.

The family of Ikechukwu after much argument pleaded with Asomogha to release their boy and bless him so that they could raise money for him to start his own business but Asomogha allegedly refused and insisted that Ikechukwu must remain with him pending the expiration of the period.

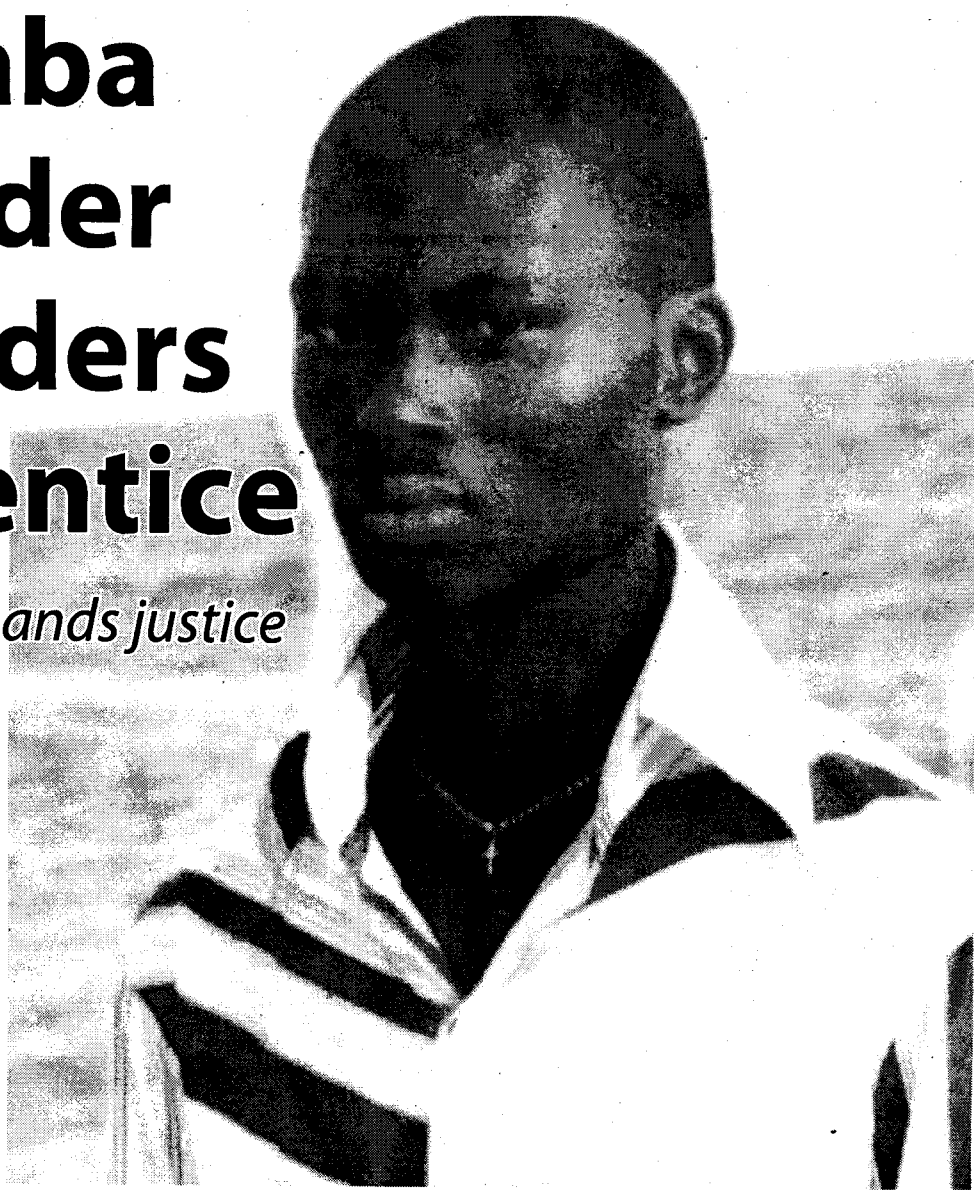
However, two years into the last four years, trouble started to brew between the servant and his master.

Daily Champion learnt that Ikechukwu was beaten at the least provocation. His boss started finding faults in him and his attitude towards him changed.

Sensing that Asomogha was looking for faults not to settle the boy, Ma Benice went to the master begging him to release Ikechukwu again but the master purportedly rejected the plea.

However the last straw that broke the camels back was the incident that occurred last week when Ikechukwu was allegedly beaten and thrown out of a two-storey building at Alaba in Ojo local government area of the state by his master over an argument that ensued between them.

Daily Champion gathered



•Mr. Ikechukwu Idoko, Apprentice allegedly killed by his master

that Asomogha had instructed Ikechukwu to buy fuel for their generating set but Ikechukwu, along the line, made a minor mistake which attracted several strokes of the cane.

Addressing some select journalists in Lagos, Adada Women Initiative, a group of non governmental organisation from Nsukka senatorial zone in Enugu described the death of Ikechukwu as "calous, merciless and man's inhumanity to man."

"We are shocked at the murder of our son and brother, Adada Women Initiative condemn in its totality the distardly act. We are dismayed that such act could be committed in a supposedly civilised society like ours, we therefore cry for justice and see that justice prevails.

President of the organisation, Mrs Stella Dike said overwhelming evidence shows that Ikechukwu was murdered by his master apparently to avoid settling him.

Also in another briefing by Ezike Youths Club, an umbrella union covering Ezike youths, the youths called for the immediate transfer of the case from SCID, Panti to zone two for thorough investigation.

According to the leader of the group, Mr. Sunday OS-SAI, "We have found floors in the technicality of the police. A murder case of this nature, police claim to have concluded investigation and was heading to court before luck ran against them. There are many questions begging for investigations and yet, police left them on touched, what happened to the medical doctor who issued death certificate before Ikechukwu finally died, who was he working for? What also happened to the three other suspects arrested along with Asomogha and why was autopsy conducted with no one to identify Ikechukwu i.e without our

presence or our lawyer?"

Speaking further, the group enjoined acting Inspector General of Police, Sunday Mike Okiro to immediately direct Zone two Onikan, to constitute an unbiased detectives to investigate the matter thoroughly. He said "What of the statements volunteered by neighbours who testified that Ikechukwu was pushed out of the building.

The investigating police officer told us that if Igbo kill Igbo is not a crime, as life is not a matter of Igbo or not? We want the police authorities to verify all these before going to court.

Speaking on alleged settlement plot by the family of the deceased a relation of Ikechukwu, Mr. Joe Onah said "our people are not people of money. Nsukka people want justice, Asomogha had severally boasted that he would close the case with money. We are talking of a boy that was killed and not money. We don't even want a trillion naira as compensation, all we want is for the police to do their work thoroughly so that justice prevails. No member of the family or town want monetary compensation, we will take this matter to National Assembly and the presidency who knows what the boy would have been in future and one is talking of money. He was calously murdered," he argued.

Adding his own voice, Chief executive officer of Von Petroleum Limited and a member of the community, Mr. Maduka Ugwu said "Asomogha, has called us severally for settlement, but we don't want, please somebody should tell him that we don't want his money. He should keep his money. The only thing that could settle the matter is for him to go to the mortuary and miraculously wake him to life, we also want the ICP to engineer his men to conduct fresh autopsy in our

presence."

However, detained Asomogha in his statement before the police said "I wanted to flog Ikechukwu for disobedience and he jumped out of the building.

The suspect said he never laid his hand on him. However, when Daily Champion visited SCID, Panti, Yaba while Ikechukwu decided to jump out of two story building to avoid a mere strokes of canes, the police said "we have the cane and a Ghana-must-go bag containing canes as exhibit, only the court could determine the truth of the matter."

The police from homicide section who pleaded for anonymity said the police have done enough investigations on the matter.

It should be recalled neighbours of Cele, off Sabo Road, Alaba woke up July 10 with the news of the death of Ikechukwu. Daily Champion learnt that Ikechukwu was rushed to a nearby hospital which referred him to Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) but was not admitted for undisclosed reasons. He later died.



Miko Okiro