

I N N O C E N T
OKONKWO spoke with the Dike family concerning the sudden demise of their son Afamefuna who was murdered in their home by robbers.

Killed in his prime

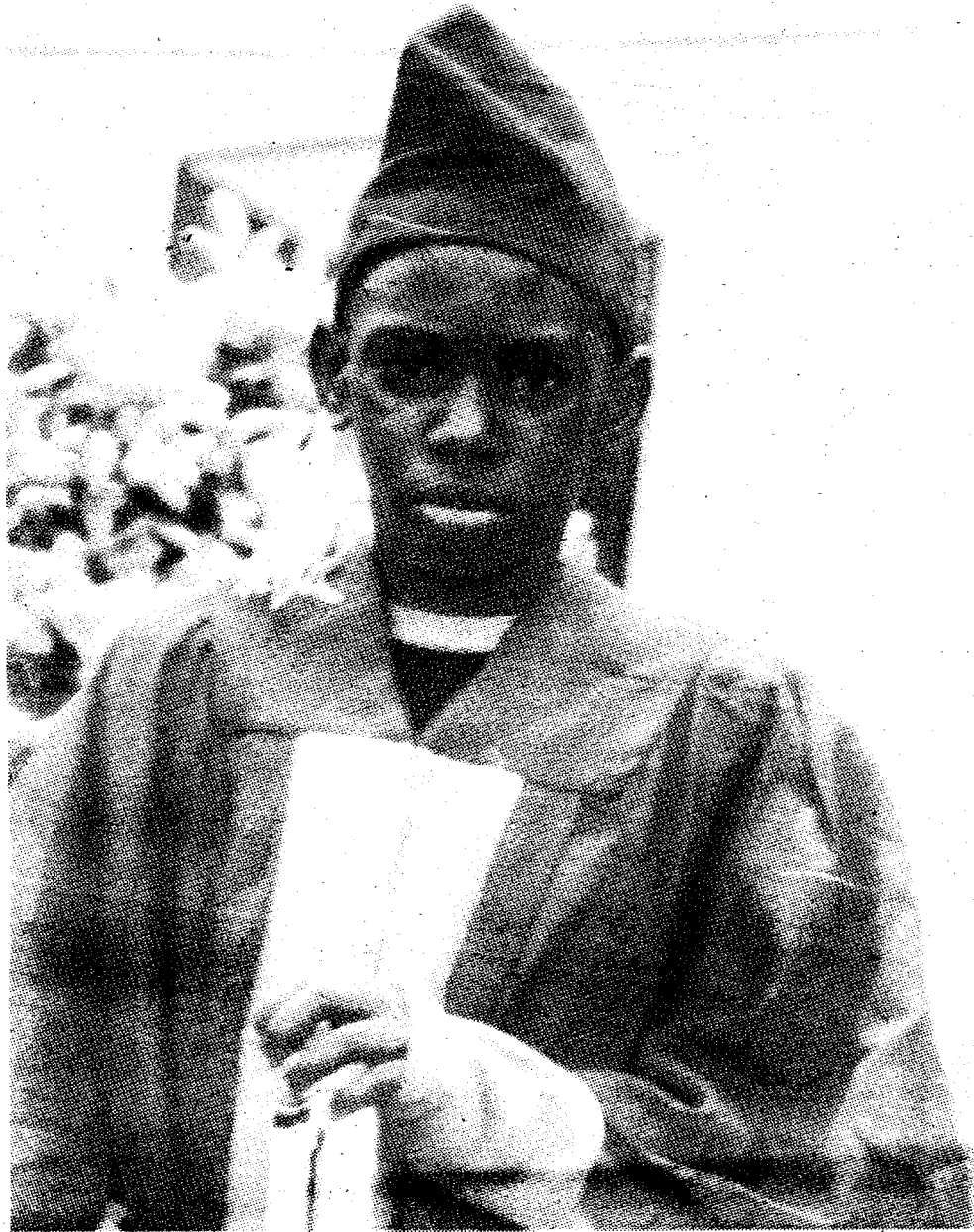
AFAMEFUNA Dike, a 13-year-old ASSII student of Federal Science and Technical College Yaba, Lagos, was the third child of Mr. and Mrs Virginus Dike. The literal meaning of "Afamefuna" is, "may my name never be lost or forgotten". One lingering ambition that made this dynamic handsome boy very outstanding was his passionate desire to serve humanity. It was for this reason that he resolved to be a medical practitioner, a decision that informed his deep interest in science subjects. This great dream was however aborted. Afamefuna was murdered in cold blood on the eve of 2008 by dare devil armed robbers who stormed their residence in Okota, a Lagos suburb.

Like many young people, the boy wanted to usher in year 2008 in company of family members. He reasoned with his mother on the need to welcome the new year in a neat and clean environment. Every member of the family with the exception of the father who has gone to his office was mobilized to tidy up the environment that Monday evening in readiness for the new year which was just hours away. Afam was assigned the frontage of the main building while the rest of the family members took care of the balcony, the stair cases and the pent house.

The story was told by Afamefuna's mother, Mrs Dike: "In less than 30 minutes, the entire compound was sparkling in readiness for the new year, and for a job well done, the children were promised their favourite soup by their mother.

"As if Afamefuna had premonition of the tragic drama that was about to unfold, he told his mother that he would not wait for the soup as he was very hungry, and suggested that he would rather go for indomie noddles which he later bought and personally prepared, having turned down the offer by her elder sister who wanted to do the cooking.

Shortly after the meal, Afam picked a novel and sank into a sofa with it. "They were all in the sitting room while I was busy preparing the soup. Suddenly, everything went dead, there was a pin drop silence and the boisterousness of the children in the sitting room ceased. I became worried and got out of the kitchen to convince myself that all was well. As I turned down the cooker to see what was going on, I was confronted by a gun-toting strange figure. He pushed me violently and bellowed that if I should talk again that I would be dead. He dragged me into the sitting room where three other armed men were. I saw my children lying face down. The question I asked myself was



Afamefuna

why me again? Robbery attack on my family has happened too many times.

The bandits ordered me to lie face down. Soon after, they pulled me up violently and marched me up stairs, saying that they got information that we kept five million naira in the house that I should bring the money or else they would kill me. They told me that the only thing that could save me was to hand the money over to them. That if I wasted time I would not see year 2008. I asked them 'how can you say such a thing to your sister? One of them pushed me hard again and thundered, "who is your brother, I told you to go and get the money immediately."

At this point, Mrs Dike, disclosed, one of the robbers suggested to his colleagues that they should descend on her children but she urged them not to touch any of her children, and promised to give them anything they wanted but added that she does not have the required N5 million. They asked about her husband and she told them he had gone to the office, that she has her own room and does not know where the key of her husband's room is. They marched her to her room from there they brought her back to the sitting room and were hitting her head with the butt of their gun severally.

There was a deafening gunshot but when she quickly turned towards the kids, they were still lying down calmly.

Once again, the robbers shoved her violently, asking if she thought they were there to play. They took her upstairs again insisting that she should produce the key to her husband's room and started to ransack the whole place. Eventually, the woman broke loose from the grip of the robbers, escaped to the pent house of the building and started shouting for help.

Daily Champion gathered that Afamefuna who unknown to most of his other siblings in the sitting room, was bleeding profusely from severe gunshot injury, stood up bravely and spoke to the hoodlums, "So you people have showed me". One of them apologised to him and they started to hurry away, carting away laptops, documents and anything they could lay hands on.

Said Mrs Dike, "The children asked whether I was still alive, I said yes and they told me that Afam was shot and was bleeding seriously. I raced down in confusion, behold my son was lying in the pool of his blood.

With the help of neighbours, we carried him down stairs, and rushed him first to Muyid hospital. We could

not see a doctor there, so we went to St Raphaels, from there we were referred to Ikeja. There was a terrible traffic jam.

When we eventually reached the hospital in Ikeja, there was no bed and we decided to go to Eko hospital but they called us back that there was a bed space. Afamefuna declared that he was feeling cold. It discovered that he has ran out of blood but before they could get more, it was 40 minutes after and my son told me that he wanted to make 2008, that he did not want to die. I responded that God will do it for us.

When my husband came to the hospital, he saw him and asked, "is he my Dad," I told him yes. He now said, "Thank God". I was encouraged. He asked after his brothers, saying he hope they are no more crying. The elder brother said, no they are no more crying. He then asked when am I living this place. We told him very soon. He said he wish to be coming from home for the treatment I said yes. He kept on saying at this point that he was feeling sleepy and that he wanted to sleep, then I was sorely afraid because of the quantity of blood he had lost.

At a point, they asked me to leave. My husband said that I should go home to prepare pap for the boy. I was at home when the phone rang and my neighbour called and said that I should not bother that it is tomorrow morning that the pap will be needed. He was praying for the person that drove him to the hospital he kept on saying "God will bless you, God bless you". Though I love all my children equally, he was a dream child that any parent could wish to have, exceptionally talented and was academically outstanding, having won many accolades in his short life on earth."

The bereaved woman stressed that Afamefuna was also a prayer warrior by his own right. How else could one explain the selflessness of a child drenched in his own blood but forgot his pains and was praying to God to bless the neighbour who was conveying him to the hospital "God bless you, God will bless you" he prayed as they trudged through the traffic on Lagos road on their way to Ikeja General hospital that sad Monday night.

Afamefuna was a sports lover and very enthusiastic about football, in fact he was looking forward to the African Nations cup this January in Ghana. This might be the reason why he told his mother amid pain that he wanted to see 2008 but that was not to be.

Heartbroken Mrs Dike and the entire members of the family are yet to recover from the shock of losing a dearly beloved child who everyone testifies to be a highly gifted child of very few words, quiet, unassuming and whose words were full of wisdom.

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