

Story behind baby-killer student

● Victim's father was romantically involved with tot's murderer

Residents of Twagwayen Kwara in Kwamba area of Suleja are yet to recover from the shock of Baby Chinonye's death in the hands of her neighbour, Miss Ozioma Azuryeme, who abducted the baby and strangled her in bizarre circumstances. **Weekly Trust** reports

Abdullahi Yahaya Bello, in Suleja & Israel Ayegba, Minna

IN scriptures of major religions of the world, one of the commonest exhortations is to love your neighbour as yourself. In the case of Miss Ozioma Azuryeme, a 21-year-old NCE II student of the College of Education, Minna and resident of Tagwayen Kwara in Kwamba, Suleja, she seems to believe in another maxim - be thy neighbour's killer. She confessed in court to the murder of two-year-old Chinonye Timothy whom she kidnapped on June 12, 2010. The baby's remains were discovered

two weeks ago.

Chinonye's mother, Mrs Kate Onyakam, who narrated the incident in tears, said: "Every Saturday, I go to shop for provisions and foodstuff that will last me a week. On that fateful day, after they ate, I asked my eldest child to take care of her siblings and left for the market as usual. On my way home I met my children outside and I asked them what were they doing and they said they were looking for Chinoye. Initially, I thought maybe one of my tenants went out with her. But to my dismay, everybody said they did not see her. We searched everywhere; we could not find her. We then reported the case to the police after

a 24-hour search. We were even at Prophet T.B. Joshua's place to seek help, but all to no avail."

Shocking revelation

Mrs. Onyakam said that they had given up hope until two weeks ago when the police called to deliver the shocker. "I was getting ready to go to church when my husband's phone rang. He said the police invited him to come to the station. We got to the station and the police showed us the clothes of a baby found inside a bag near the farm of the man who informed the police. The police went there and picked the bag which had the decomposed body of my daughter inside it. I can't describe how terrified we were at the sight of our own child, murdered."

Mrs Onyakam said the biggest shock was the discovery that her daughter was killed by her neighbour. "The biggest shock in all this was the following day when police came to our area and arrested one of our neighbours as the killer. Apparently the farmer had trailed the killer up to their house before informing the police. We learnt that the man suspected the lady who came to dump the bag in the bush and trailed her to her house without her



BABY Chinonye, according to neighbours, was a good natured tot, always smiling

knowledge. I was speechless when the police arrested Ozioma and her family and she later confessed to abducting and strangling my baby in an uncompleted building, left the corpse to decompose before throwing it away. We attend the same church with Ozioma's family. I and her mother are from Imo State. We are all Catholics. In fact, we looked for Chinoye with Ozioma's parents together. I don't know who to trust again. The only thing that I can recollect was that when we were looking for the baby, Ozioma never joined us. She was laughing at us and somebody even threatened to beat her up," Mrs Onyakam told **Weekly Trust** that Ozioma should not go scot-free.

Scandalous aftermath

When **Weekly Trust** visited Ozioma's house, it was in a state, as angry locals broke the doors and windows, though they were stopped from setting the house on fire. Mr. Ganso Azuryeme, Ozioma's father, said his problem with Mr. Timothy Onyakam, the victim's father, dates back to 2004 when [Ozioma] accused him of impregnating her, which he denied. "My daughter was in SS2 when he impregnated her. We didn't know of the pregnancy until it was seven months old. At that time, Timothy was married and had three children.

"A week later he went and reported me to the police saying that we accused him of impregnating our daughter and they gave him two policemen to come and arrest me. On his way to my house, he turned back and informed the police that I have travelled. When I heard of it, I went to report myself to the police that I did not travel. Fortunately the same Investigator, one Mustapha whom he reported me to, was the person I met. He immediately sent for Timothy and demanded to know why he lied to them that I had travelled. I told the police that I don't want any problem but I want my daughter to deliver safely so that she can continue with her studies. Two months later, she delivered. Timothy continued to deny the baby and never showed any remorse. Sometimes he even refers to the boy as bastard. Ozioma never fully recovered because she felt cheated."

Azuryeme said he even assisted the Timothys look for Chinonye that fateful day. "I came back from Church on June 12 to meet the whole neighbourhood in pandemonium and I was told that Chinonye was missing. I immediately joined the search. I asked Ozioma if she



THE Onyakams during happier days

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knew anything. She said she did not. I was shocked when police came to pick my daughter. By the time we got there, she had confessed to killing the baby out of frustration that Timothy had abandoned her and the baby.

Mr. Timothy Onyakam, Chinonye's father, said the story of the pregnancy was meant to whip up sentiment. "This pregnancy issue has been resolved six years ago and both families have been getting on well. We visit each other. As I am talking to you, there is a car I bought for her father, for which he is yet to complete payment. Even the upkeep of said baby, I send money for that. Ozioma used to visit my wife. Ozioma even called me when Chinonye was missing because I was in Lagos then. I don't know why they are playing up the pregnancy issue."

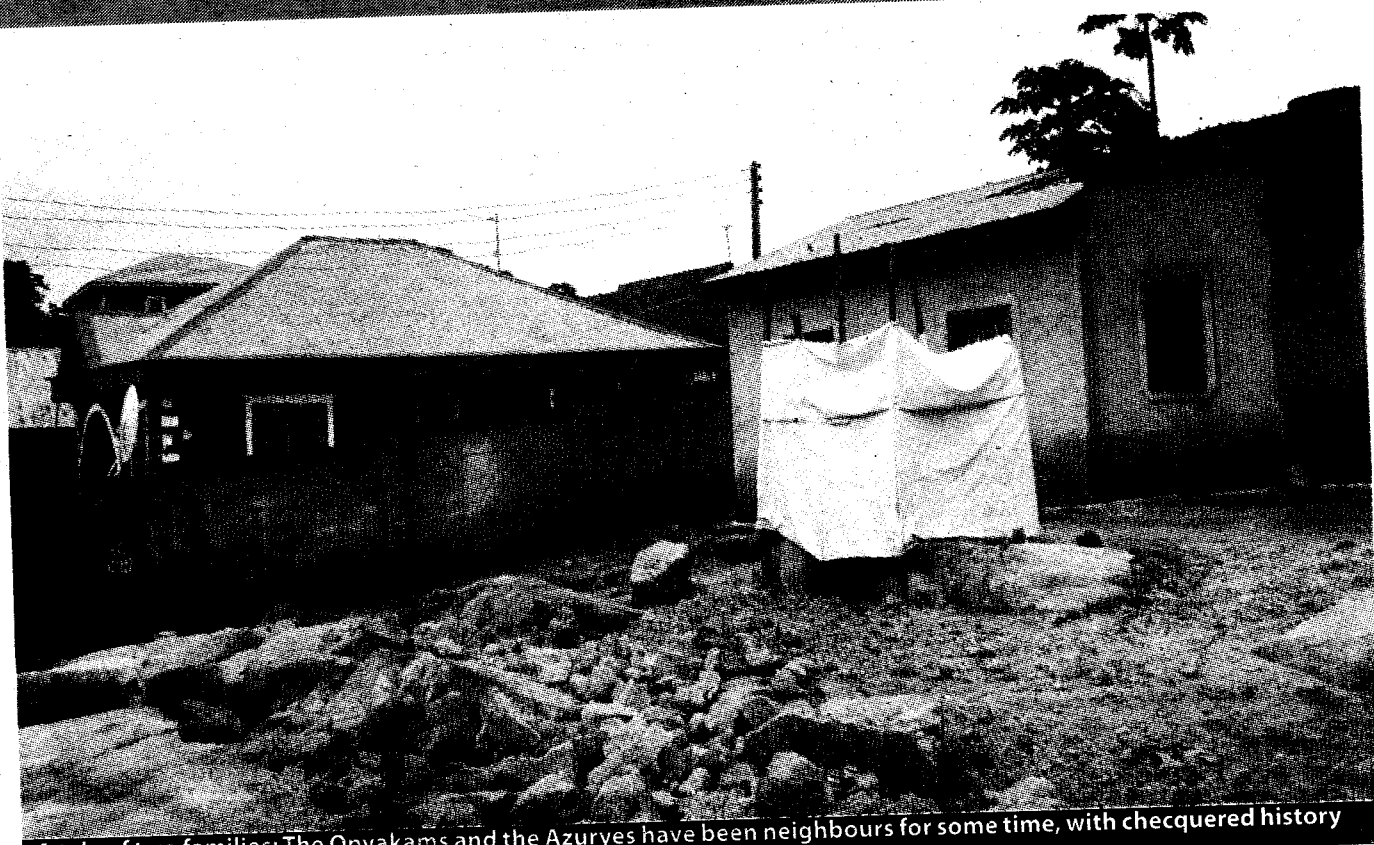
Force Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Niger State Police Command, Richard Oguche, confirmed the incident to *Weekly Trust*. "Ozioma is giving conflicting information. She told us that she killed the baby on her own without external prompting and she later told the court another thing, that one Mark promised her N100,000 and gave her an advance of N30,000 already to carry out the murder. We are still investigating the matter," he said.

Portrait of a killer

Shuaibu (not real name), told *Weekly Trust* that if not for the timely intervention of the elders they would have burnt down the compound of the Azuryemes. "Ozioma were friends with my sister. They parted ways because of her arrogance," he said.

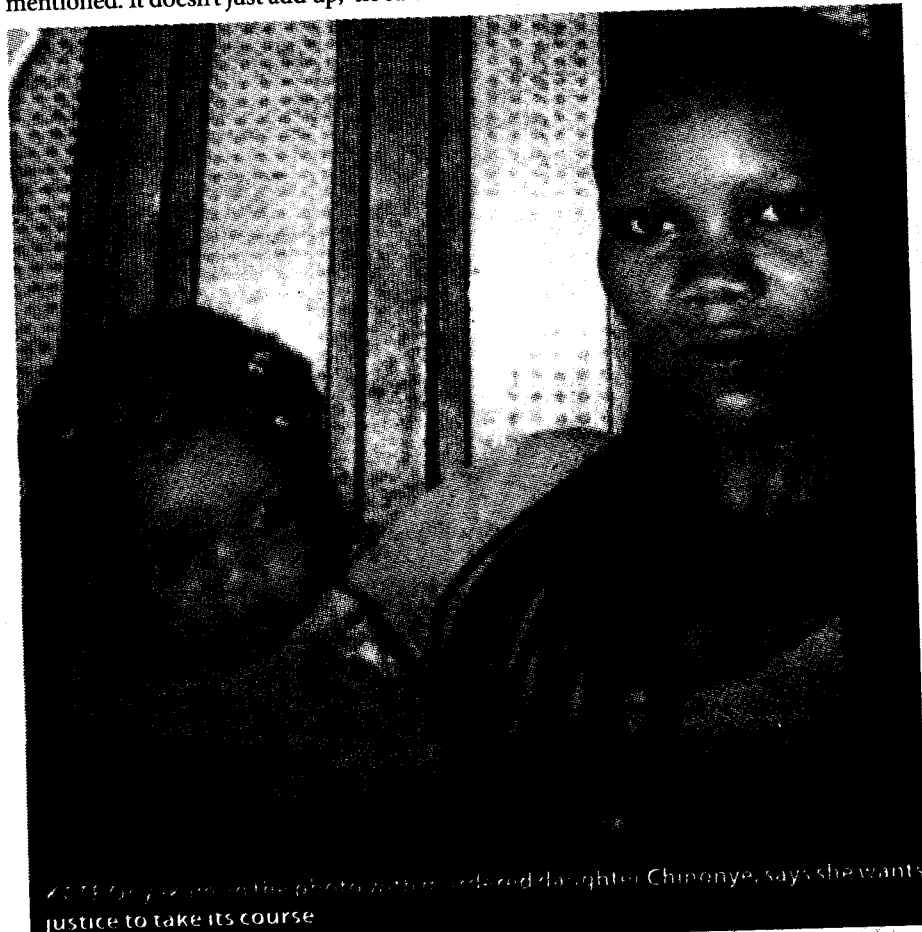
Another neighbour who spoke on condition of anonymity told *Weekly Trust* that the Azuryemes do not have a good reputation in the area. "If you interview 10 people, I am sure 9 will tell you that Ozioma and her siblings inherited bad influence from their father. Here was a man who built his house on the road. When Mai-Angwa came to question him on the propriety of the action, he went inside and brought a cutlass and threatened to chop off the village head's head. When the baby was missing, I remember that Ozioma was unperturbed when everyone was searching. I believe she has an accomplice she has not mentioned. It doesn't just add up," he said.

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A tale of two families: The Onyakams and the Azuryes have been neighbours for some time, with chequered history

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