

Untold story of woman killed in Enugu during burial

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Family members at Chukwu's compound where the burial ceremony took place.

All seemed in order penultimate Saturday. The bright weather that heralded the day signposted that all would be well.

The Chukwu family of Amanato, Mburumbu Community, Nkanu East council in Enugu State, who had fixed the burial of their matriarch, Caroline Amanato, looked forward to a successful ceremony.

Caroline, who died at the age of 120, was the oldest woman in the community. Her burial, therefore, attracted relations, friends and members of other communities.

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The solemn ceremony that was held in her family compound had, indeed, progressed peacefully as Madam Caroline was committed to mother earth.

This was followed by entertainment of guests and condolences paid to the bereaved family by those who gathered, in line with the community's culture.

This segment of the ceremony also progressed peacefully with entertainment, music, dances and other displays that usually accompany such events, involving an old person.

Suddenly, the tranquility was shattered. The joy that pervaded the air was truncated, and the gathering was once again thrown into a sorrowful mood. This came about by the killing of Ngozi Eze, while she was serving guests.



Run away from sin

1 day ago

Eze was, however, not the only victim of a gunshot allegedly fired by one Daniel Sunday Aninwaejim, as the deceased's second son, Christopher Chukwu and Mrs. Agatha Onyema also sustained injuries from gunshots.

But while Chukwu and Onyema survived and are recuperating after being taken to the hospital, Eze, a mother of four and the breadwinner of her family, was not so lucky, as she died less than two minutes after receiving bullet on the head.

The incident brought the ceremony to an abrupt end, as mourners scampered to safety.

When The Guardian visited Amanato, the people wore long faces and looked forlorn. Everywhere was enveloped in gloom and grief.

The people were yet to get over the shock of the killing, especially members of the immediate family, who not only described the incident as a “taboo”, but also said it would live with them for some time.

Narrating the incident in their family compound amid tears, Lawrence Chukwu, the chief mourner and first son of Caroline's family, recalled that the burial ceremony was nearing conclusion at about 6.30pm, when tragedy struck.

He said mourners, mainly members of the community were drinking and eating, with the women dancing around the compound, as is the tradition, when a motorcycle drove in and Dan Sunday alighted from it, holding a gun.

He said: “He is a member of the vigilante group in the community. But I know we did not invite the group to the burial ceremony.

All the same, we offered him a seat, but he refused to sit down. We asked whether he would like to drink anything, but he also declined and said he was not interested in anything.

“Less than five minutes, he pulled out his gun and aimed at Mrs. Ngozi Eze, who was serving people at the occasion and shot her on the head. She immediately fell down.

Dan dropped the gun and started running away, but the youths at the venue pursued and arrested him and later handed him over to the police.”

Chukwu, who could not hide his disbelief over the action, said his younger brother, Christopher and their Councilor's wife, Agatha, sustained injuries from the gunshots that drove away mourners and caused further grief on the family.

He explained that Ngozi Eze died while being rushed to a nearby health centre, and that her corpse was picked by police officers, who were notified of the development.

“The spilled blood is pollution to the family and entire village. We don't shed blood, which is why we condemn this dastardly act in its entirety.

Somebody's blood has been shed in the compound and we must cleanse the land, so as to prevent further ugly development.

I have never seen this kind of thing before, even right from the time of our fathers and fore fathers," he said.

Pointing at a local cow and goat tied to a tree in the compound, he said they were items bought for the burial rites, but the remaining burial formalities had been put on hold, until the police concludes investigation on the incident.

An elder, Jacob Eze said: "I am asking God to intervene and guide us to take the right decision and ask the right questions, so that there won't be further loss of lives and shedding of blood.



Ogun screens intending pilgrims

1 day ago

My greatest worry was the fact that the deceased, Ngozi Eze had been taking care of her family in the last six years, as her husband, Eze Egbo was bedridden.

"Presently, the old man can neither see nor walk alone. Ngozi, who was supporting him was murdered unnecessarily. The family has been thrown into more sorrow. What on earth could have elicited this action? It is a terrible thing."

The suspect, Dan Sunday was said to be married with three children. He hails from a neighbouring Umunafor Mburumbu community.

Efforts to get his family's reaction proved abortive. His grief-stricken wife, said to have delivered a baby girl a day before he allegedly committed the crime, was unavailable.

Although the residents said he (Dan) is a member of the Vigilante group, they explained that vigilante members in the community don't carry guns, but only machete and sticks, which was why they were worried, when he alighted with a gun.

The Untold Story

Investigation by The Guardian revealed that Dan Sunday had been having a running battle with the family of Eze, whose wife he murdered at the burial ceremony. It was gathered that Dan had openly threatened the family on a number of occasion.

Last year, he was said to have crept into Eze's unfenced compound in the night and laid siege until their only daughter, Onyenachi, a primary four pupil came out to urinate.

He was said to have waylaid and carried away the girl, but she raised alarm, which woke her deceased mother, Ngozi Eze, who started chasing after them. Dan was said to have dropped the girl, following the hot chase and fled.

Earlier this year, Dan was again said to have had a disagreement with Mrs. Eze's second son, Chinonso at a building site.

The issue bordered on who was expected to work on the building, said to belong to a native of Amanato residing overseas. He was said to have pursued Chinonso with a shovel and failing to get him, had allegedly threatened to cause him pains.

Chinonso, an apprentice at a building material shop in Afor Market, Nara, confirmed this. He said his dead mother had on several occasions pleaded with Dan Sunday to leave her family alone.

Chinonso, who said he was returning home from the shop the day his mother was brutally gunned down, said: “After the incident, I have been avoiding him and never knew he could take his animosity to this level.

“I saw my mother’s body lying at Ohuagba Junction, as I was returning from the shop. I did not know she was the one until I dropped the money I was holding at my boss’s house and returned to the junction, only to be told that my mother was dead.”

His father, Mr. Eze Egbo, who is physically challenged, having lost his sight six years ago, said his wife’s death should not go unpunished.

“She went to help our relations at the burial. I could not go because I can neither walk nor see. I was here, when they brought the sad news that she had been killed through a gunshot fired by

Dan. What have I done to deserve this level of hatred and punishment? She is the person taking care of me and toiling to feed this family. I don’t have anything doing since I can no longer see.

I ask that justice should take its course and very soon, too, to enable the spirit of the dead rest in peace.

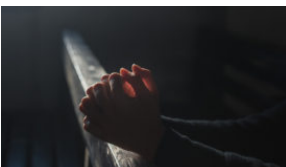
Culture Of Using Gun At Funeral And Other ceremonies

Using gun at funerals and other social functions is fast acquiring notoriety in Igboland, especially among politicians and certain individuals, who seem to be thriving in the business.

It has gone so far that bullets are sometime sporadically fired into the air, either to announce the presence of such persons or scare away people considered to be hindering the movement of these personalities.

At times, too, cultural groups use them during their display. But such guns are locally made without bullets in them. Recently in Nkanu area, during the burial ceremony of a prominent politician and businessman, a cultural dance group handled guns in such a way that mourners held their hands close to their chest in fear, while the performance lasted.

A Community leader, Chief Jideofor Ibe, said brandishing of loaded gun, especially by people who are not licensed to do so, should be checked.



Adeniran urges Christians to shun sin

1 day ago

He said various accidental discharge have been occurring, and has been taking the lives of innocent persons by those wielding gun as a status symbol.

He said the trend has become another way to display wealth by some rich persons in the society, adding it was more rampant with “persons that made money through questionable ways.”

But the Police in Enugu said it never approved the use of gun during funerals, stressing that, certain residents have continued to take law into their hands by behaving recklessly.
