

Ndigbo

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When Greed Led To Murder In Ahiazu Mbaise

UNTIL June 16, 2009, the late Mr. Richard Ndubuisi Anyanwu, a successful Jos-based businessman in Plateau State, who hailed from Umuololo kindred in Umuoma autonomous community in Ahiazu Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State, had lived peacefully with his kinsmen without any skirmishes.

But events preceding that date changed the long years of peaceful reign between him and his kinsmen, as a piece of land said to belong to members of the Anyanwu family was allegedly sold illegally by the Eze-in-Council.

In fact, it was this development that led to the death of this enterprising middle-aged man as he reportedly resisted the illegal sale and refused to compromise on the alleged misdemeanor by the Eze-in-Council.

Narrating the incident that led to the gruesome murder of the 58-year-old man, his wife, Roselyn Richard Anyanwu, alleged that one Hyacinth Chukwu, her husband's kinsman and principal suspect to the crime, featured prominently in the land dispute.

According to her, the community had sold the land to a new generation bank for N28 million for the building of its branch office without the knowledge of the Anyanwus, one of the elders being her husband, adding that on hearing it the late Richard, who resided in far away Jos, came to Ahiazu to challenge the decision of the chiefs to sell the land. She alleged that following his resistance to the sale and his demand that the action be reverted, some of the chiefs approached and offered him N5 million to keep him quiet.

However, wife of the deceased maintained that her husband rejected the offer and insisted that the Anyanwu family can never be dispossessed of the land, pointing out that this indeed angered some of the chiefs and some members of the kindred who were privy to the sale. However, as the controversy raged, the principal suspect, who is also a distant relation of the Anyanwus, reportedly claimed that the frontage of the compound where Anyanwu built his family house belonged to him, and woke up one



•Late Anyanwu

morning in June and started cutting down some of the economic trees in front of the house without consulting the late Richard on the issue.

"This incident led to exchange of harsh words between my husband and the man. My husband reported it to the police at Ahiazu Mbaise, but following the intervention of Eze D.O. Anyanwu, traditional ruler of the town, the police asked the two parties to go home and make peace. This happened on June 10, 2009.

"However, early on June 16, 2009, we heard a knock on our door and my

husband responded by asking who it was at that wee hour of the day, it was about 3 a.m., the person said he was Chinedu, (one of my husband's relations) and he (my husband) went to the door to open it. On getting to the door, he was shot from a window beside the door and he slumped and died," she said.

Roselyn Anyanwu disclosed that following an alarm she raised, some relations and kinsmen of theirs rushed to the scene to behold the lifeless body of her husband, adding that it was those early sympathisers who quickly took his body to the mortuary

and deposited it there.

The death of the late Anyanwu, a father of nine children, has been riddled with controversy as his burial has continued to be delayed by the police because of the circumstances surrounding his death.

Indeed, the Anyanwu family has called for justice over the gruesome murder of their breadwinner. It was learnt that the police have continued to foot-drag on the case and no one knows when the dead would be buried. The case was said to have gone from the Ahiazu Mbaise Police Station, where it was first reported, to the State CID, Owerri, then to the Police Public Relations office and later back to the State CID. But his survivors (his widow and children) are calling for a speedy charging of the case to court so they could bury their murdered husband and father. Right now, an autopsy on him has been carried out.

"As his burial is dragging on, he has continued to disturb me in the dream, asking me to facilitate his early resting in peace," Roselyn sobbed as she stated that what was important now to the family is to ensure that justice was done by prosecuting those involved in the murder, who, according to her, have been known after investigations by the police.

"Right now a powerful traditional ruler from Ahiazu Mbaise is soliciting for the release of the principal suspect; therefore, I'm calling on the police authority to ensure this does not happen. I'm also asking the police to protect my children and me, because they might decide to kill all of us," she pleaded.

Contacted over the issue, police image maker in the state, Linus Nwaiwu, assured that the police would soon conclude investigations on the matter and that any person found culpable, no matter his position in the society, will be charged to court for murder.