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Aneke: Death at dawn, cry for justice

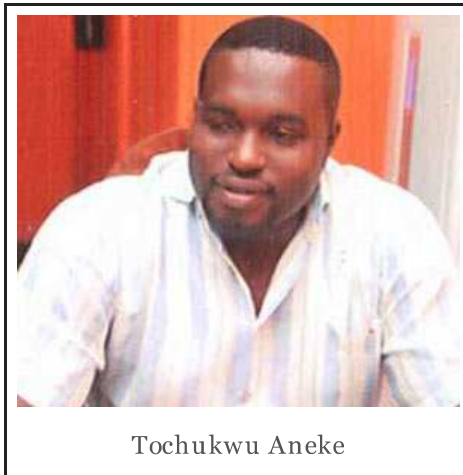
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By **Funmi Falobi** / *Lagos*

Tochukwu Aneke

For members of late Tochukwu Aneke family of Udi, Enugu State, justice is the only thing they are crying for at this moment. 34-year old Tochukwu, before his death was the Technical Service Manager, Linksoft Communication System, a service provider to telecommunication companies in the country. He however met his death in

a suspicious way that calls for investigation and justice.

Narrating her ordeal since the death of her husband, Mrs. Rita Aneke said her husband worked in the Abuja office of the company where they also live. They were enjoying their young marriage which was just one year as they tied the nuptial April 2012. However, on July 10, her husband went for a meeting in Kano along with a colleague Ogbugu Justus Authentic but never returned.

“They usually went for rotational meeting in the north every two weeks. I didn’t want him to go for the July 10 meeting in Kano because he was not supposed to go. But he said pressure was too much on him; that his boss, Michael Falodi was insisting on his attendance.”

He left for the meeting in Kano on July 10 at 6am and when I called him around 11am he told me; “we just arrived. And I asked; you and who?” because he was expected to go alone. But he told me he went with Justus who was earlier scheduled to go to Gusau for an inspection.

“He said Justus told him he still wanted to attend the meeting and then go for the inspection afterward. Around 5pm he called that they were through with the meeting and were coming back in

Justus' Peugeot 406, ash colour station wagon."

According to her, her husband drove the car and around 9 pm when she called to know where they were, she was informed that they were proceeding to any hotel to pass the night in Kaduna. "I woke up by 1am to check for missed calls from him but none came. At about 5am my brother in-law Okwudiri said he had been trying his number but could not get through to his personal and official lines.

"Whenever my husband slept outside he must call at 6am. I was worried and wondered why he would switch off his phone. I called his colleague Mr. Raphael Nwanze who forwarded Mr. Justus' number to me. It was ringing but he didn't pick. I called Ralph back to help me call with the official line but Justus was not picking, only for Ralph to call my brother in-law and inform him that my husband had an accident on the way back from Kano and had been taken to Suleja General Hospital".

She explained that in May this year her husband was promoted but before then Falodi did not want him to work with him. After the promotion Falodi said there was a deal he wanted him to do concerning diesel which her husband declined on the ground that they might want to use it to sack him for refusing the deal.

She said; "Ralph told us that Justus informed them that on their way, they ran into a check-point manned by people putting on Police uniform who told them to park and lie down. But it was when they asked them for money that they knew it was robbery attack. After releasing their wallets they heard a gunshot inside the car and my husband was shot while he escaped into the bush. But the last time I spoke with my husband, he said he was about entering a hotel to spend the night. When did they proceed on the journey without telling me? I don't understand.

"Doctor said my husband was brought in the night and after some treatment he gave up around 4am. He was taken to the hospital by some military officers. The soldiers told the police that when they got to the scene of the incident my husband was still alive and they took him to the hospital in their Hilux vehicle. His body was deposited at the National Hospital Abuja.

"Since the incident nobody has called me. Justus never called till today. Ralph only accompanied the corpse to the village and narrated the story to my father in-law who went to Alagbon in Lagos to report the matter and police arrested Justus, Falodi and Ralph who was later released.

"However, autopsies were carried out. The first autopsy was

done on September 17, X-ray on October 5 and second autopsy on October 5. Result revealed that there was no metal or bullet pellet on my husband's head. The police also said the car that was involved was not dented and that they suspected foul play".

Rita who said she lost a three-month pregnancy due to the incident said, "I want justice. When my husband's phone was released, we saw calls made by Justus to some people including Falodi, Jude Akamadu before 1 AM. I want justice. I want police to look into the case and prosecute all suspects. Some people have been arrested but Akamadu is still walking freely."

On his part, Okwudiri, younger brother to the deceased, said; "Initially, they did not want me to see my brother in the hospital. When I saw my brother, I saw a cut on his lap and I asked Akamadu: what's the meaning of this cut? He said they had embalmed him without the family's consent because he's decaying. They had done it before we got there around 9am."

Efforts at getting the extent of Police investigation into the case through Force CID, Alagbon did not yield desired results. The pledge by the Public Relations Officer, Friday Achibong that he would find out the extent of investigation and call back our reporter did not come through by press time.

Victor Opara, Principal Counsel to the deceased family said "my clients reported the unfortunate death of the husband and their son. We appraised the fact in the chambers and effortlessly came to the conclusion that there's need for a detailed forensic investigation into the circumstances that led to the unfortunate death of Mr. Tochukwu Aneke.

As lawyers it calls for a petition to be sent on behalf of our clients to Inspector General of Police having viewed this as one homicide case that should be thoroughly looked into. Quite impressively we got response from the top rank of police to direct the Homicide Unit of Alagbon to look into the matter. Police swung into action and travelled to Suleja, Abuja and other places on investigation drive and some persons who the police suspected could throw more light on the murder case were arrested. In my view, the police are doing their job but there are still so many other areas they ought to look into.

For instance, there are allegations that after his demise, certain persons were using his phone to make calls. I believe callers and receivers should be called for interrogation. I sincerely believe that it is duty of the police to comprehensively look into this issue and take investigative and prosecutorial stand on this matter. I must acknowledge the fact that at interview session that had

(Deputy Commissioner of Police) DCP, homicide section, Alagbon, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) option was alluded to and parties were enjoined to explore an option. Finally, in my humble view, the ADR option is not foreclosed. However we believe the truth must be known first.”

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Anya Emetu Kalu · DCP Ind at Nig.Prisons serv.

What I collateral loss,such an energetic young man good to a fault since I knew him about ten years ago,his murderers will not know peace,

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