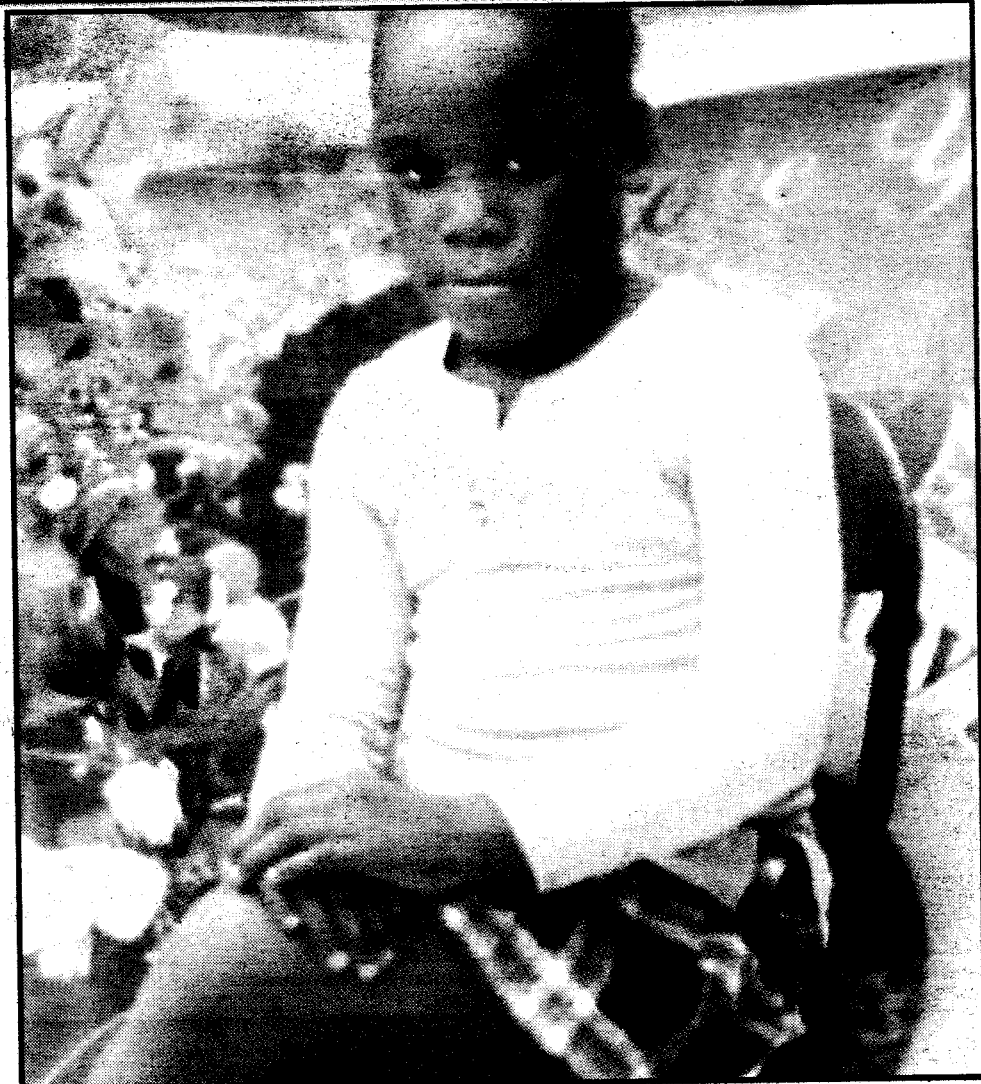


Murder, so cruel

Unknown assailants rape, kill lecturer, daughter



•Murdered: Dr Philis Ifeoma Okoli



•Murdered: Little Jewel Okoli

TO the family of Anazodo in Nnewi community of Anambra State, Sunday January 25, 2009, will remain indelible in their memories for generations to come.

Reason: it was the day calamity befell not only the family but the entire commercial nerve centre of the state, when one of their illustrious daughters was brutally murdered.

Before that day, Dr. (Mrs.) Philis Ifeoma Okoli, a 45-year old lecturer at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Awka, had separated from her husband and was living with her seven-year-old daughter, Jewel, at Udoka Housing Estate in the capital city.

Ify, as she was fondly called by her friends, associates and relations, met her untimely death alongside her daughter in the hands of assassins on that fateful day.

The incident, according to sources happened between 4.30 to 5.30pm in her apartment on Road 17 of the estate.

Though the identity of her estranged husband is yet to be known as every available investigation has been in vain to locate the man, but the home town of late Mrs. Okoli at Nnewi remains quiet.

Every attempt to get any of them to speak to the reporter proved abortive. But back in Awka, luck smiled on the reporter as the head of the family, Dr. Eric Anazodo was able to open up.

Anazodo who described the late sister as humble, hardworking and reserved, said he doubted if she had the mind to hurt anybody that would lead to such a dastardly act on her life and her daughter's.

After the incident, authorities of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University (NAU) where she taught at the department of Agricultural Economics, were said to have alerted the state police command

■ Nwanosike ONU. AWKA ■

on the matter.

The Director of Public Relations of the University, Mr. Emma Ojukwu, who confirmed the incident to *The Nation* described it as unfortunate and sad, adding that the institution would not keep quite over the issue.

Also, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Fidelis Agbo, a Superintendent of Police (SP), told *The Nation* in Awka that investigations are on going in the murder case.

Before then, he had told newsmen that the homicide department of the command, led by Chris Ezike, an Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of criminal investigations, was seriously working on it.

Though no further report has come from the police, police sources yesterday, told *The Nation* that investigations had reached an advanced stage, adding that the perpetrators of the ugly act must be brought to book when the time comes.

Already, the family of the deceased, Okoli has pledged one million naira (N1m) reward for anyone that could provide useful information leading to the arrest of the killers.

According to Dr. Eric Anazodo, the head of the family, such report would be treated with utmost confidentiality which should be reported to either the family or the nearest police station.

However, the new fact emerging from the murder case, is that before the death of the university don and her daughter, there was a workman working for her in the compound, charged with filling the bumpy areas with laterite in the place.

And since the incident, nobody has seen the workman, while Anazodo said they earlier thought that the late Okoli and her daughter had been kidnapped by unknown persons.



•Dr Okoli's residence where she was murdered

His words : On the day of the killings, the late lecturer had hired a workman to help her transfer some laterite by her gate to fill up some gaps in the compound.

"When I got alerted that the whereabouts of my sister was unknown, we moved into the apartment, and there, we discovered the strangled body of her seven-year-old daughter with a piece of cloth tied around her neck and she was in a position that suggested that she had been raped.

"But after that sorry sight, we continued the search for her mother, since the door to her room was locked, we then put up a ladder and peeped into her bedroom through the window, we saw her body lying in a pool of blood".

It was gathered that Udoka housing estate has a very strong vigilance outfit that guards the area, but on that fateful day, there was none of them on site.

But one of them who spoke to *The Nation* in confidence yesterday said the fault was not theirs because according to him, they were only contracted to do the job at night and not in the afternoon; and that was the reason according to the dark-complexioned boy, they got the woman.

On further investigation, it was discovered that Mrs. Okoli and her daughter with another distant relation packed into the uncompleted storey building about a month ago.

As things stand now, the state police command still has a lot of job to do on the murder of Okoli and her daughter.