

Lagos black Sunday

Is this passenger alive or dead?

• His whereabouts remain a mystery a week after the tragedy



suppress his agony when he visited *The Nation*. He seethed with shock all through, while his hand trembled as he handed the boy's picture over to this reporter.

His voice quaked as he recounted the rigours that his family and relations had been undergoing since that Sunday, trying to know what had become of the hapless boy.

Hear Afolabi: "Since that day, none of us in the family has had a minute respite. Shortly after the incident happened, we contacted the Ojota Park, where we were told point-blank that the bus he (Aduragbemi) boarded was involved in the tragedy. Those who witnessed the accident happen also told us that a boy of his age was the only one rescued in the bus. We therefore rushed down to the scene to see if we could locate the boy and see if he is our own boy.

"What is still baffling everyone is the fact that we got the shirt he wore that morning. We also got his bag and its contents. We recovered one of his shoes but the other had got burnt. This is why no one has been able to actually say what happened and where he is."

Certainly, no one would expect the boy's parents and relations to sit down and enjoy their choice food and music. For them, it has been a trying moment. "By now, the hospitals we have not visited in Lagos at least, in search of Aduragbemi, are very few. Of course, if he was rescued, he is expected to be taken to a nearby hospital for treatment. We have searched both public and private ones for a clue, we have not made any headway," said Afolabi.

That his father has since remained on tenterhooks is perhaps not debatable. The reporter felt his heartache when he spoke with him on phone on Thursday afternoon. He said he was inside a vehicle.

"I have not slept since that day; it has been my worst moment in life because I was anxiously awaiting Aduragbemi's arrival when I got the bad news that he might have been involved in the tragedy. I don't know what to do now; may God help me find this boy. Whatever you can do for me, please, help me do sir. This is too much for me," the troubled cleric pleaded passionately on top of his voice.

His wife, Afolabi hinted, had been "badly traumatised." "It has been very hectic for some of us. As we keep managing the emotion of his mother on one hand, we are all out in the frantic search. It has not been a moment one would have wished for. I just pray that God will help us find the boy alive".

As the encounter with Afolabi was winding up, his phone rang; at the other end was Aduragbemi's father. His voice thundered out as he implored Afolabi: "Please help me beg the journalist to take my phone number in case there is any clue from the public." Thus, Afolabi gave Pastor Owolabi's number, 07037925033 to the reporter in addition to his own, 08033302507.

No doubt, those whose relations have been confirmed dead in the tragic incident may have been struggling to take it behind them, but for the Owolabis, it remains a different ball game; the trauma remains in them!

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• Aduragbemi

OF course, it was predictable; about noon on Sunday, August 15, the voice of Pastor Moses Owolabi of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Supari-Akoko in Ondo State, rose for his congregation. Sure, as he urged the heavens to bless them with prosperity, he wouldn't have failed to pray against all vicissitudes of life. Ironically, however, while that was going on, his beloved 22-year-old son, Aduragbemi, stood face-to-face with naked danger!

Caught pants down like many others, he was helplessly entangled in the blood-shilling

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accident that reduced about 21 loaded vehicles to rubble on the Shangisha Bridge, Lagos-Ibadan Expressway around noon that day. A trailer was said to have "run mad," ramming into some vehicles allegedly forced to a halt by a police checkpoint.

Earlier on the "black Sunday," Aduragbemi had prepared himself for a trip to Supari-Akoko. After meeting his father, he had planned to travel to The Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti to sit for an examination.

After waving good bye to his mother, Mrs. Cecilia Owolabi at 43, Ibido Street, Agege, where they had been living together, he had first sought to board a commercial bus at the popular Pen Cinema Park, Agege, but no dice. When he couldn't get a bus there, he opted for Ojota Main Garage where he boarded one.

Loaded with passengers, the bus took off. Sadly, the trip ended prematurely on the Shangisha Bridge where the devil made a bumper harvest on the fateful day many would forever hate to remember.

The eardrum of even the deaf would catch the hues and cries that gripped the nation when the bad news spread that about 60 souls ended their life journey tragically on the bridge.

Convinced that her son would not have left the axis of the horror, Mrs. Owolabi's heart jumped into her mouth, thus began a frantic search for his whereabouts. As you read this, only God knows whether Aduragbemi is still living on the earth surface or not.

Distraught and fear-gripped, Oyebola Afolabi who is married to the boy's sister could not