



From close friends to sworn enemies

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They started out as childhood friends, but their families are now at daggers drawn over the death of one of their sons. The families of Abraham Olusegun Akosile, the late former Surveyor General of Ondo State, and Kayode Owoeje, a retired Army Major, had been the best of friends until the death of Tunde, Akosile's son, on November 5, last year subjected the friendship the two families had built for more than 50 years to severe strain.

Now, all that is left between the two families is bickering, mudslinging and verbal war. The Akosiles are bent on going to court to get justice over the death of their son allegedly masterminded by Major Owoeje's son, Olayemi. The distraught mother of the deceased, Mrs Aduke Akosile, who became a widow only about two years ago, regards the death of her son as one too many.

The genesis

According to Aduke, distraught mother of the late Tunde, both Akosile and Owoeje families hail from Iju Ita-Ogbolu in Ondo State, and had been friends for decades. "We have been friends from youth and had known each other for more than 50 years," she said. In fact, Olayemi's father, Major Kayode Owoeje, was my late husband's best man when we got married and we have been together ever since. Even after the death of my husband, we remained very close and lived as one family.

"The Owoejes live in Ibadan while we live in Akure, Ondo State. This friendship grew and extended to our children too, who also became friends. Olayemi came to stay with Tunde, my late son, and we all lived under the same roof.



"One day, on November 5, 2015, to be precise, the two went out together. At about 7 pm, my cell phone rang and Olayemi told me on the phone that my son had been hit by a car by the gates of the School of Nursing at Ilagbaka.

"I rushed there with some of my children and found my late son in Olayemi's hands. The late Tunde was soaked in his own blood."

Expressing doubts about the purported cause of her son's death, she said: "I don't believe it was an auto accident at all. The boy was just pretending that it was an accident. But he will confess when the time comes.

"There was no trace of accident and the boy (Olayemi) did not tell us how it all happened. Instead, he bolted away and we have not seen him since November 5, 2015. I kept wondering how he could be lying in Olayemi's hands, and he kept telling me that my son was not dead; assuring me that he would be alright.

"We rushed him to the State Hospital but we were told that he had already died before we got to the

hospital. I believe there is more to my son's death than meets the eye.”

Waving Tunde's death certificate issued by the National Population Commission with number D130166132, and dated February 9, 2016, the bereaved mother lamented that she made a costly mistake accommodating Olayemi.

“My late son was just 30 years old, and he had just one child”, she lamented.

Asked what the late Tunde was doing before his death, Mrs Akosile said he was an NCE holder who used to travel to Cotonou in the neighbouring Benin Republic to buy cars which he sold in Akure. His marriage was just one year old. His daughter is just about a year old,” she said

Family ties

Speaking on the strong ties between the two families, Mrs Akosile said their friendship was very strong until Tunde died.

She said: “Apart from being related, the patriachs of the two families were childhood friends. Owwoeye's father was my late husband's best man when we wedded, and it grew to the extent that we were visiting each other. My children would go to them in Ibadan and they too would come to Akure here to stay.

“When my son had an eye problem, he was in their house in Ibadan and was going from there to the University Teaching Hospital (UCH), Ibadan. Another of my children stayed in their house in Ibadan during his industrial training.

“But see what they are doing to me. Their father is a retired Major in the Nigerian Army, and he used to abuse me on the phone on this matter.

“The most painful thing is that since November 5 when this incident happened, Olayemi and his parents did not come to sympathise with us. Instead, he ran away and his father has been calling me names, sending text messages to me.

“What I want is for Olayemi to come and explain how it all happened for record purposes. But he has been nowhere to be found since November last year.”

Omoseke, Tunde's 27-year-old widow and student of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, said: “I have one child for the deceased. We were together in the morning of that fateful day when my husband called me that he was with Olayemi.

“Around 5pm, I called my husband's cell phone but he did not pick it. About two hours later, Olayemi called and said there was an accident at the School of Nursing area. When we got there, we saw Olayemi carrying the lifeless body of my husband. We took him to the hospital but Olayemi did not go with us. My late husband was bleeding from the head and nose. We were later told that he had died.”

She added: “We are family friends with Olayemi , although we were told that he was once a student at Federal University of Technology Akure before he was rusticated. He used to tell us that he had changed from his bad ways and that he was going to Mountain of Fire and Miracle Church to pray. Olayemi claimed he (Tunde) was hit by a hit-and-run vehicle. Where are his cell phones? Let Olayemi tell us. What would I tell my daughter when she grows up?”

Olayemi speaks from hideout

For months, our correspondent tried in vain to reach Olayemi. He, however, eventually spoke on the phone and said he did not want his whereabouts to be known to the Akosiles.

Confirming the two families' closeness, Olayemi said it is true that he came to live with the Akosiles in Akure. He said: “I have been living with the Akosiles when they were living at 57, Alagbaka GRA, before they moved to their present residence and I continued to live with them.

“In the morning of that fateful day, I left for a Senator's house to drop my credentials for recruitment in the Nigeria Navy. He asked me to go there and give it to his driver.

“When I got home, Tunde was browsing. But there was no light at home and we went to where we used to browse. He said we should not take a bike and that we should trek.

“We were going together–Tunde, Dapo, Deola and myself. We saw a bike and Tope mounted it and left. When it was 6 pm, the light was off. We planned to trek home because of the heavy food we ate. We were all discussing about girls.

“When we got to the School of Nursing's gate, we saw a white Hilux vehicle and a small lady coming out. We also made jest of the lady and the old man .That was the last conversation we had.

"All of a sudden, I saw myself on the ground. It's like what's happening? My head was empty. Later, people gathered. The security man at the School of Nursing came and asked me to sit down.

"Nobody stopped to carry us. I was feeling weak and dizzy, but I managed to call Mummy Akosile. I was feeling weak within me. I got up after some time, but I didn't know when I got to the hospital. I was trying to ask what happened.

"I have not repaired my wrist watch and my phone which were crushed in the accident. I was also at the hospital on admission as I was also wounded. There was a collar on my neck. It was the following day that I woke up. I still have the picture with me."

Danger signals

Olayemi said the late Tunde must have had a premonition of his death as he had started seeing some signs before the accident.

He said: "After Tope left and Tunde and I were going, we saw a black snake and wanted to kill it but Tunde said I should not kill the snake. And after the snake had gone, Tunde said he was still seeing it. He became confused and still spoke about the snake not quite two minutes before the accident happened. The omen was there."

Asked why he had not deemed it necessary to visit the deceased's family members, Olayemi said he wanted to go to his late friend's house but was discouraged by his parents.

He said: "I wanted to go but it was my parents who asked me not to; that they heard all sorts of things they were saying about me. He is my father and I have to obey him. I did not go to Akure to visit the bereaved family, based on what my parents told me, that I should let everything die down. I have not gone there since December.

"When I came back from the hospital, I wanted to go; it was my parents who asked me not to. Why should I be afraid when I have not done anything wrong? Akosile (Tunde) is my cousin. There was no scuffle between us. I learnt that when my father visited them, they were saying that I pushed him into an oncoming vehicle.

"My father was in their house. He said someone almost slapped him and they were saying all sorts of things; that I killed him, that I am a cultist. I heard they even went to the School of Nursing to ask the security man about the incident, and the security man said I did my best when it happened."

Olayemi also denied being a cult member. He said: "I am not a cultist. They should go to FUTA and ask for my result. I have my transcript with me. They cannot rusticate me and give me my transcript. I started from pre-degree. I read Agric Engineering. They should go there and confirm my result.

"Maybe their wish is that we should have died together. I did not run away from the Akosiles. My passport, bible, laptop, even my shirt which Tunde wore on that day are in still in their house.

"Mrs. Akosile was being tutored. She once said that she knew I could not kill her son. She said when they came to pick Tunde on the floor, they did not pick me and I was on the floor for 30 minutes."

When The Nation met the retired Major and father of the accused in Ibadan, he claimed that his son was innocent of all the allegations the Akosiles had levelled at him.

He said: "In fact, I am surprised that Mrs. Aduke Akosile could accuse my son of having a hand in her son's death. I was told that the two were knocked down and when the Akosiles came to the scene of the accident, it was only their son, Tunde, they took to the hospital, leaving my son lying on the ground. My son was in the hospital for some days before he was discharged.

"It is true that I advised my son not to go to their house because of the way they behaved to me when I went there. The Akosiles manhandled me and started cursing me and my family. They have forgotten that we were childhood friends and later became family friends. My late friend, Segun Akosile, and I were from the same town, attended the same primary and secondary school from form one to five in Ita Ogbolu Grammar School, living in same dormitory.

"We were friends from childhood. When he was to marry, I was his best man. One of my daughters was the little bride and my son in Abuja was the page boy. Never, never for almost 50 years have we quarrelled till Tunde died about two years ago. When my son, Femi, who is in Markudi, gained admission into FUTA, they were staying with them for two years. Before my daughter got employment in Ondo State, she was staying with them.

"My late friend's wife, Aduke, I have to call her by name, we are from the same family. Her grandmother and the mother of my father have the same father and mother and are from same Ita Ogbolu. We were childhood friends till he died.

“The boy of blessed memory, when he had an appointment at UCH, he stayed in my house here in Ibadan. And when the wife came with her daughter to visit him, they all stayed in my house. Even when the wife came to visit him, they all spent a week in my house.

“Their last born, Tokunbo, when he was to do his IT in Ibadan here, I assisted him. The family always showed appreciation by thanking me and saying that I am the only person left for them. Even their mother, Aduke on several occasions called my wife to thank me, including my daughter. I have the text messages they sent to me to thank me on several occasions.

“The most embarrassing thing is that this thing happened on 5th November and on 9th November, there was a serious thing that happened. When I went to their house at about 8:18 am, this woman (Aduke) called me, begging me that they should not cause enmity between us .My son is not a cultist. In fact, he too was wounded by the vehicle and he had a collar on his neck.”

The police confirmed the story when our correspondent visited the Police Headquarters, Alagbaka, Akure. The investigation conducted at the headquarters revealed that Olayemi was wanted by the police to say what he knows about the incident.

“Since December when this incident happened, the suspect has not even shown his face. That means there is something he is hiding. If Olayemi is a good friend and his hands are clean, he should have gone to the family and explained,” an officer said.

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