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Row over accident victims' identities

Posted By: OLATUNJI AWE and TOLULOPE ODUSANYA on: July 21, 2016 In: Campus Life No Comments



It was a black Monday at the Ekiti State University (EKSU), Ado-Ekiti, following the death of five persons in a road accident. Days after the accident, there is a controversy over the victims' identities, OLATUNJI AWE (Corps Member, NYSC Ondo State) and TOLULOPE ODUSANYA (400-Level Linguistics) report.

Activities at the Ekiti State University (EKSU) were at the peak that fateful Monday. The long-awaited second semester examination was supposed to have started when members of the Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU), National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT) and Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities (SSANU) went on strike for alleged non-payment of subvention to the university since last December.

Students, who were prepared for the examination, left for their hostels crestfallen. Some stayed back on the campus, hoping the workers would change their mind.

A few minutes past 5pm, when some students were leaving the campus, tragedy struck. There was a road mishap a few metres away from the university's main gate, which claimed the lives of five students. A mini-cab, known as *akoto*, conveying students from the school, had a head-on collision with a Lexus saloon car whose occupants were also students.

For members of the university community, it was a black Monday. Students trooped to Irasa, the accident scene. Many fought back tears; others wailed as the bodies of their colleagues were removed from the mangled vehicles.

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"The Lexus car was going to the school, while the mini-cab was leaving the campus for town. Within the twinkling of an eye, all we heard was a loud bang. I could feel the impact of the head-on collision of the cab with the Lexus car from where I was standing," Adekunle Oremeji, a student and eyewitness, told CAMPUSLIFE.

The occupants of the Lexus car were said to be "Yahoo-Yahoo boys" returning from a party, where they

had gone to celebrate with one of them, who bought a brand new Range Rover Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV).

CAMPUSLIFE gathered that the occupants of the Lexus car were drunk. The car was said to be on top speed. At Irasa, the Lexus car veered off its lane and rammed into the oncoming mini-cab.

Students described Irasa as a dangerous spot on the Ado-Iworoko Road.

Olusegun Osaremen, a 300-Level student, said: "This is one of the most dangerous spots on Ado-Iworoko Road. It is a sharp bend but many motorists don't slow down when they get to the spot. They pass through the stretch with speed. This accident could have been avoided if both drivers were not moving on high speed, knowing that the spot is a dangerous bend."

An eyewitness, who did not want his name in print, said: "The Lexus car overtook us from Ado and we noticed that the driver was moving between 100km/hour and 120km/hour. This level of speed is unnecessary on this road. When we got to Irasa, we saw the car had an accident. While rescuing the occupants, we found bottles of alcohol in the Lexus car. This is a case of drinking and driving. I think the driver must have been heavily drunk and he lost control."

A man, who took part in the rescue operation, said he counted five students dead on the spot. Two other occupants of the mini-cab, including an attendant at a filling station on campus, were said to be in critical condition.

The survivors are being treated at the Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital (EKSUTH); the victims' bodies are in its morgue.

Governor Ayo Fayose declared a three-day state-wide prayer for the repose of the souls of the victims when he visited EKSUTH to sympathise with students. He said the accident claimed the "precious lives of the students". The governor said the prayer would forestall a recurrence of "terrible incidents" in the state.

Days after the accidents, the victims' identities are yet to be known. However, there is a raging controversy over their identities. CAMPUSLIFE learnt that the school management could only ascertain the identities of two of the victims – Seun Egbeyemi, a 200-Level Guidance and Counselling student of EKSU and Masbau Olalekan Ibikunle, a graduate of Mineral and Petroleum Resources Engineering at the Federal Polytechnic in Ado-Ekiti (ADO POLY). The rest are said to be non-students.

EKSU Students' Union Government (SUG) President Ibrahim Oladimeji described the accident as "terrible", saying it was a bad day for students. The union leader confirmed two of the dead as students of the institution, adding that the rest were either non-students or students studying in other tertiary institutions.

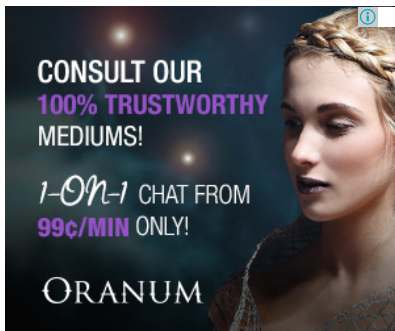
He said: "There has been rumour that four, six and seven of our students were involved in the accident. This is not true. I want to say clearly that of the four students involved in the accident, only one has been confirmed as a *bonafide* student of the Ekiti State University. Her name is Seun Egbeyemi, a 200-Level Guidance and Counselling student. One was a student of ADO POLY and another was a drop-out student of Ekiti State University. We are yet to get any information about other people who died in the accident."



Effort to get the management's reaction was futile, as the Deputy Registrar Public Relations, Olubunmi Ajibade, did not pick calls put to his phone.

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