

Outrage over retired civil servant's mystery death, secret burial

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- ***Husband in soup for allegedly brutalising victim, impregnating her househelp •Body must be exhumed for autopsy, family demands***
- ***Police agree to exhume victim's body for autopsy***
- ***Hubby, friend who conducted secret burial arrested, detained***

What led to the death of our daughter? Where and why was she buried without our consent and presence? These are the posers the bereaved family of a deceased housewife, Mrs Iyabo Stella Ayo-Vaughn (nee Soyinka), are asking the police to find answers to and unravel the alleged complicity of the husband in the controversial death of the retired civil servant.

According to the woman's bereaved family, the deceased, who retired as Principal Executive Officer in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture in 2017, was allegedly subjected to brutality and humiliation by her husband, Bolaji Ayo-Vaughn, before her mystery death.

It was said that the deceased, who was childless, built a one- storey house and a detached three-bedroom flat somewhere in Sango- Ota area of Ogun State.

In 2104, the late 57-year-old civil servant had engaged the services of a househel, identified simply as Atinuke, to assist her with chores where she lived with her husband at 5, Shamura Street, Oshodi, Lagos. Crisis, however, hit the marriage after her husband allegedly impregnated the househelp, leading to an initial protest by the deceased. She later soft-pedaled after the househelp was delivered of a baby, thinking that the coming of the baby might lead to her becoming pregnant too.

Sources said the matter got to a head when the late Iyabo found that the househelp, who was moved to a small room, had become pregnant again. She was said to have complained that she cannot stand the situation anymore. The news of her protest soon caught the attention of a sister to her husband, who stormed the house and forcibly moved her out of the room and asked the

househelp to take over her room. The deceased was allegedly further subjected to series of humiliation and brutality, leading to her ill-health.



One of Iyabo's cousins, Adebimpe Adenrele, who claimed she was raised by the deceased, said there was more to her aunt's death. She accused Ayo-Vaughn of complicity in the death of her aunt and burial without the knowledge of the family.

"The deceased (Iyabo) raised me; she was my guardian. Before her purported death, she summoned me and others (cousins) one day and complained to us that she was brutalised by her husband when she turned down his request for her house documents and the condition we met her that day was disturbing, to say the least, as she could not

walk. She had a one-storey building and a three-bedroom flat at Sango-Ota area of Ogun State and said her husband wanted to take over the house but she rejected. She explained that her husband beat her and dragged her on the floor when she refused to hand over documents relating to her property to him and that she took ill because of the brutality meted to her. She explained to us that her husband impregnated her maid and that both her husband and the maid had been threatening to take over her houses at Sango-Ota.

" We took our smartphones and filmed the room where she was forced to move to and we were about filming her former room, which is now occupied by the maid when her husband stopped us and threatened to smash our phones. We wanted to take her to a hospital but the husband again refused and said we were being unfair to him. She told us that her husband and the maid had been victimising her. We left her that day when her husband prevented us from taking her to the hospital and we promised to check on her in a few days' time.

"Few days later, she called us on the telephone again and complained that her husband was still maltreating her. But we became worried after my brother, Adewale, visited her residence at 5, Shamura Street in Oshodi, and no one was able to tell him her whereabouts. My brother told me on the phone how he later visited the her house several times after his first visit, but could not get anyone to confirm her whereabouts, while her husband did not pick his calls.

"I also called her husband's phone lines a number of times, but he did not answer nor return my calls, while my aunt's phone was also switched off. My cousin then asked his wife to check at the house again, still no one knew our aunt's whereabouts. It wasn't until December 19 that her husband called me on the phone that my aunt had been hospitalised at Mainland Hospital in Yaba, but nurses at the hospital refused to tell us what was wrong with her. When we pressed further to know what led to our aunt's admission at the hospital, her husband accused us of trying to cause trouble at the hospital. The only thing we noticed was that our aunt was placed on oxygen. We repeated our visits to the hospital on December 20, 21 and 22. It was after that, that we were told by sources at the hospital that our aunt's condition cannot be handled at the hospital. We wanted to take her to Eko Hospital, Ikeja, for better treatment but her husband was against transferring her to another hospital. Despite that, we made up our mind to take our aunt from the hospital to Eko Hospital and we tried to reach her husband on December 23 to intimate him with our decision as a family to move his wife to another hospital. We called her husband on his mobile phone(s) for hours without any response, only for him to call my brother (Adewale) on December 24 that our aunt had died on December 23. He broke the news to us on December 24 and promised to revert to us when to see her body and make burial plans, only for him to secretly bury her body on December 26 without our knowledge and consent. We want to know what led to her death, where and why she was secretly buried without our knowledge."

Another crestfallen cousin of the deceased, Adewale Adekunle, also urged the police to unravel the mystery surrounding his aunt's death by investigating the roles played in Lyabo's death and controversial burial.

"I had visited my aunt and did not meet her at home on several occasions. I could not also reach her on her mobile phones. I even sent my wife to check on her at the Oshodi home, but she could not get any information on my aunt's whereabouts. After my persistent calls to her husband, he rudely told me that my aunt was on admission at Mainland Hospital and when we rushed down to the hospital on December 19, the nurses around were not willing to divulge what was wrong with our aunt. For the next three days, we were at the hospital and made fruitless efforts to know what was wrong with our aunt, who was then placed on oxygen. We had a shouting match with her husband. I left her in the hospital and got in touch with other members of our family and it was agreed that we should move her to Eko Hospital for better treatment after my persistent calls to her husband to reveal the nature of his wife's health were not answered.

" Other members of our family were also at the hospital. We were to move her to Eko Hospital in Ikeja on December 24 when her husband surprisingly called me on the phone to break the sad news of her death. He said she died on December 23 and I queried why he did not inform us the very day she died. He then promised that he would carry our family along when she would be buried but he did not. We were shocked when he called us on December 26, saying that he was already burying our aunt at Atan Cemetery in Yaba.

“ When we rushed down to the cemetery, we found nobody there and we were told there was no fresh burial hours before our arrival. So, we cannot actually confirm she was buried at Atan. When I asked him on phone why he would do that behind us, he called my bluff on the phone, saying: ‘You guys should just leave me alone. I have buried her and there is nothing you can do about it; you guys should just go to hell! We found out that her husband and one of his friends (Anthony) carried out the secret burial of our aunt.

“Our grouse is that, we feel there was more to our aunt’s death. The whole thing looked suspicious and we are impelled to feel that there is something her husband was trying to hide about the circumstances surrounding her death, which made him to bury her without our knowledge and presence. More so, our aunt had complained severally to us about the brutality meted to her by her husband. It was for these reasons that we reported the matter at Makinde Police Division in Oshodi and her husband and one of his friends, who helped him to organise the burial, were arrested and are now detained at the Homicide Unit of the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID). We are urging the police to help us investigate Mr Ayo-Vaughn’s complicity in the death of our aunt and reasons why he hurriedly buried her without our knowledge.”

A friend of the deceased, identified simply as Jumoke, said: “ The deceased was my bossom friend. We became friends several decades ago and joined the Federal Civil Service the same time in 1982 and we both also retired after the mandatory 35 years in service in 2017. On December 27, 2019, my friend’s relatives informed me that my friend died on December 23. They said that her husband did not inform them until December 24 when they started asking after her from him and that he had given my friend a kind of secret burial at Atan Cemetery in Yaba.

“My friend had no children; she only adopted and raised some of her siblings’ children. She married her husband, Bolaji Ayo-Vaughn, in 2002 and the marriage was not blessed with children. However, in 2014, she got a housemaid to assist her with chores but her husband impregnated the maid. The maid was delivered of a baby. Trouble started after my friend protested when the maid had another child for her husband. Hence, she was forcibly ejected from her room and moved to a dingy room given to the maid, while the maid took over my friend’s room.

“She became emotionally distressed from the brutality and humiliation meted to her, but despite that, she did not divorce the man. Her husband only informed her cousins while he was burying her without the knowledge of her family members and the husband was nowhere to be found when her family members rushed down to Atan cemetery. All we want is the exhumation of the body wherever she was buried for proper autopsy because her death and secret burial look suspicious.”

Lagos Police spokesman, Bala Elkana, a Deputy Superintendent of Police(DSP), said Iyabo’s husband and his friend, who helped him to organise the secret burial of the deceased, are currently detained by the police at the State Criminal Investigation Department(SCID),Yaba, Lagos.

"It's true. The incident happened on December 26, 2019. The man is in our custody. His friend, who helped him to organise the controversial burial, is also in our custody and we are going to exhume the woman's body for autopsy.

" We have obtained a court order to detain them in our custody until investigation, including the autopsy to determine the nature of the woman's death and her husband's complicity, are concluded.

"We have filled all the necessary papers relating to the autopsy and we are only the readiness of the pathologists to carry out the exhumation and present the body for proper autopsy.'