

# The Killing Of Grace Ajibola

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EDITORIAL



LAST week, policemen in Ibadan, Oyo State, arrested a 34-year-old painter for allegedly killing a 69-year-old retiree following his discovery of over N2 million in her bank account. The painter, Niyi Abegunde, killed the woman, Mrs Grace Ajibola, a lady evangelist with the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Oke Imole, Agbeni, Ibadan, in the morning of Tuesday, March 17, in the Johnson Awe area of Oluyole Estate where the woman had lived since 1975. He then fled with her Automated Teller Machine (ATM) card, one phone and some other valuables.

The details are chilling: Mrs Ajibola had engaged Abegunde's services in November 2019 and, impressed by the good job he did, had taken a liking to him. He was thus always a regular face in the house, sometimes attending the vigils she organised on the third Monday of every month. Indeed, according to reports, the evangelist used to send him on errands, even with her car. A week before the dastardly incident, he had helped her withdraw some money from her account in a first generation bank in the Apata area of Ibadan. But after withdrawing the money, he decided to check her account balance, and was shocked to have found over N2 million in it. So on Tuesday, March 17, he came to the house after the young girl living with the woman had gone to school, descended on her, and strangled her to death. He then locked the door of the house after taking the phone and the ATM card and fled.

Speaking with Tribune Online while being paraded at the Oyo State Police Command's headquarters, Eleyele, Ibadan, Abegunde said: "I knew she was comfortable financially but didn't know she had such amount of money. At this point, evil thoughts came to me on how to take possession of the money. When I returned to her home, there was nobody at home and I hit her with wood before strangling her. She couldn't struggle with me because she was not so strong. She was nursing an ailment as she was always going to the hospital for check-ups. Nobody was inside the house when I carried out the act as the person staying with her had gone out. It was in the morning. I regret what I have done."

According to reports, Abegunde had already withdrawn N120,000 from the account before policemen got wind of the murder. They then obtained details of the transaction on the Close Circuit Television (CCTV) of the affected bank. Next, men of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad in Dugbe launched a manhunt for him and he was arrested in a hideout in Akure, the Ondo State capital, on Wednesday, March 25.

To say the least, the killing of Mrs Ajibola in cold blood by the same young man she apparently loved and treated like a son is horrendous and saddening. As we have said time and again, the collapse of family values in the country has led to the breeding of a generation of youths lacking basic decency and mired in perverse values. When the factor of the general slide in social morality is added to the mix, the results becomes easily predictable in its barbarous essence. Without seemingly taking notice, the nation has, for ages, been busy breeding a generation of criminally minded, emotionally unstable and defiantly irreligious youths given to fleshly pleasures and without the slightest moral quality.

To all intents and purposes, Niyi Abegunde is an extremely dishonest and callous individual who opted to reap where he did not sow. Taking the affection and trust of an old woman for granted, he checked her account balance when all he was instructed to do was to help withdraw some money. Sadly, it did not even occur to him that the woman's account balance might not even be a true indication of her worth at the time he committed the offence: a substantial portion of the money could in fact have belonged to other people to whom she needed to make payments at some point in time. But even if all the money in her account actually belonged to her, Abegunde's conduct is still inexcusable. What he did amounted to criminal invasion of another person's privacy. And even if she was not nursing an ailment, a plausible reason for her decision not to take the pain of going to make the withdrawal herself, it is doubtful if a woman of her age would have stood any chance against a desperately callous 34-year-old male.

Like many other despicable characters before him, Abegunde blamed his action on the devil. However, since there is no possible legal way of questioning the devil's role in the matter, he would have to leave that line of defence and show what gave him the right to terminate an innocent person's life just because of her account balance. In taking him as a son, Mrs Ajibola did no wrong. Even if she had been perhaps too trusting, the fact cannot be ignored that she was apparently a woman with a large heart who treated other people's children as her own. Unfortunately, though, it cost her her life.

We commend the Oyo State command of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) for its efforts in tracking down the killer painter soon enough. The law should take its natural course forthwith. We sympathise with the friends and family of Mrs Grace Ajibola and wish them the fortitude to bear the loss.