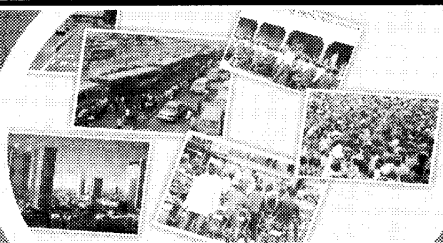


PUNCH



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Controversy trails killing of woman by hit-and-run driver

Success Nwogu

THE cause of the death of a BRT passenger, Ms. Ifeanyi Dennis, who was allegedly killed by a commercial bus driver being pursued by men of the Lagos State Transport Management Agency on Thursday, is still generating controversy.

While a witness, Mr. Adetiba Joseph, told PUNCH METRO that Ifeanyi was killed by a fleeing bus driver, who was being pursued by the LASTMA men, the agency denied any complicity in the death of the 42 year-old woman.

But Joseph, who insisted that the victim was knocked down by the fleeing driver, added that Ifeanyi died on the spot before medication could be administered to her.

According to him, the death sparked off a spontaneous reaction from members of the public including commercial motorcyclists, popularly called *okada* riders, who allegedly pursued LASTMA officials at the scene.

Joseph said the officials later reinforced, stormed the scene and confiscated 15 motorcycles, while the motorcyclists ran away.

Joseph said, "Around 1pm, LASTMA people were pursuing one *danfo* motor. The *danfo* driver wanted to escape from LASTMA at the service lane when the officials blocked the road with their rake-like equipment. The vehicle crossed to BRT side and knocked down one of the two women that were standing at the BRT tarmac.

"We carried her to the other side of the road. We took her to a nearby hospital but before we could reach there, she was already dead. When the emergency response operation came after being phoned, they discovered that she was already dead.

"Later, people pursued LASTMA officials standing there. Afterwards, the officials came and impounded 15 motorcycles from the other side."

The Pastor of Living Covenant Christian Assembly, Onigbongbo, Maryland, Pastor Timmy Amode, where the deceased worshipped, said although he was not there at the time of the accident, information available to him corroborated Joseph's account.

He, however, said he witnessed when LASTMA officials came and confiscated the motorcycles.

Amode said, "She was at the BRT stand to board a vehicle. How the bus got there and knocked her down, we do not know. Every attempt to talk to LASTMA officials there soon after was unsuccessful as regards what happened.

"When we were still at the hospital, LASTMA officials came in five vehicles and cordoned off the entire area and took away some motorcycles. I do not know if they made any arrest but I am a witness at this point."

But the Special Adviser to the Lagos State Governor on Transportation, Mr. Kayode Opeifa, on Sunday said LASTMA was not in any way responsible for Ifeanyi's death.

He said the woman had had the accident before the attention of his officials at Maryland was drawn to the scene.

According to him, the officials quickly informed the appropriate rescue and accident management unit, which sent its officials to the scene, adding that the cordoning off of the road was to aid the evacuation and possible treatment of the woman.

Opeifa said, "Our record has it that there was an incident around Channels Television at Maryland. The attention of LASTMA was

drawn to a woman that was killed by a hit-and-run-driver.

"We called Lagos Ambulance Emergency Response and the Ministry of Health. "The health officials promptly came to the scene, but before they could reach there, she had already died. As soon as we got there, LASTMA stopped traffic.

"In the process of managing the traffic, the public including, *okada* riders, who had developed sympathy for the deceased, spoiled for a fight for not allowing traffic to continue.

"They started attacking LASTMA officials. Police came in and

dispersed them and the *okada* riders."

The younger brother to the deceased, Mr. Onyeka Dennis, advised the Lagos State Government to reform LASTMA to curb their alleged excesses.

He added that people should show more attention and concern for others especially accident victims and people in need.

The Lagos State Police Command spokesperson, Mr. Frank Mba, in a telephone interview with our correspondent on Sunday, said he was not aware of the incident.

Fake policemen rob motorists with dummy guns

Sesan Olufowobi

WHEN next you are flagged down at a checkpoint by policemen, especially at lonely spots between the hours of 9pm and 5am, you need to be careful and more vigilant as the men in black may not be genuine policemen.

A gang of armed robbers arrested by the police in Lagos State on their way from a successful operation at a spot in Ijebu Ode area of Ogun State, told PUNCH METRO that what one needed to rob successfully along the route were confidence, torch and black clothes that look like police uniform.

The quartet of Anayo Nwaga, Christian Obika, Johnson Onie and Chukwudi Nwankwo, were arrested by policemen attached to Rapid Response Squad of the Lagos State Government.

The Lagos State police spokesman, Mr. Frank Mba, who spoke with our correspondent, said what attracted the policemen to the suspects when they were stopped at a checkpoint was a big wound on the arm of one of them.

Mba said, "Further search into the bus they were driving revealed a number of telephone sets, which obviously were not their own because they were

packed in a bag. There was also a large amount of money on them among other things. The policemen became suspicious and decided to take the suspects with them.

"It was not long before one of them broke down and confessed to the policemen how they robbed unsuspecting motorists at a spot at Ijebu Ode, pretending to be policemen."

Obika, who divulged the information that put other suspects in trouble, said he was reluctant to join the gang because of the risks involved.

"But I have to do the job because I need the money. For



instance now, my father has just died and I need a lot of money for the burial," he said.

Obika said they usually selected a lonely spot on the expressway.

According to him, "We are usually in colour clothes and we drive to the place like any other driver. We usually

the stick at them, making it look as if we will shoot them if they don't cooperate. But we have never killed or injured anybody during operation."

Chukwudi also said the aim of the gang was not to injure people but to get money from them "in order to survive and we don't even do it

Build me a house before divorce, wife tells husband