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Family blames hotel for UNIBEN student's death

APRIL 15, 2014 BY ENIOLA AKINKUOTU 5 COMMENTS



Chukwudi Nwaobi

| credits: Eniola Akinkuotu

A student of the University of Benin has drowned in a hotel swimming pool in the Ipaja area of Lagos State.

PUNCH Metro learnt that the victim, Chukwudi Nwaobi, had gone to relax at Infinity Hotel, Abesan Estate, on April 1, 2014, when the tragic incident occurred.

The family of the 20-year-old student of Sociology, however, blamed the hotel for the incident.

The elder brother to the deceased, Chuks, told *PUNCH Metro* that if the life guard had been on duty at the time of the incident, his

brother would not have died.

Chuks told our correspondent that the family did not know that Chukwudi had gone swimming at the hotel on the day of the incident.

He, however, said his brother was a good swimmer and wondered how he could have drowned.

He said, "In the morning of that day, my mother sent Chukwudi to give someone some money. After delivering the money, he called my mum to say he wanted to get to Iyana Ipaja to do some shopping as he was due to return to school a few days later.

"After sometime, my mother called him on the telephone, but he did not pick. After trying for hours without success, my mother informed me and I also started calling him but his phone just kept on ringing. Just before we were about to report the matter to the police, someone finally picked up to say my brother had been arrested and we should come to Ipaja Police Division.

"On getting to the station, the police were acting funny. Later, we were allowed into the DPO's office where we met the manager of the hotel. They then explained to us that my brother was dead and his corpse had been deposited at the Mainland Hospital, Yaba."

Chuks said the information relayed to the family implied that the hotel was negligent.

He said the hotel should have also informed the family immediately the incident occurred as further investigations revealed that Chukwudi did not die in the hotel, but at the hospital.

He said had the family been notified on time, his brother's chances of survival would have been higher.

He said the refusal of the hotel personnel to pick the telephone calls made to the deceased's phone compounded the problem.

He said, "We were told that my brother visited the hotel around 11am and bought a swimming ticket at the cost of N500. He then ordered for a bottle of soft drink.

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"I used to visit the hotel a lot and I know that a bar tender is usually by the swimming pool. However, the manager said the barman was not around.

"If the hotel knew that safety of life could not be guaranteed, why did they open the swimming pool on that day?

"Also, we were told that when my brother was brought out of the pool, he was rushed to Adefemi Hospital, Opeki.

"We were told by the hospital that he still had a pulse when he was brought there but because of the severity of the case, he was referred to Rauf Aregbesola Clinic, Egbeda, where he was declared dead."

Chuks said there was need for the hotel to ensure safety of its customers.

Chuks described his late brother as a responsible and gentle soul. He said the family was pained because they lost their father a few years ago and Chukwudi, who was the youngest child, was the closest to his mother.

"My brother and my mum were very close. Being the last born, he was her confidante and always had her time. This is a huge loss to the family," he said.

The mother of the deceased, Ngozi Nwaobi, told our correspondent that she wanted the police and the Lagos State Government to do their best in ensuring that an autopsy was done quickly so the corpse could be released for burial.

It was learnt that the hotel manager and another employee were arrested by the police but later released.

When our correspondent visited the hotel, the manager was said not to be around.

However, the lawyer for the hotel, Mr. Boye Leyimu, told our correspondent that the incident was unfortunate.

Leyimu commiserated with the family.

He said, "The incident is very unfortunate. The life guard was initially at the swimming pool but he left the hotel without permission and the management was not aware that he was not there. However, this was an isolated incident; people have not been drowning at the pool.

"We will do everything we can to help the family in this trying time."

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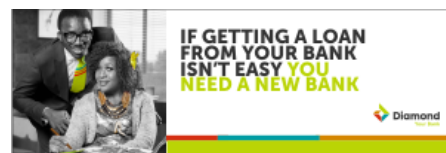


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