

Robbers lead mob to lynch innocent clearing agent in Lagos

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Temitope Adeoye

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A 26-year-old clearing agent, Temitope Adeoye, has met his untimely death in the hands of a mob, who mistook him for a thief in the Cele-Ijesha area of Lagos State.

PUNCH Metro gathered that Temitope, and his friend and colleague, Babatunde Adigwe, were on their way back from work at the Tincan Island Port, Apapa, when they were accused of being thieves by some men.

It was gathered that while Adigwe was able to escape, Temitope was beaten and burnt to death by the irate mob.

Adigwe said the mob action took place around the Odo Olowu area of Ijesha, adding that Temitope was lynched without being given the opportunity to prove his innocence.

He said, “We closed from work around 8pm on Monday and we left the office around 8.30pm. We boarded a motorcycle, and while on our way around Odo Olowu, Ijesha, the motorcyclist said that we should pay our fares so that when we get to the Cele bus stop, he won’t have to bother about the police there.

“Temitope was sitting behind me so, I told him to alight for me to be able to bring out money from my back pocket. We were still arguing with the motorcyclist on why he decided to stop around that isolated area for us to pay him when we sighted a minibus coming from the opposite direction. The bus stopped and immediately the people inside it started calling us thieves; there were about seven men in the bus.

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“They crossed to our side of the road and three of them came to meet me. I was still on the bike but Temitope was running away. The motorcyclist wanted to move but they held him down and someone was also drawing my shirt from the back so that I could fall down too. The motorcyclist and I struggled with the men and we were able to escape.

“After Temitope ran some distance, he gassed out and the suspected robbers outran him. The mob caught up with him and butchered him. I was still on the bike and looking from a distance. I saw that he tried to struggle with them. When I got to a safe place at Cele bus stop, I did not see Temitope again. I tried his telephone immediately but it was not going through.”

The Delta State indigene said efforts to get help for Temitope proved abortive as he (Adigwe) was detained when he went to report at the police station.

He added, “I did not know what to do at first, so I decided to call some of my colleagues, who would be passing that route. When about five of them arrived, they said I should go and report at the nearest police station. The nearest police station was the Cele Police Post.

“On getting there, I was directed to meet some operatives on patrol and I explained everything to them but I was further directed to go and meet the Divisional Police Officer of the Ijesha Police Station. When I reported at the Ijesha Police Station, the DPO immediately ordered that I should be detained, labelling me a suspected thief.

“He asked me to write my statement and while I was doing that, two of the robbers, who actually committed the crime, came to the police station. One of them came with a broken nose. Temitope was the one who broke his nose while he was struggling with them. I guess the suspect had gone to the hospital to take care of himself but the hospital requested a police report, which he came to collect. That was when the DPO suspected that something was amiss and asked that the two of them should be detained and their statements were taken.

“Around 2am, the DPO said he wanted to move us to the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department, Panti. While we were at the counter to get our personal belongings, the DPO queried why the two had three phones on them. They were trying to avoid bringing out the phones but the DPO insisted on seeing the phones.

“As soon as they brought out the phones, the phones turned out to be Temitope’s. I told the DPO that the phones belonged to the person I was talking about. His two phones and his wristwatch were found on them. That was when it became clear that Temitope was innocent of the crime he was killed for and that he was a victim of robbery.”

Temitope’s childhood friend, Ganiu Suraj, said he received the news of his demise through his colleague, who called him.

He stated, “I was informed around 12.54am on Tuesday by one of his colleague, who called me. The person explained what happened and told me not to inform Temitope’s father yet. He lost his mother in December 2018 and his girlfriend is heavily pregnant. He had plans of going to school part-time while working and we agreed to see on Sunday to talk about it.

“He wanted to work to raise money first, because he was the breadwinner of the family. He was the one working and taking care of everyone. He said he wanted his family to be happy before going to school or pursuing any plans of his own. It is so painful that his dreams were cut short.”

Temitope’s father, Mr Adeoti Adeoye, said only justice for his son would bring him true peace.

The Ogun State indigene said, “The robbers might have got information that he had money on him, because he just got a contract and it involved a lot of money. The government should do everything in its powers to make the perpetrators of the act face justice; only then, will I have true peace.

“It was exactly three months after his mother died when he was killed. I am glad though that he was vindicated and he did not die with a bad name.”

One of Temitope’s colleagues, Yusuf Tijani, said his death must not go in vain.

Tijani said, “I had known Temitope for some time and he was neither fraudulent nor a thief.

“We learnt that there had been incessant cases of robbery in that area before and reports to the police had yielded no result, but killing him without giving him the benefit of doubt is disheartening. It is also worrisome that everybody is acting like nothing happened and before you know it, we will not hear anything about the case again; his death must not go in vain.”

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When the state Police Public Relations Officer, CSP Chike Oti, was contacted, he said two suspects had been arrested, adding that investigation was ongoing.

He stated, “The man, who raised the false alarm, has been arrested alongside one of the participants in the killing. The matter has been transferred to the SCIID, Panti, for further investigation. The matter will be charged to court at the completion of investigation.”

“The Commissioner of Police, Zubairu Mu’azu, urged the people of Lagos to refrain from jungle justice. They should hand suspected criminals over to the police for questioning and extraction of useful information that will lead to proper investigation.”