

Mother of man killed by policeman: My son's soul won't rest till killer-cop is punished

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Mrs Rose Duru-Awuzie speaks to CHIDIEBUBE OKEOMA about how a police inspector, Kelechi Chikwe, attached to a new generation bank at Umuaka in Imo State allegedly shot dead her 26-year-old son, Osita, on December 1, 2019

You are the mother of Osita, who was recently shot dead by a police officer for retaliating after being slapped across the face by the policeman, what do you do?

I am a retired nurse. Osita Duru-Awuzie, who was shot dead by one Inspector Kelechi Chikwe at United Bank for Africa premises at Umuaka, Njaba Local Government Area in the (Imo) state, was my son.

How did the incident happen?

Osita and two of his brothers – Miracle and Nzube – had gone to the bank to use an ATM. While in the queue, another customer claimed that he was there before my son and that he would make a withdrawal before him (my son).

While my son was trying to tell him that it was not true, an armed policeman emerged from the bank and started beating him. He said he would take him to Umuaka police station. His brothers, who tried to tell the policeman that their brother (my son) did not commit any crime, were also beaten. Osita also told the policeman that he did not fight or commit any crime.

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Still, he was shot in the leg by the inspector. The policeman also shot my son in the spinal cord and his brothers tried to give him first aid. He then arrested Miracle and Nzube and locked them in a room while my son was shouting for help. He later brought a police van and dumped my son there while he was bleeding profusely.

It was at that time that the news spread around and some youths threatened to mob the place if Miracle and Nzube were not released within five minutes and Osita taken to the hospital.

So what happened at the hospital?

Osita was rejected at the first hospital he was rushed to at Nworubi because of his delicate state. Blood was oozing out and he was dying. So, we took him to the Federal Medical Centre in Owerri, where the hospital exhibited a high level of unprofessionalism. FMC workers did not attend to my son until after over four hours. My son was already dead by the time they brought the oxygen machine for him. As a nurse, I knew he was dead but my people, including the doctors tried to confuse me by lying to me that he was resting. I quickly told them that Osita was dead and one of the doctors nodded in pity.

What are the police doing to ensure you get justice for your son's death?

We just returned from Owerri and it is the same story. The police were asking for money, saying they wanted to carry out an autopsy (to determine the cause of my son's death). I don't know what kind of country we live in. The president of my community was arrested by the police and he paid N70,000 as bail. They accused him of not

being able to control the youth of the community who threatened to mob the place if Miracle and Nzube were not released, and my dying other son immediately rushed to the hospital.

What do you want from the government?

What else do I want from the government if not justice? There is no amount of money that will be given to me that can compensate for the life of my son. First, I want that wicked policeman, who sent my son to the grave prematurely, dismissed from the police force. I want him to be prosecuted and sentenced to death for taking away my joy.

You wouldn't want to be compensated...

Compensated like how? The blood of my son cries for justice. His soul won't rest until the man in police uniform, whom we have found out is from Agwa in Oguta Local Government Area of Imo State, is made to pay for his wickedness. How can anyone compensate me? My son had got blocks to use to complete the construction of his house. We had gone to meet the family of the lady he wanted to marry. He was involved in dredging and was doing well before the policeman killed him. The painful thing is that we had gone to meet the people that would have been his in-laws at Ngor Okpala in Imo State. We went on a Saturday and he was killed on Sunday, which was the next day.

What kind of person was he?

My son, Osita, was born on January 12, 1993. He loved peace and was industrious. He was a plumber too. He was a peacemaker and always wanted everybody in the house to smile. The woman he was about to marry does not know what to do now. The wicked policeman has cut short his dream of being big and successful in life.

He was a covenant child. We were very close. He took my affairs seriously. He filled the gap left by my husband who died in 2013. He was a cheerful giver. He never wanted to see me cry. How do I stomach this painful death? It happened eight months after I buried one of my sons. Just few months after burying a son, I have another son to bury. What kind of world is this? Osita was the one taking care of his late brother's wife and children. How do I cope with this? This is too much for me to bear.

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