

Sister of UNIBEN student raped, killed inside a church: Uwa sustained brain injury before she died

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Judith Omozuwa is the elder sister of the late Uwaila Omozuwa, also known as Uwa, the first-year Microbiology student of the University of Benin who was raped and brutally murdered while studying in a church in Benin City, Edo State. Judith, who told ALEXANDER OKERE about her grief, was too distraught to continue with the interview after about 10 minutes

How did you learn about the attack on your late sister?

She always went to the church to read. She had been doing that for more than two years now. She read at the Redeemed Christian Church of God at Osa Amadasun Ikpoba Hill, Benin City, in the morning at about 10am or 11am. Once it was noon and she had not gone to read, she would stay back at home. She used to return home around 5pm, 6pm or anytime she was done.

On Wednesday, May 27, 2020, she left (to study) as usual. There is a member of the church who keeps the key to the church. She collected the key from the person, opened the church and went in to read. The security guard at the church usually resumed at 6pm. When he was going to the church, he passed by the residence of the church member, who always keeps the key.

But when he got there, he was told that the key had not been returned by Uwa. So, he decided to go to the church, thinking she might still be there. But when he got there, he saw her lying in a pool of blood. There was a fire extinguisher beside her and she appeared like she had been battered. There was blood all over her body. Her books were scattered and her glasses were by the door. She had recommended glasses because she had an eye problem.

Do you all attend that same church?

Yes, excluding our dad.

What did the security guard do when he saw her on the ground?

He ran back immediately to call the couple who gave her (Uwa) the key to the church. The couple, the security man and some residents took her to a private hospital that night to, at least, revive her. But the next morning, she was taken to the University of Benin Teaching Hospital. She was a student of the University of Benin. She was a first-year student of Microbiology. It was at the hospital (UBTH) that she died. She died on May 30. My uncle called my dad and broke the news to him.

Did she tell you anything before she died?

No.

Can you remember the last conversation you had with her?

We just played. She wore my clothes and I teased her that she was always wearing my clothes and we laughed. That was the last conversation we had.

What kind of person was she?

She used to be very withdrawn. In the past two months, my mother encouraged her to associate with others. I observed the change – she started talking to people. We slept on the same bed, and most of the time, we discussed before we slept.

Was it her first attempt at securing admission to university?

No. She had been trying to gain admission for about four years. She was offered Microbiology. She didn't want to accept it but we encouraged her to accept the offer.

Why wasn't she interested in the course?

She wanted to study Nursing and become a nurse.

What happened when you reported the matter to the police?

When we reported to the police, they said we didn't mobilise (give them money) them and for that reason, they would not leave the station. That was why we posted pictures of her after the attack. They (policemen) later came after the photos went viral.

Looking at the way she was killed, what do you think could have led to that kind of attack?

I suspect that it was somebody that knew her and the family (that carried out the attack). It must be somebody close, for her to have been blindfolded.

How difficult has it been for your parents to cope with the loss?

It is not easy for any parent to lose their child.

Many Nigerians have been calling for justice for your sister? What kind of justice do you want?

I want justice. I want the people responsible to be found. They should be brought to justice.

Do you also suspect she might have been attacked by more than one person?

My sister was beaten and dragged. If it was just one person, I don't think it would have happened.

Has the church taken any action?

The church (members) visited us at the hospital.

Do you think your late sister would have survived if she got medical treatment early enough?

Even if she survived, she would never have been normal again because the beating was too much. Before she died, the hospital told us she sustained a brain injury.

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