

How friend hit, killed my son with car over N30,000 debt – Ex-Akwa Ibom councillor

Godfrey George 16 May 2021

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Mr Edet Okon George *left* and his late son

*A former councillor in Akwa Ibom State, Mr Edet Okon George, speaks to **GODFREY GEORGE** on the alleged killing of his son by one Akpaniko Essien over N30,000 debt*

What is your name?

My name is Honourable Edet Okon George.

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You recently lost your son. What happened to him?

My second son, Ephraim Okon, died on May 12 after being knocked down by a Lexus SUV without a number plate. The vehicle was driven by Mr Akpaniko Essien, son of the late J.O. Essien, a popular cleric in Uyo during his lifetime.

How old was your son?

He was born on April 14, 1999. He was just 22 years old when his life was cut short by this unfortunate incident. He was in 200L at the Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, studying Engineering.

Where exactly did the incident happen?

It happened on Gibbs Street, Uyo, outside the residence of Mr Akpaniko.



Akpaniko Essien

How did it happen?

My son, Ephraim, went to meet Akpaniko to pay him a sum of N30,000, which he owed him for months now. My son had told me about the money and had complained to me that Akpaniko refused to pay him despite repeated demands. But I just thought it was a little issue between friends, so, I encouraged my son to go to Akpaniko's house to sort the issue out as friends.

But I am still in shock now how 'sorting it out' would mean that my son is now lying lifeless in the mortuary. My strong son, who was not sick, is now dead. I cannot believe it. I'm in shock.

What actually happened when your son got to Akpaniko's house?

I wasn't there. It was Samuel, a boy who accompanied my son to Akpaniko's house, that called me on phone to tell me that my son had been knocked down by a vehicle. As we spoke on phone I could hear the voices of people wailing in the background. The boy said I should come to the scene and see my son bleeding. I was confused. I did not understand, because one moment, Ephraim was at home with me; the next, people were calling me to come see my son in a near-lifeless state. I told Samuel to look for a way and take him to a nearby hospital, but finding a tricycle was a problem, especially at that time.

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I ran like I had never done before. I even forgot I had a car. I had to run back, so I could use my car. While I was on my way, Samuel called and told me that Ephraim had been taken to LifeCare Clinic, Udosen Uko, Nwaniba. I drove to the clinic and found my son on oxygen. I didn't like what I was seeing, so, I opted to take him to the Federal Medical Centre, Sani Abacha, Uyo. On getting there, still on oxygen, he was pronounced dead on arrival by the doctor on duty and his body was deposited in the hospital's morgue.

Did you ask eyewitnesses how the incident happened?

Yes, I asked. They told me that they saw my son approach Mr Akpaniko outside his gate on Gibbs Street, Uyo, and they were having a loud conversation about money. One of the residents told me that it was not his first time seeing my son, that he had seen him a few times before then, having the same conversation with Akpaniko.

Samuel, who accompanied my son to the place, also said when the argument got heated, Akpaniko told my son to wait for him to go into his car and get the N30,000. But he didn't do so; he rather entered his Lexus car and steamed the engine. My son confronted him from the wound-down window of the driver's seat, asking him why he didn't want to give him his money. Akpaniko moved back with speed, with the car on reverse and hit my son, who fell on the bonnet. He dragged him on the ground for a few kilometres before he held the brakes, which made my son to fall on the tarred road and began to bleed. Akpaniko ran him over and kept going. This is to tell you that the murder was premeditated and intentional. He just deliberately wasted my son.

I was told that after that, Akpaniko ran to a nearby patrol van and told policemen on duty that he might have killed a kidnapper, who was trying to abduct him. They took him in their van and drove off.

And you said Akpaniko and your son were friends.

Yes; Ephraim and Akpaniko were friends. In fact, Akpaniko comes to my house to pass the night. He eats my food and drinks my water. As I speak with you now, his clothes are still in my house. It is amazing how he could do this to my son.

Did you report this case to the police?

Yes, we did. When we got to the police headquarters, we met Akpaniko there. He had written a petition that he killed one kidnapper the previous night. Since it involved death, he was detained for further investigations. We told the police what really happened, the Investigative Police Officer was shocked. He retrieved Akpaniko's petition and told us to write our own. We did and it was admitted as a working document. So far, the police have been cooperating with me on the case. Mr Akpaniko is still in detention while investigations are ongoing. I am on my way now (Friday) to go have an autopsy run on my son's body.

All I want right now is justice. The killer should not go unpunished. The mother has been crying and has refused to eat. It is too sudden. She is still in denial. How can a boy she saw yesterday be in the mortuary today?

What was Akpaniko's reaction when he saw you at the police station?

When we were writing our petition at the police headquarters, Akpaniko was boasting that he has a judge, a member of his late father's church, who would get him out in no time. I want justice to be served. The death of my son should not be in vain.

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