

Our daughter's killing after obtaining master's degree has left us hopeless —Parents of AAU graduate killed on way to collect NYSC call-up letter

Sunday Williams and his wife, Helen, whose daughter, Ella, was allegedly killed on June 10 by herdsman on her way to collect her National Youth Service Corps call-up letter at Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, share their grief with ADEYINKA ADEDIPE

WHAT went through your mind when you got the news of her death?

Father: Well, I can tell you this is the most harrowing experience I have had in my life. I feel sad because of this occurrence and I cannot quantify how sad I am. This loss is irreplaceable and I don't know what to do because everything still looks like a dream. My wife and I put everything we had into training her, so she can become successful in life and help us train her four younger sisters. There were times I stayed without food or drank garri just to make sure she fulfilled her desire of getting a good education. She loved her books and she was a brilliant student right from her days at Air Force Primary School, Emmanuel Foundation Secondary School, and Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State. As it is now, the bad elements in society have cut her down in her prime and robbed me of my joy. If anyone on the street asks me how I feel, I will take it out on that person. How do you think I will feel after the loss of my first fruit? But you are in our house to do your job and I must thank you for coming to our aid.

Mother: The news hit me so hard that I thought I was having a bad dream. I couldn't believe it until we got a call from the police in Ehor. They told us there had been an accident but I knew something had happened especially when I started having goose pimples on my body. I asked, "God, is this child alive?" When we got to the police station, I discovered that life had been snuffed out of my child who we laboured hard to train. We deprived ourselves of food, clothing, and some other essential things in life to get her to where she was. We tried to bring her and her sisters up and give them a better life with our meagre resources. I am still in shock and it is a very big loss to me. She was everything to me. Whenever I looked at her while she was alive, I had hope. My situation looks hopeless now and I ask God to comfort us at this trying time. She spent seven years in school, obtaining her first and master's degrees.



•Sunday

•Helen

She was on her way to collect her National Youth Service Corps call-up letter when she was killed. It is very painful and a big loss to me.

Who did the police say these attackers were?

Father: According to the police, the attack was carried out by Fulani kidnappers. I didn't witness the attack but the police confirmed those who carried out the killing but I can't say if some other people were involved.

What did she tell you before she left home on that day?

Father: When my daughter was leaving home that morning to collect her NYSC call-up later, we agreed she should call me as soon as she got to Ekpoma, so I could know she arrived in school safely. She called me when she got to Ramat Park (in Benin City) at 10 am and I reminded her that she should call me when she gets to her destination. But when at about 1:30 pm, I did not hear from her, I

decided to call her and I was surprised to hear a male voice at the other end. When I asked him who he was, he said he was a police officer. He further said the bus my daughter boarded to Ekpoma had an accident and the victims had been taken to the specialist hospital in Irrua. He also told me to go to the police station in Ehor before going to the hospital. When I got there, he told me to go to Irrua and return later to pick her belongings. It was at the hospital that we confirmed she was dead. But the killing must have taken place between 10am and 12pm.

How would you describe your daughter?

Father: To me, my daughter was like a son. She even did better than a son. Even as a student, she got architectural jobs which she used to take care of the family. She supported the family, bought clothes for me, my wife, and our other kids. Whenever she was displeased with my clothes, she bought me new ones. She was a child that would have brought progress into the family. She was a child that could have given me happiness and taken care of me till I died. Her death is a great loss. I will say she was a devoted Christian and a former secretary of the choir. On the day of her burial on June 11, many pastors came from the province and the burial was filled with grieving people. If she wasn't a good person, I am sure only a few people would have come to pay their last respect.

Mother: She was our pillar and she would have lifted the family. She was loved by many people. She was humble and was a devoted Christian in the church, which we all attend. She was also very active in the choir. She loved her



•Ella

siblings and did her best to make sure that they did not lack.

Have the police contacted you on the investigation being done?

Father: When we got to the Ehor police station, they took a report and handed over all her belongings to us - laptop, two phones and other things. We later went to Irrua (specialist hospital) to take her corpse. I went back to the police station and we were not told to come back.

How are her younger ones coping with the loss?

Father: They cry every day. The youngest one has yet to come to terms with the loss. They wonder who will take care of them like their late sister. She bought clothes and took care of them. I am getting old and I don't know how to take care of them. She was the one I hoped would help me take care of these children. The third one just got admission into the University of Benin, but she is yet to resume. How will I get the money to pay her school fees? Others are also still in school and it will be difficult getting them through school.

What kind of assistance do you need now?

Father: I need all the assistance I can get. You can do whatever you can to help me. I am calling on philanthropists, good Nigerians and the government for help. I am a contract staff where I work and the job is not stable.

Mother: My appeal will go to the government to help our family at this time. Life will get very challenging because of our daughter's death as she had been the one supporting us.