

I can't believe my son drowned in River Benue – Policeman

13th April 2025

| By Ayoola Olasupo

Peter Agaba, the father of an 18-year-old student of Benue State University, Abel, who was said to have drowned while swimming in the River Benue, speaks to AYOOLA OLASUPO about his doubts regarding the circumstances surrounding his son's death

Can you tell us about yourself?

I'm from Benue State but reside in Lagos State. I'm a police officer serving the country to the best of my ability.

Can you describe the kind of person Abel was to you and the family?

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To the best of my knowledge, what I'll tell you is that this boy, Abel Agaba, was my first son, and there is no vocabulary I can use to qualify him. I miss him right now. He was never sick, and he never had any issues with anyone.

He turned 18 years old this January and was in the second year of the Chemistry Department at Benue State University. He was my right hand because we used to communicate from time to time. He was healthy, smart, and a good person.

What happened to him was so terrible that I don't even know how to explain it. The information circulating online that he was 24 years old is not true. I'm his father and I have his birth certificate with me. I can confirm that he turned 18 in January.

How did you hear about the incident?

The day the incident happened, I was not there. I was in Lagos, and the last time I spoke with my son was in the evening of Wednesday, January 12, and he also spoke with his mum.

The following day, around 4:30 am on Thursday, I received a call from someone who was monitoring him on my behalf, saying that while he was not around, someone had informed him about what happened to my son.

I asked how many of them went to the river together, and I was told that they had mobilised the sea divers and fishermen to search for him. The information circulating online that he went to the river at 11:45 pm was very wrong because the incident happened around 9 pm.

As I said earlier, he was healthy because 'he didn't fall ill.' We do not have any health conditions in our family; even his mum and I rarely fall sick. The only illness we have is nothing more than malaria. So, I can tell you the truth: he was neither sick nor had any health condition.

Did Abel tell anyone before he went to the river?

He was not staying with anyone. They were just neighbours, but that man was the one monitoring him for me because I wasn't there. If he wanted to go out, he would always tell me. In December last year, Abel was with me in Lagos, and he left on January 4 because school resumed on January 5.

What went through your mind when you first heard about it?

What I believe is that there was water in his compound. So, I don't understand why they would say he went to the river to swim at night. I'm currently confused about the incident.

The incident was so sudden, and it was a surprise to me because he had no issue with anyone. I don't like what people are writing about it. They are only circulating wrong information online.

Did Abel have any prior experience swimming in the River Benue?

I'd never seen him with anything to do with water. I don't swim, and neither did he; so, I don't know why he would go to that river when he couldn't swim.

Did you notice anything different about Abel's behaviour when he visited you in December?

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Nothing changed about his character. I know my son very well, and I would have noticed if he had started behaving strangely.