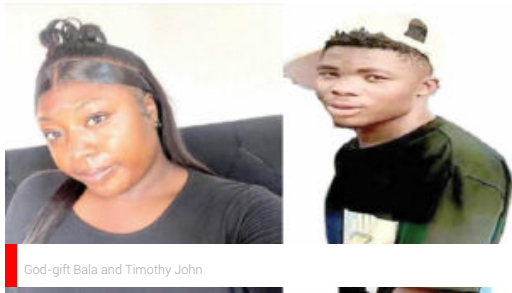


Police demanded money from protesting youths after cops killed my cousin – Abuja bizwoman

19th April 2025



By Temitope Adetunji

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Abuja businesswoman, God-gift Bala, speaks to TEMITOPE ADETUNJI about how her cousin, Timothy John, was shot dead at an accident scene by policemen

How are you related to Timothy?

Timothy John was my cousin. I am from the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. I live in Abuja and run my business there.

Where was Timothy from?

He was from the FCT Abuja, Dutse Baupma, Bwari Area Council. The incident happened at Dutse Baupma, Tiper Garage, Abuja.

Can you describe the kind of person he was?

Timothy just completed his apprenticeship as a welder. Just one week before he was killed, he officially started his welding business. He was full of dreams and excited to build a future. He was only 21 years old. He would have turned 22 in November. It still feels unreal; someone so young, with so much ahead of him... gone just like that.

How did you hear about what happened to him?

I wasn't far at all; I was in the church just a short distance from the accident scene. Our church is quite close to where the incident happened. I had only just passed the spot when I noticed a large crowd gathering. I stopped and asked what was going on, and someone told me there had been an accident; a truck had crashed, and people were being pulled out from underneath it.

I went back to the church, still trying to understand what was happening outside. Then one of his friends suddenly ran into the church. He leaned over and whispered something into someone's ear. I noticed the change in their expression, and I asked what was going on. After hesitating for a moment, they finally told me: 'Timothy has been shot dead.'

I froze. My body went cold. I couldn't speak; I couldn't move. I asked myself, 'Timothy shot?' I didn't believe it. I was still trying to process the news of the accident, and how a shooting came into this.

So, what happened?

According to what his friend explained to us, Timothy was actually at the accident scene with a few other people from our community. The truck had run over some people and crushed them, and it caused a terrible traffic jam. The entire area was in chaos. People had gathered out of fear, curiosity, and confusion. Every side of the road was blocked, and it was barely moving.

Then, a VIP convoy came, escorted by armed police and soldiers. Because of the traffic and the crowd, they couldn't move freely. That was when the policemen started firing tear gas to disperse the people. But it didn't stop there; live bullets were fired—live bullets, not just warning shots.

According to Timothy's friend, he told people to run so they could avoid being hit by bullets. He was trying to help them stay safe. But in the confusion, in the panic, a bullet hit him, and just like that, he was gone; he was shot dead just like that.

What about his parents and siblings? How have they been coping with the loss?

It's been difficult; it still doesn't feel real. One minute, Timothy was alive, vibrant, full of life, and concerned about everyone else... the next minute, he just collapsed and was gone. No sickness, no warning. He fell and was lying there, lifeless. That was how he died. He didn't even make it to the hospital. He died on the spot. His body was taken straight to his aged parents' home in Abuja. These are elderly people who do not fully understand the world around them. They're not educated. They're not strong. They are simply heartbroken.

His father hasn't even been able to get on his knees since it happened—he's been battling a stroke for a while now. And guess who had been caring for him all this time? Timothy! Timothy was his father's hands, his legs, and his support. He lived with them. He helped him on the farm. Now he's gone. The policemen who shot Timothy dead have denied his father the opportunity to live longer because my cousin was the man's helper.

Everything feels like a terrible dream. The entire family is still in shock. No one saw this coming. Timothy was the second to the last born; so young, so full of purpose. And now... it is just memories. I can say without a doubt that coping with this loss has been nearly impossible. At a time when parents should be reaping the fruits of their labour, when they should be surrounded by their children's success and care, they are instead burying their child, a child who was everything to them. It is not just sad, it is painful, it is cruel, it is horrible.

Can you share fond memories you have of him?

He was such a respectful soul. Everyone who knew him would say the same thing. He greeted people with so much warmth, and he could greet you over and over again in a single day. It didn't matter how many times he had seen you, he would still say 'good morning' or 'good evening' like it was the first time. He was very calm and didn't fight; he never argued and didn't like trouble. I was always teasing him about his girlfriend. It became something I did often, to see that little smile on his face. He wouldn't talk back but would smile or laugh softly. That was who he was—gentle, peaceful, respectful. The kind of person whose absence you would feel so deeply because even though he wasn't loud, he had a way of being present. And now that he's gone, the silence he left behind is even louder. I truly miss him.

When did the incident happen?

It happened on Saturday, April 6, 2025, a day I will never forget. You said he had just started his welding business before the incident. Was his shop close to the scene? Did he leave his shop to go and check what was going on?

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No, he had already closed for the day and gone home. But when he heard about the accident, he decided to go there to see what was going on. He didn't go there to do anything; he was just concerned and curious. That's the kind of person Timothy was: always showing up, always checking on people. He never imagined it would be the last thing he would do.

Did he ever share any of his future dreams or aspirations with you when he was alive?

Yes, he did. One of the last things he said was that he hoped to travel out of Nigeria someday when things got better. He believed in hope, in better days ahead. He wanted more for his life.

When he was confirmed dead, how did you feel about the situation?

I broke down completely. I cried uncontrollably for days. I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep. Even now, as I speak to you, it still hasn't fully settled in. My chest still feels heavy. The pain hasn't eased. I still find myself waking up in the middle of the night, hoping it was all just a bad dream.

Who informed the parents?

His body was taken straight to their house. That's how they found out. It was the most devastating way for them to receive such news.

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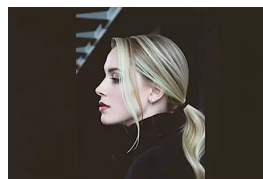
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Was Timothy's case reported to the nearest police station?

I was grieving so badly; I was completely shattered. There was no way I could have followed up with anything at that point. But from what I was told, some of the youths in the community took his body to the police station, and what did the police say? Instead of showing concern or taking any kind of responsibility, they asked them to bring money.

Just imagine, a young man had just been killed, and all they cared about was money. Eventually, the boys brought his body back home, and he was buried the next day just like that. No justice.

What about his siblings?

They are based in Abuja too; he is the second-to-last child out of six children.

What would you say about the attitude of the police?

It's heartbreaking. The police didn't acknowledge what happened. There was no ownership, no accountability, no effort to even pretend they cared that one of them had just taken a life. It was as if nothing had happened. We're still here, dealing with the pain, and they've moved on like Timothy never existed.

Did anyone give you a description of the officer who shot him?

They said he was masked. The person who fired the shot had his face covered. So, no one could tell who the person was.

You mentioned that his parents are old. How have you been trying to comfort them?

No one prepares to lose a child, especially not like this. It hasn't been easy for them at all. We've been trying our best to speak comforting words to them, to remind them they're not alone, but what can words do? The father is already battling a stroke, and now he's dealing with the loss of the son who was his support system. It's been painful to watch. They exist in deep sorrow.

Has any legal action been taken by the family or civil rights organisations?

No. The family hasn't been able to do anything about the case, especially the parents—they don't have the strength or awareness to push for justice. But justice is needed. Accountability is needed. We all know that nothing can bring Timothy back.

He's gone. But at least, let the family feel like their child mattered. Maybe it wasn't intentional. Maybe it was. But silence is not acceptable. The least this country can do is to show them that it still has a conscience.

Let people come around the family; let someone take action. Let them feel like they are not completely alone. There should be solidarity. There should be concerns; there should be a response because a life was taken, and that life meant everything to someone.

I'm speaking out because my heart is heavy; I'm in deep pain. My cousin didn't just die — he died a terrible, heartbreaking death. It hurt so much that I had to pick up my phone and use my platform to talk about it.

What do you ask for from the government?

All I want is for the world to know how Timothy died. He didn't deserve to die that way. He was young. He had a future, and now, he's gone. I want his death to mean something. He should not be forgotten.

But honestly, I've lost hope in this country. People keep telling me, 'Don't waste your energy, there will be no justice.' That's the hardest part, knowing that after everything, nothing will be done. Nigeria won't take responsibility. That breaks me even more. We are hurting because our country keeps failing us. It keeps breaking us.

What lesson can be learnt from this situation?

If there's one lesson I want people to learn, it's to protect themselves. When anyone sees a crowd around an accident scene or a fight, he should stay away. When a policeman or any law enforcement officer asks you to leave an area, go, don't argue. Don't try to be brave, leave. I say this because if anything happens to you, you're gone, and in this country, you may be forgotten. So, please, save your life.