

## INSIGHT

# CRUEL MURDERS IN ENUGU

- 36-year-old woman killed, genitals removed
- 37-year-old father of six also butchered

BY SUNDAY ANI  
NICHSSUNNY@YAHOO.COM

**O**n March 9, 2014, the people of Umu-Agama, in Enugu-Ezike, Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu State, were shocked when a 36-year-old lady, identified as Ngozi Eze, was declared missing. Her sudden disappearance, according to her father, Mr. Jerome Eze, was reported to the Divisional Police Office at Ogurute, Enugu-Ezike, and to the local vigilante group. While the police launched a manhunt for the kidnappers of the woman, the vigilante group also organised a search party, which combed all the breadth and length of the village. These efforts went on for three days without any success.

According to Eze, the riddle was solved on the fourth day after disappearance when some villagers, who went to harvest palm fronds from the nearby bush, raised the alarm that an offensive odour pervaded the entire vicinity where the palm trees were located. They suspected that it could be the decomposing body of the missing lady and, therefore, quickly alerted her family of the development.

Members of her nuclear and extended families as well as friends went along with those who brought the information and some vigilante boys to the area, where another round of search commenced. Within a few minutes of the search, her naked body was found, with her private part missing, raising fears that it was ritual killing.

The 36-year-old Ngozi was said to have seen off somebody, who visited them when she got missing.

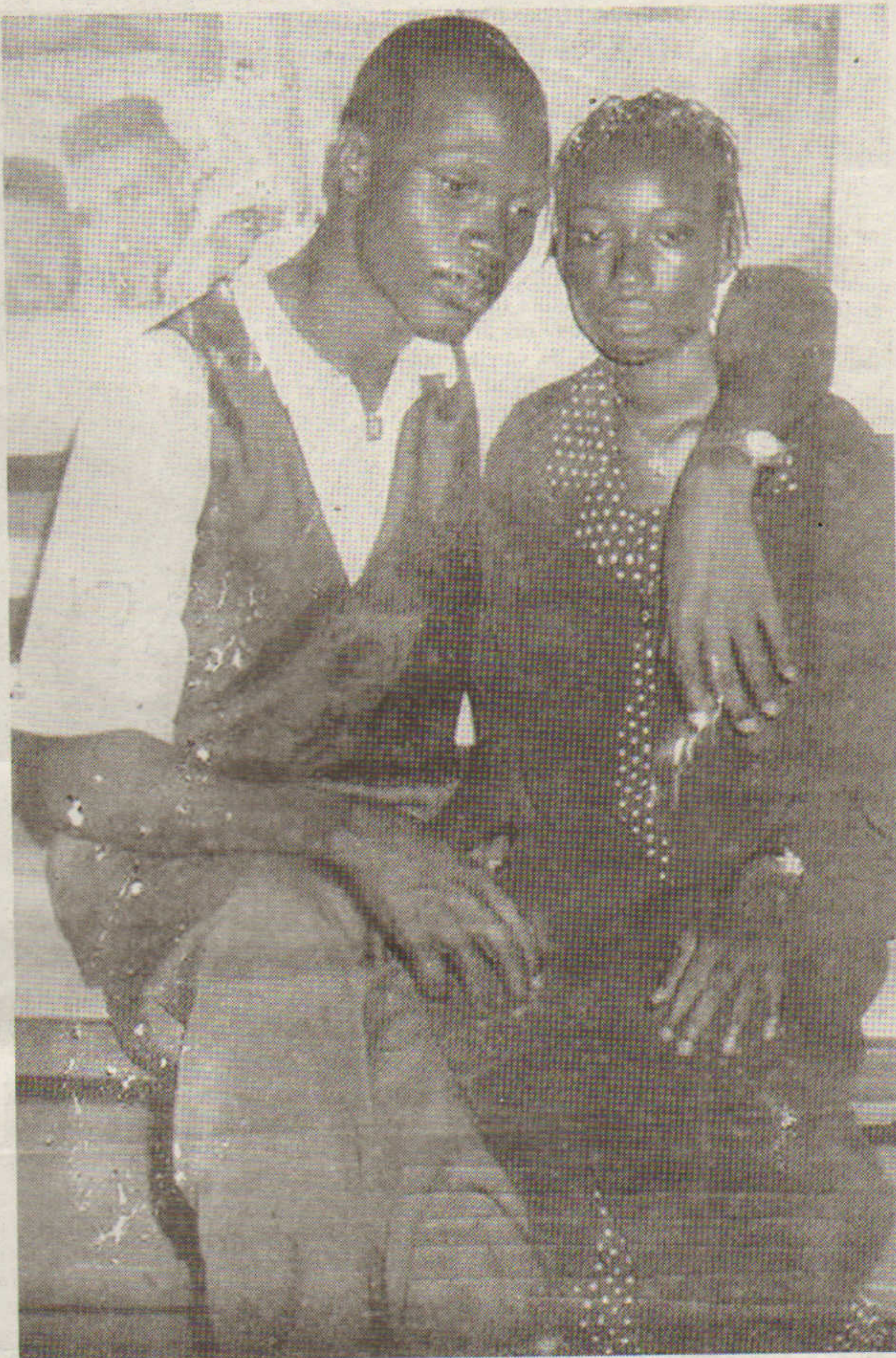
When our correspondent met Eze at his residence, in Agha Okoshi village, Agu-Afo Umu-Agama, the grief-stricken man broke down in tears, as he tried to narrate what happened. In an emotion-laden voice, the bereaved father said: "She was killed on March 9, which was our *Omabe* festival day. My daughter's name is Ngozi. She was 36 and my first daughter. Ngozi saw somebody off but never returned alive. After two hours and she was still not back, my wife, Bridget, alerted me to it. I dismissed her fears with a wave of the hand. I assured her that Ngozi was no longer a child and that she would come back.

"When my second wife, Agnes, served my dinner and I was about to eat, one of my daughters, Nnenna, cried that Ngozi was not yet back. Her loud voice attracted neighbours, who gathered and it was then I became worried that something untoward could have happened to her. We decided to search for her. Everybody, including members of the Neighbourhood Watch, was involved in the search. We even consulted several traditional soothsayers and they all assured us that she was within the community. For three days, we searched for her in vain. Then, on the fourth day, one of her aunts came to report that people, who went to harvest palm fronds somewhere in the village said an offensive odour had pervaded the entire vicinity where they were harvesting the palm fronds. She suggested we should go and check if it was Ngozi's decomposing body. We all rushed there and behold, it was her body that was lying carelessly on the boundary between Umu-Agama and Imuhu, a neighbouring community. They covered her with a cloth and some people were shouting that her head was caught off. We reported to the police and when they came with a doctor, it was confirmed that her head was intact but her genital had been cut off."

With the body already decomposing, the family was instructed by the police to bury her at once, while investigation continued.

According to the distraught father, clues to the culprits began to emerge during the burial when one of the alleged suspects told one of the vigilante boys that Ngozi's murder was a N600, 000 deal. When probed deeper, the suspect declined further comments and denied knowledge of what could have led to the lady's death. But, like the saying that no matter the extent truth is suppressed, it must come to light, a few days after she was buried, the Neighbourhood Watch arrested two persons in connection with the dastardly act.

The two arrested suspects were promptly handed over to the police, who continued to unravel more culprits behind the acts from the duo's confessional statements. On Friday, March 28, 2014, the suspects were paraded before the entire people of Umu-Agama village by policemen from the State Police Headquarters, Enugu. During the village parade by the police, our correspondent learnt that they



IK and his wife

again, confessed openly before their people how they planned and executed the evil act.

"So, police ordered for her burial while investigation continued. During the burial, one of the suspects called one of the vigilante boys aside (names withheld by us) and confided in him that the job was a job of N600, 000. The vigilante boy accused the suspect of having a hand in the killing, otherwise, how could he have known that it was a job of N600, 000? But he promptly denied any knowledge of the evil act and the vigilante boy left him without informing us and my daughter was buried," Eze further informed.

On how the culprits were finally arrested, he said: "The leader of the vigilance group called me and asked me to tell my son, John, to see them by 6pm that day. When John got there, he saw Ibe and Eugene, who were already arrested by the vigilante in connection with the murder of my daughter, Ngozi. He came home and informed me that the vigilante boys had handed them over to the police. So, it was at the police station that they confessed to the act and named their accomplices, including their sponsors."

The grieving father also said it took eight days after the arrest of the first two suspects before their alleged ring leader, who lived a stone's throw from his compound was arrested.

On how the leader was arrested and his confessional statement, regarding how the act was perpetrated, Eze said: "The alleged leader of the gang is Ndukwe. He lives just a stone's throw from my house. His house is just within a pointing dis-

tance. His accomplices are Eugene, Chinedu and another person I can't remember his name now. It took eight days after others were arrested before Ndukwe was arrested. He was arrested about 3am where he was hiding at his in-law's house. At the station, he mentioned the man, who sent him. He said the person that sent him was his mother's relation. He said the man gave him a handkerchief with which he used on my daughter and she became unconscious before they killed her and removed her genital. The alleged sponsor, I was told is a businessman, who sells horse. I also learnt that the businessman said he was also an agent to some other people."

Investigation by our reporter revealed that the arrowhead of the evil act had committed suicide. He was alleged to have taken acid, which later killed him. He took his own life so that he would not be implicated since his boys had been arrested by the police, it was gathered.

Investigation also revealed that the man was wealthy and influential in the community and didn't want his name to be soiled, hence suicide became a beautiful option for him.

"Today, what we are hearing is that Ndukwe's alleged sponsor has committed suicide. They said he drank acid and died instead of being known because he is a very popular man in the community," Eze added.

Eze regretted that his daughter was still single and hoping to get married and raise her own family before the evil men cut

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