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Death of MC Longs casts dark pall over entertainment circle in Jos



By [Our Reporter](#) on December 28, 2014 [Trending](#)

BY MARIAM ALESHINLOYE AGBOOLA, JOS

The people of Plateau State are in deep grief. They are mourning over the death of MC Longs, who was the lifewire of the entertainment industry in the Tin City. Longs, a musician cum comedian, who was born and raised as Joseph ThankGod Longji passed on after a ghastly car crash that happened on November 6 as he was returning from Pankshin in Plateau State. He made his mark by presenting decend comedy to varied audiences. Through music and comedy, he contributed in no small way to restoration of the peaceful atmosphere that now exists in the state. Along with his group, he used to present a programme, Wetin Dey, on Silverbird Rhythm 93.7 (Friday), PRTVC 90.5 FM (Saturday). The programme kept listeners glued to their radio sets as problems bedeviling the state were discussed in a comical manner. MC Longs particularly mimicked Governor Jonah Jang, trying to justify his programmes while his colleagues in like manner pointed out the loopholes in the programmes.

MC Longs, father of two very young sons, died at 31 on November 14, 2014, leaving a wife, parents, siblings and unfilled dreams. In this interview, his father, Mr. Joseph Gumuwes, a retired police officer, relives the memorable life of his artistic son, who touched audiences with his songs and comedy and even made former President Olusegun Obasanjo smile and joyfully ‘spray’ him with N50,000 for his exciting performance.

Excerpts...

He learnt to sing as soon as he could talk

He was born in 1985 at Mubi and after one year I was transferred from Mubi to Jos. He became a funny chap as he was growing in Jos. When he started walking, he was always singing the song ‘Praise God Hallelujah,’ which he heard us singing during our morning devotion. That song so stuck to his memory that he would go from door-to-door at ‘A’ Division Barracks in Jos, where we were living singing the song and our neighbours would give him money. Right from a

very tender age he had shown interest in singing and acting.

When he was about two years, one very strange thing happened in his life. But since I know what the Bible says about prophesy and vision, I was not overly disturbed. It happened when he had just been weaned and was no longer sleeping with us in our room. He was with other children. He woke up around 1am and came to meet us in our room. He was banging on our door until I opened the door for him. I asked him what he wanted and he pulled me and asked me to come and see something. Before then I had once taken him to a crusade at Polo Field. He told me to come and see the place where I had previously taken him; he said I should see how people gathered and he was given the microphone. He said, 'I was talking and the crowd was large. I was singing that song 'Praise God hallelujah'. I said okay, I have heard you, just go and sleep. At about 3am, he came back again to drag me to see him sing. I sent him back to bed with the promise that we would do so the following day. Then his mother started crying that maybe her son had become possessed because then we had this issue of secret cults all around us. I said no, he could not be possessed and still praising God in songs. At about 4am, he came back again for the third time. Between that second and third time, the Lord had opened my eyes. He said this could be a vision of what he would become in the future. I had the thought that if he came back, I would pray for him before asking him to go back to sleep. So when he did come back, I did just that and told him he would be a big man in future. That he would be singing and praising God and people would listen to you. We never took it serious but we satisfied him at that moment and he went back to bed.

We forgot about that incident. When he entered nursery school, he developed this habit of gathering used milk tins and hitting them like drums while singing his popular song 'Praise God, hallelujah'. We used to pack the tins and throw them away. He would gather them again. He did not mind singing from morning till night and would not bother about food. While things were going on that way, I never knew when he enrolled in the church choir and started learning to play the drums and even sing using the microphone. He was still in primary school. Then without my knowledge, he and a friend of his visited the studio of Panam Percy Paul and began learning how to play guitar, piano and other musical instruments. He became very good in the church choir and could play any of the instruments perfectly.

Day he scaled the fence to sing for Governor's wife

When he was between 14 and 15 years of age, and Valentina, the wife of the former governor, Joseph Dariye was launching the first special Christmas Tree, he told me he would go and I asked him not to step out because in the first place, I thought he would not have the money to transport himself there; besides he would have to pay gate fee to get in. But he insisted on going. I did not even know how he went in. He and his friend must have scaled the fence to get in. As the occasion was going, I was told, his friend informed the Master of Ceremony that his friend had a special number. So MC Longs was called out and given the microphone. The audience was very impressed with the performance, which was not only in music but included a drama presentation.

I could say that was the beginning of his journey in comedy presentation. I never knew he attended the event until the second day when people who also attended from the barracks started telling me how well my son performed at the occasion. I was even arguing with them that he did not go out that the day because I told him not to go. They said he was there and even got a prize. They asked if I did not see what he brought back. They did not know he did not show me because I had told him not to go out.

Right in the house MC started making his drums and other instruments. His friends would come into the house and he would sing with them, and sometimes they would go to his friends' homes to do the same. He continued like that until he enrolled in secondary school. In his second year, he came home and said he wanted to organize a concert. I asked him how that would be. He said the only contribution he wanted from us was to buy mineral drinks or make the local kunu for the people that would come. On that day, we gathered what we could afford to get the drinks and his sisters made some snacks for him. When his mother saw him performing that day, she burst out crying because she could not believe it. He held it in our church, all of us were there. Some musicians of repute also turned out on that day to be part of the occasion. They all presented their numbers. The surprise was too much for us. Instead of laughing, we were crying. The joy was too much. From that time, he was always going from one club to the other to perform.

How Obasanjo gave him N50,000

He started to earn money from performing for people when he began going to primary schools to perform during their closing days. He would sing and present stage drama. He began working with a renowned artists and act as Father Christmas too. At the end of it all, he would collect between N200 to N300 until it later got to N1000. The first N1000 was very helpful because it came when we did not have money in the house. We spent it there and then. The second time he got something substantial was when he was the Master of Ceremony at an occasion and was paid N5000. By that time

he had become an undergraduate.

At the NTA College, he joined a band. The leader of the band was so impressed that he followed him home. Soon after, the NTA College dropped the leader and made MC the bandleader. That again became a problem. The man left the school and went back to Lafia. He could not even finish schooling. There was a competition at NTA where he emerged as the best comedian. After that there was a contest between Plateau, Nasarawa and Benue states. He represented Plateau and emerged the winner for the state. This was beside the competitions he went for in clubs and won awards. My house was just too full of awards. I was always wondering what this boy would become.

There was a time when the then President Olusegun Obasanjo came to commission projects in Plateau State. There was one at NTA where MC Longs was the Master of Ceremony (MC) and also staged a drama. He was also the MC at the commissioning of Jos University the Teaching Hospital. At the end Obasanjo singled him out and gave him N50, 000 apart from what was given to the whole group. From that time, he became known everywhere. He was being invited for one programme or the other. When the use of handset came to Nigeria, we had no option but to buy a handset for him because he was always coming to collect money to make calls at phone booths. Later he could afford to buy for himself and for others.

He married early to keep girls away

He reached when he began to tell us he wanted to own a studio. He was always coming up with ideas of what he wanted to do. When he reached 25 years, he came and said he wanted to get married. I was surprised and asked him if he was not too young to marry, especially as he was still in school. He drew my attention to the girls that followed him right to the house after shows and the fact that after every show a girl or two must locate him at home. He said, 'Daddy, if I allow things to continue this way, I will be polluted.' I asked him what he meant by being polluted because as far as I was concerned, it was the state of his mind that would determine if he could be polluted. I knew I did everything possible to bring him up with the fear of the Lord. But he insisted he wanted to marry to keep off sins and he married the year he was about to finish in the university. He married in 2011. Imme'Daddy, if I allow things to continue this diately after the marriage, he rented a house at Kakanga in new Abuja in Jos. He and his wife had two sons.

He had great plans but death cut them short

I had been very sick lately. I was down for about two months. A week after I recovered, he came and said, 'Daddy, you are okay now just enter the car and let us go and take some breeze outside.' We went out and he showed me the house he was building. He was about finishing the house. It remained for him to roof it and build a fence around it. I commended him. He then took me to the house, where he was living with his family. In his home, he told me about the job before him and how politicians have been trying to woo him to their side. I advised him to drop politics and focus on his career. I told him that he could perform at the events of any of them. He told me he would be travelling Abuja and upon his return, we would discuss his other projects. I asked when he was going, he said he would leave on Friday but before then, he needed to go to Pankshin to do something. It was on his way coming from Pankshin that he had the accident.

He told me about establishing an office in London. He said someone had already spoken to him that he would build the house and the studios where he would stay and work and when he was ready return to Nigeria. The person said he could that without any strings attached. He even told me he needed to undertake another foreign trip with the president of their association.

On December 6, the day of the accident, I had just returned from a wake keep when I got the call that he had been involved in an accident and was taken to a private hospital at Rayfield, Jos. We went there and saw the doctors attending to him. For about five hours he was in the theatre undergoing surgery. It was already late when he was brought out of the theatre. So we stayed there until daybreak.

He was in that hospital for three days. On the third day, I was asked to look for an ambulance urgently. When we saw him, he was breathing heavily. He had been complaining for days that he had a pain on the left side of his chest, but they seemed not to see anything there and it seemed the pain was getting worse. We made the arrangement and he was taken to JUTH on Sunday. Before we got there the consultants were already waiting for us. When we reached, they surrounded him and did all they could to help him. I told them that he was complaining about the chest pain. One of them checked the area and agreed there was a problem. They flushed out the bad blood from it and did X-ray and then took him to the Intensive Care Unit to prevent people from disturbing him. He too was always talking. Anytime he saw anybody he knew, he would say, 'Look at your friend, see my condition oo. I am broken.' And people were saying even on the sick bed you are still making jokes.

Health workers strike had devastating effect on his recovery

On Wednesday of that week, the health workers had a meeting and decided to go on strike. So he was no longer receiving proper treatment. On Friday, we saw that his condition was getting worse. There were no attendants. The doctors said the problem was getting nurses to work with them. We promised to employ three nurses who would stay morning, afternoon and night. We had already gotten one but we were told that since the nurses were not working at JUTH, they would not allow them to work and even if they were JUTH nurses, they could be sacked for contravening the strike order. We saw there was no reason for keeping him there and decided to take him to Abuja. As we were getting close to the National Hospital in Abuja, he gave up. We just decided to return with his corpse to Jos.

Longji was an obedient child right from childhood. He was a type that cared for everyone, his brothers and sisters. They were all crying and wondering who would do for them what he used to do. I tried to make them understand that God loved him more than we loved him. He was very lively. Once he entered the house you would hear him calling, 'Papillo, where are you?' He knew the problem we pensioners have with our retirement benefits. We are under PENCOR. How will you work for 35 years and your gratuity is not paid to you. They will just pay you peanuts and say they are managing your money for you. When one was working, one was managing his money well but it is when one has retired he would not be able to manage his money well. Does that make sense? MC knew my problem and always made sure I had money on me.

He sometimes used my name to make jokes

I do not have any regrets about his life and death. The pain I have is that he died in agony. I cried when I saw him in the hospital with his fractured hands and the two hands hanging out like rope. I was disturbed. I never knew he had fractures all over. I was even thinking that if he survived, how will he be? Would he be able to walk again? Finally when it happened, I felt very sad because he had been of tremendous help to the family. He was the second child but my first son. So all of us needed him; including those at home; even in our village and local government, he had been contributing. He established a studio for DJs and comedians in Pankshin. The boys came here and cried bitterly.

I felt that God had wanted to use him to do many great things if he had lived but if it is God's wish that he should die, I do not have any choice but accept it. Humanly I felt it but I will have to accept it. Normally he should be the one that should bury me and not me burying him. Today, I have just trekked back home from the hospital. If he was alive, I just needed to flash him and he would call and ask what I wanted and I would have told him that I wanted to go to the hospital and he would have taken me. My wife too has now gone to see his wife. We would not have been going up and down if he was alive. We however thank God for the helping hands we have been receiving. Even during burial people tried a lot. So I will soon go on air to thank everyone.

His wife, Scholastica ThankGod Joseph broke down completely. For six days she was here with us. She was really shaken but she is pulling through. The children are still very young. The first son was just two years plus when his father died.

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