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Enugu family grieves over son's death as youth corps member in Zamfara

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...Father attempts suicide

By **Romanus Ugwu**

For the Chinevu family of Aku in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area of Enugu State, tears, agony and sorrow have refused to fade away following the demise of their son, Uzochukwu Chinweuba Chinevu, a corps member who died servicing his fatherland in Zamfara State.

The mysterious death of the graduate of Applied Biology and Biochemistry happened on the evening of Sunday September 17 inside a volleyball court. Confirmed 'brought dead' at Tudun Wada Hospital, the defeat of his team during a volleyball game ,many believed, may have sent shock waves down his spine, resulting in his collapse and instant death.

But for the family, his death was more than ordinary because sometime in 1996, the parent had lost their first son in almost the same mysterious circumstances. Uzochukwu's death, according to the parents, came with unbearable anguish because he was shouldering the responsibility of the family even while he was still an undergraduate at the Enugu State University of Science Technology (ESUT).

This was corroborated by Uzochukwu's uncle, a medical doctor, Dr Kevin Ugbor, who argued that he had no previous health challenge as he emphasized that "his death was so surprising because he was not having any BP problem or sugar before his death.

"He was a sportsman and never had breathlessness while farming or participating in sports; and that was why his death was very surprising and devastating. He was such a promising young man.

"He combined schooling and farming work very effectively, contributed in training almost all his siblings through farming. He was shouldering everybody's problem before his untimely death. He was such an inspirational son."

Little wonder the father, Pa Amos Chinevu, had on few instances since the death, attempted suicide.

According to him, the world has not only totally lost any meaning; he is now a living corpse.

Eyewitness account

Uzochukwu's cousin and fellow corps member deployed to Zamfara State, Chika Odoh, described the death as shocking and unbelievable.

"He was not sick. He had organised a volleyball game at his family church on that Sunday evening for a fitness exercise. But after the game, his team lost and he shouted 'my team did not win' and rested on a pole where he slumped and died," she said.

His last encounter with parents

Although the parents admitted that there was no premonition of his death, he had, however, on few occasions they spoke on phone complained of attacks in his dreams, recalling that he had appealed to them not to strenuously stress themselves in farm work because of their ages.

According to Pa Amos, "the last contact I had with him was when he visited us before his departure to Zamfara State where he was serving. He had advised us to reduce our involvement in farm work since we are not getting younger. He told us to concentrate only on subsistent farming. He participated extensively in farming work then before leaving us for Zamfara."

Explaining how he received the news of his death, he said: "I returned home from our farm settlement because of the death of my nephew, he called his mother and told her to greet me. He told the mother that he will return during Christmas since where he was serving is very far away from home.

"But around 5a.m the next day, some people held me while I was still on the bed and announced to me that Uzochukwu is dead. I wanted to commit suicide but they did not give me the chance. His death has fast-tracked my journey to the grave. Life has lost its real meaning without Uzo."

Pa Amos, while trying to force back tears told Oriental News that Uzochukwu's death awakened reminiscence of many unfulfilled promises he gave to them.

Pa Amos' hope that Uzo would, after the service finish the uncompleted building he started before gaining admission had gone up in flames.

"We are still living in a thatched house that is almost collapsing on us now. I remember him in many ways, especially his kind of person. He was one person you can go to bank with his words or promises. He was somebody you can easily trust or entrust with anything.

"He was my most loving child because he listened and obeyed me. He was not a troublesome person from childhood. He was very industrious that even while schooling, he went the extra mile to raise money through farming to pay the school fees of his siblings. He was wiser than all other of my children.

"He was not my first or second child but he played the role effectively, especially since I lost my first child in the same mysterious circumstances. My second child was not educated like Uzo," he lamented.

Appeal to government

Realising that it is finished for his son, Pa Amos said his siblings were almost stranded because they were no longer strong enough to cater for their schooling through farming.

"We had hoped Uzo would continue to help. When he was posted to the North, we had expressed reservations over his safety, especially the quit notice given to the Igbo but he assured us that nothing will happen to him."

Like Pa Amos, Uzochukwu's mother, Esther Chinevu, is full of grief.

"I spoke to him extensively when he called few days before his death. He was returning to Zamfara from Sokoto where he went to see his uncle.

"We spoke again on the eve of his death not knowing that it was the last I will hear from him. Early Monday morning, many people woke me up to announce the news of his death to me.

"He was the one who picks the bill of his siblings, paying their school fees and buying cloths for them through farm work and sometimes borrowing. He was born twins but he was outstanding over the others," she wept.

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