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## A widow's inspiring struggle against odds

— 14th January 2018

From PAUL OSUYI, Asaba

**A widow** in Delta State, Mrs. Chinyere Chukwudi Zimako, a mother of four and graduate of Computer Science from Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma, Edo State, is showing a great deal of grit. With courage and determination she is standing up to the odds against her in the tough world of running a business, starting out after losing her beloved husband in a tragic car crash.

She took to supplying diesel to families and businesses in Asaba, the Delta State capital, to support herself and four children, following the death of her husband, Chukwudi Zimako, who she described as her pillar and breadwinner, on December 17, 2016.

Though the responsibility for catering for the family is weighing her down, but Chinyere has refused to give up. Like Britain's Queen Victoria was quoted by Margaret Thatcher as saying, "Defeat? I do not know the meaning of that word," Chinyere is determined to push on against the odds, to ensure that

her business succeeds. As she explains, she owes it to her late husband and her children to succeed.

The meagre margin she makes from sales is being overwhelmed by financial burden of catering for the children's needs. To overcome the trap, she says she needs to widen and deepen her clientele who are currently few.

On how she has been coping, Chinyere said: "It has not been easy coping without him because he was the pillar of the family. He carried us along. Since his death, I have been struggling. I said I would not beg, we just have to survive, and by God's grace, we have been pushing on.

"The little business I ventured into has been struggling. I got into supply of diesel but I don't have a station of my own, I liaise with those who have filling stations and look for clients to supply the product. I get few liters of the product and supply to my clients in jerry cans.

"My dream is to own a filling station with pumps that I can be dispensing diesel, fuel and kerosine to the public. For now I just specialize in diesel because I don't have the capital to start off fully. So I am appealing for empowerment in the aspect of getting a dump and some quantity of product to start-off."

"Though I have been struggling, there is a bright future ahead of me. I just want to inspire women, widows especially because there are some of them that when their husband die, their entire world will just collapse, they can't forge ahead, you see them suffering. But just put yourself together and be determined to make it, and you will make it."

Chinyere stated that the business is struggling as responsibilities at the home front are overwhelming the meager gains from the supply of diesel to few clients, adding that the bills keep mounting.

Her words: "It has not been easy coping without him because he was the pillar of the family. He carried us along. Since his death, I have to start struggling, that we are not going to beg, we just have to survive, and by God's grace, we have been pushing on.

It has been almost a year since that fateful evening of December 17, when her husband left their home in Asaba, to visit some friends in another part of town. The couple got married in 2003, when Chinyere was 22, and their marital union had been filled with romantic expressions of love. As usual, she bade farewell with a kiss and urged him to return before dusk.

But little did she know that that particular kiss and goodbye were the last emotional actions she could ever have with her darling husband, as he never returned to her loving embrace.

Recalling that day, Chinyere said it was the last time she saw her better half alive. The husband, was involved in a fatal auto crash along the Benin-Asaba-Onitsha expressway. As Sunday Sun learnt, his Toyota Corolla car had a head-on collision with a trailer loaded with consignment. He never made it to the hospital.

Worried that her husband had not returned, Chinyere put a call through to his cellphone but it was switched-off. She had no inkling about the fate that had befallen her love. Even friends and family members who first got information about what happened concealed the information from her. Disturbed by the unusual silence from her husband who would always several times a day to talk with her, Chinyere tried to reach some close friends and family members of her husband, but they all pretended as if nothing had happened until the next morning when they began trooping into her compound only to wish her a belated happy birthday. On the preceding December 16, Chinyere had marked her birthday.



At some point, Chinyere became suspicious of the movement of acquaintances into her apartment but she was still kept in the dark. Eventually, the news of her husband's tragic death was broken to her. Instantly her world crashed, leaving Chinyere devastated.

After a year of the sad incident, Chinyere is battling to console herself and forge on with the family responsibility which was hitherto shouldered by her husband.

In an emotion laden voice, Chinyere told Sunday Sun that the whole episode is still like a dream, which she is desperately praying to wake up from, adding however that the reality is that she will never see her husband physically again.

"It was just like a dream because he was with me at home when he said he would go and visit somebody in the evening. I told him bye. It was on his way back that his vehicle collided with a lorry, and that was it.

"I never knew because his phone was switched off. I was worried. I called his friends and family members but nobody wanted to tell me what was happening. I started to suspect that something must have gone wrong.

"He never came home that night, until the next morning when I started seeing family members and friends coming around. Yet they told me that there was no problem but just to wish me happy birthday because my birthday was actually on December 16.

"Within me, I knew something was fishy because how come they all left their homes to come and wish me happy birthday. It was in the long run that they broke the news to me, and I was devastated.

"I never really understood the meaning of death, so when I heard the news, I thought maybe he just went on a journey to return but up till date, he has not come back. So as the days fly, I am beginning to realize that death is something very terrible, that when one is gone, you are not going to see that person anymore. It has dawned on me now that he is gone forever."

Having been able to find strength on the inside, Chinyere, who hails from Anambra State, is now able to encourage other widows, urging them never to give up but to see the brighter side of life.

"Since the death of my husband, it appeared that the world was coming to an end but as time passed I began to see that the future is bright. Though I have been struggling, there is a bright future ahead of me. I just want to inspire women, widows especially, because there are some of them that when their husbands die, their entire world will just collapse. They can't forge ahead, you see them suffering. But just put yourself together and be determined to make it, and you will make it."

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