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• How Lagos landlord allegedly murdered youth to settle an old score •
Victim's corpse found in morgue, suspect in police custody

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The cold-blood murder of Steven Benson Doubra is one of the tragedies recorded in the course of the five-week coronavirus lockdown in Lagos. The victim, a 26-year-old popularly known as Bouncer, was allegedly shot by King James Olu, one of the landlords in the neighbourhood. The incident which happened on Saturday, April 18, left the residents of Summit Lighthouse Estate, Iba, reeling with shock.

The victim had joined other members of the ad hoc security group convened to watch over their neighbourhood to keep the rampaging One Million Boys at bay. This was a common measure across the city, necessitated by reports and incidents of robbers rampage in the wake of the coronavirus lockdown.

On that fateful day, Steven Doubra was on his way home in the wee hours of the morning when he was accosted by the man who allegedly took his life. Together with two accomplices, the suspect unleashed an unprovoked attack on the victim, shot him and took his bleeding body away.

Two days later, when members of the victim's family were invited by the police to a hospital, it was not to see him recuperating but to identify his corpse in the morgue.

Death after a vigil

That fateful Saturday, Doubra and his cousin were on their way home after participating in the community's night watch duty. The cousin, still in a state of trauma, gave *Saturday Sun* a first-hand account of how the tragedy unravelled.

His recount: "We were on our way home when we met Mr James who also spent the night outside with the regular vigilante. He was with a couple of the vigilante. As he approached us, he said: "You two, I don't tell you for this street say na me go kill you." Steven paid him no attention and instead urged me that we should continue on our way. I think this infuriated the man. He ordered the two other vigilantes with him to grab us. But I quickly moved out of their reach. They held Steven who started asking "What have I done now?" By this time, Mr James had begun to hit him on the head with a motorbike helmet and Steven had started bleeding. He wrestled himself free from the man's grasp and made to run, that was when he was shot in his left chest."

According to him, they took to their heels and Doubra struggled to get to his family home, which was a short distance from the scene of the confrontation. He barely made it to the front door of his house when he slumped and fainted. A family member who came out and found him in a pool of his blood rushed in to raise an alarm. By the time members of his family trooped out, they were just in time to see James Olu arrived with a bike.

"He quickly put Steven on it and sped off," a family member told *Saturday Sun*.

The victim's family and concerned residents in the neighbourhood had made frantic calls to the phone number of James Olu, the alleged assailant, to get details of his whereabouts with the wounded boy, but the calls were answered. Eventually, the victim's father had gone to the nearby Adoff Police station to report the incidence.

When Olu answered the call hours later his response was short: He was with Steven Doubra at a hospital and "the boy is okay."

At this point, word had gone round the estate and angry youths stormed the suspect's house, broke in and would have completely destroyed the property but for the timely intervention of the police who dispersed the mob. The suspense about the whereabouts and condition of the victim was soon clarified in the evening when the Police Area Commander showed up and sued for peace, assuring the community the victim and his assailant have been found by the police, and that Steven Doubra was alive.

A source told *Saturday Sun*: "We were told that "Steven was in (Ikeja General) hospital, alive and responding to treatment. But the man then said: 'If he (Doubra) doesn't make it, we don't want any form of riot or violence'."

The policemen allegedly took details of the victim's family and threatened to pick them up in case of any eruption of unrest in connection with the incident, the reason members of the victim's family had refused to speak about the tragedy, and those who spoke to *Saturday Sun* did so only on the condition of anonymity. The threat from the police also subdued restive youths in the community.

The police, sources claimed, had also informed the family they wouldn't be able to see their son until on Monday. Hence, family and friends of the victim spent the weekend praying for him and hoped to see him in good health on Monday.

On Monday morning, members of the victim's family were taken to the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department, Panti, Yaba, where they found the suspect James Olu behind bars. They then proceeded to the hospital where they hoped to see Steven Doubra recuperating. At the hospital, instead of heading to the wards, they were taken to the morgue where they were shown his cold, lifeless corpse.

Community in grief

The victim, an Ijaw from Arogbo Kingdom in Ondo State, was described as a focused young man, who until his untimely murder was devoted to honing his football skills. He was on the verge of moving to Portugal in furtherance of his football career before the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic scuttled his plan.

"You would see him in jersey returning from the field after playing football. He was an easygoing fellow," a resident told *Saturday Sun*. "That man (Olu) always bullied people around here because he calls himself a naval officer."

He was an ex-petty officer, and has since been out of service, another resident submitted.

A few residents who spoke with *Saturday Sun* claimed the suspect who is chairman of landlord association in the neighbourhood, has a penchant for harassing youths in the area whom he often accused of being cultists and bad boys. He was alleged to have issued death threats against the victim on three occasions.

"But we thought he was bluffing," stated a cousin of the victim.

"Since he has made good his threat, I want justice for my son," declared the victim's father.

When contacted by *Saturday Sun*, DSP Bala Elkana, the spokesman of Lagos Police Command, PPRO, promised to provide further clarifications on the case. No further information was forthcoming from him yet.

However, a reliable police source disclosed that the hunt is still on for the two accomplices involved in the deadly skirmish while the suspect is expected to be arraigned soon.