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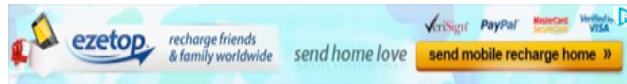
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Mosaic

The bodies in a freezer

Written by Nosa Osaigbovo
Friday, 20 May 2011

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When she found her children's bodies in a freezer in her home in Agbor, Delta State, in April, Mercy Elianor knew it was not hide-and-seek gone tragically wrong. Her children's bodies bore the unmistakable marks of murder. Harrison was seven years of age and was two years older than Favour, but the murderer in macabre thoughtfulness placed his body on top of that of his sister—he was her protector.

Elianor, a nurse, lived alone with her children after her marriage failed. On the day of their murder, Elianor locked her children in and went to the abattoir to buy beef. She told a newspaper that she put the key in the 'usual place'. She could not find the key on her return from the abattoir and used the spare key to open the door. The children were not in the room as far as she could see. She was greatly alarmed. The person who removed the key from the 'usual place' must have taken the children away and his motive was clearly sinister.

Elianor's neighbours had no reassuring information about her children's whereabouts and she went to the police. The police said they did not understand her agitation and asked her to return home. A stranger took her to a pastor and the pastor went with her to her room to pray to God to reveal the whereabouts of the missing children. Elianor did not actually hear God's voice, as many Nigerian pastors claim they do, but a parched throat made it impossible for her to concentrate on the prayer and she hurried to the freezer to get a bottle of water. She momentarily froze and then let out a window-shattering scream. Her missing children were in the freezer and they were dead. The killer had made sure that they were dead; the freezer was the children's cold coffin.

Suspicion has not fallen on Elianor and perhaps rightly so. It has not been suggested that she staged the discovery of her children's bodies in the freezer when witnesses were present. The murder of children by their own mothers, a fairly common derangement in places like the United States, is an extremely rare phenomenon in Nigeria. Nigerian mothers are generally well adjusted, though some young, unmarried ladies, rejected and confused, have been known to throw their babies into pits.

It was reported that Elianor lived alone with her two children before they were murdered. If she did, why did she have to put the key in the 'usual place' and not in her purse? She had a spare in her purse and it was this she said she used to open the door when she could not find the key in the 'usual place'. Was the 'usual place' a secret place unknown to no other person but herself?

Six children were put in an unusual place in Ado-Ekiti in December 2008. The girls were forced into a car boot and the lid was slammed shut. It was their father's car and they were used to sitting comfortably in it. But now they were in a cramped boot and struggling desperately to breathe. Five of the children died and one of them survived. She was unconscious when they were discovered in the car boot and it was touch-and-go. It was the cruellest way to kill anybody, especially innocent children. The children's suffering may have been worse than what victims experienced in Nazi gas chambers.

The police took two men into custody a week or two after the appalling murders and the survivor positively identified one of them. The man said he knew the murdered children's father because they were both butchers. He said he had nothing to do with the brutal killings and that he was completely innocent. He spoke at a news conference organised by the police. Was anybody ever charged with the murder of the Ado-Ekiti Five?

Uchechukwu Nwanzo was only two years old when he died in October 2010 in the Okota area of Lagos. He was not ill and his death was sudden. He was taken to school, but was found dead in a septic tank. Uchechukwu's head, according to his father, was missing when his body was recovered. He said his son was the victim of cold-blooded murder.

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great one sensational case involving a wealthy businessman did not go to trial, though the alleged murderer made a full confession. He claimed he was contracted by the businessman.

In some parts of the country, children are accused of practising witchcraft and are savagely tortured. A long nail was driven into a child's head in one city.

A country where rabid dogs are safer than children cannot call itself civilised. Those who kill children, like the person who murdered Harrison and Favour, whose bodies were found in a freezer, must not be allowed to escape punishment.

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Your view

The mindless killing of innocent people by the Jamma'tul halle sunnah aka Boko Haram in Maiduguri is unacceptable. The state chief executive, Ali Modu Sheriff, the sect leader, the late Mohammed Yusuf, and a former commissioner for religious and local government affairs, now late, were allegedly close allies. The speed / haste at which the sect leader, his father-in-law and the former commissioner were parcelled to the world beyond was questionable. Can our security operatives unearth the collapse of that alleged friendship before this barbaric trend? Boko Haram's irresponsibility with impunity is assuming a frightening dimension. It is also a pointer that our security apparatus needs to be reorganised for effective service.

Mcdogara Peter Aruwan Marsa, New Dawn Baptist Church, Victoria Island, Lagos.

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