

# Spotlight



•A bus driving against the traffic on Oshodi-Apapa Expressway

## LINGERING APAPA GRIDLOCK: When driving against traffic is the only way

•Fatal 'one-way' accidents on the rise

By Mike Ebonugwo, Evelyn Usman and Bose Adelaja

A MILD, but familiar drama played out in a Berger-Underbridge-bound Lagos commercial bus that took off from the Cele Bus-stop along the Oshodi-Apapa Expressway. Instead of heading in what one of the passengers considered the right direction relative to the loudly announced destination, the driver had taken the overhead bridge and was soon driving against the traffic in the opposite direction of the road. And almost immediately, the female passenger had raised an alarm.

"Heh driver, is it not Mile Two this bus is going?" she demanded in a panicky voice. And when the conductor assured her that the bus was indeed heading to Mile Two, she had heatedly queried: "Then why are you driving on this side of the road? Or don't you know that driving 'One-Way' is dangerous?"

And the driver was quick to explain this: "Madam, it's because of hold up. Don't you know that the whole road from Second Rainbow to Mile Two and Coconut is blocked? There's no movement at all because traders and tankers have blocked everywhere."

Some of passengers supported the driver by saying it was inevitable to drive against the traffic given the prevailing gridlock. But the woman was not impressed, insisting that it was unsafe to drive against the traffic. And she has her reasons.

"If you people happen to know the number of persons that have

been knocked down and killed by vehicles driving 'one-way' you will not be supporting the driver. I personally witnessed two incidents like that on this road."

In one case, a woman crossing the road at Sanya Bus-stop was knocked down by a *danfo* bus that was driving one-way. She died on the spot. And just last week, another person, a young man, was killed near Ijesha as he was trying to cross to the other side of the road. And guess what? It was another *danfo* driving one-way that was responsible.

### Fatal accidents

"And there are many other cases like that. So, when you consider these fatal accidents, why will anybody still want to support or encourage the drivers of these buses to be driving one-way even if there's traffic jam on the road?"

Indeed the lingering gridlock along the Mile Two/Apapa axis of the Oshodi - Apapa Expressway created by a siege of articulated heavy duty vehicles and failed sections of the road seem to have left many motorists, especially commercial bus drivers, with no choice but to drive against the traffic from Cele bus-stop to Berger Under bridge (outward Apapa). In fact, most of them feel justified that it is the only way to beat the traffic if you must get to your destination on time. Also, most clearing and forwarding agents as well as those whose places of work are situated in Apapa, have taken to mounting readily available

motorbikes to and from their destinations in that axis.

And the fact that the relevant authorities, including security and traffic regulating agencies, did not for a long time move against commercial vehicle operators taking this accident-prone alternative seems to reinforce the popular impression that the law against 'one-way' driving has been suspended pending when the traffic situation

**A woman crossing the road at Sanya Bus-stop was knocked down by a *danfo* bus that was driving one-way; she died on the spot**

in the axis improves.

Unfortunately, the cost in lives has been high, especially for motorbike riders plying the expressway. While some of them are presently confined to their sick beds with severe injuries, others did not live to tell their story after being knocked down and their skulls smashed by fast-moving trucks.

Statistics at Vanguard Spotlight's disposal showed that at least five lives are lost along the expressway in a week. The latest was that of a motorcyclist

penultimate Monday night at the Cele Bus-stop. The deceased with an unknown identity, had picked a man at Tin-Can First Gate to Cele bus-stop. He got to his destination safe where the male passenger disembarked. But as he made to turn for a return to Rainbow, the unexpected happened.

An eye witness, James Udoh, narrating how the tragedy occurred, said: "The Okoro rider wanted to cross the median when he missed his step and mistakenly pressed the throttle. This caused the bike to skid, resulting in both rider landing at the middle of the expressway. Before he could stand up, an oncoming truck ran over him, killing him on the spot."

Among those who have so far lost their lives were a pregnant woman and an old woman. The case of the latter, a trader at Cele Bus-stop, was pathetic. The pepper seller identified simply as Mama, was said to have gone to the Lord's Chosen Charismatic Revival Movement Church, located at Ijesha. She was said to have been at the verge of crossing the road when a vehicle being driven against the traffic hit her.

In the case of the pregnant woman, she was said to have been hit by a motorbike at Second Rainbow Bus-stop. Eye witnesses said she could have survived had help reached her on time. Rather than carry her to the hospital, sympathisers reportedly clustered round her, with each person suggesting what should be done, without any of them taking any step to act on the suggestions. She

was said to have been on the ground for close to one hour before breathing her last.

**Bitter tales of victims families**  
Indeed some families are now bitterly counting their losses on account of this tragic developments. Vanguard Spotlight met with three separate families who claimed their loved ones were knocked down by reckless motorists driving against the traffic.

One of them Alhaja Mulikat Ogunremi said her younger sister, Adams, had been under medical observation for the past three years due to the injuries sustained after she was knocked down by a commercial motorcyclist. "She was a factory worker at Warehouse Bus-stop and was returning home on that fateful Tuesday when she was knocked down by a commercial motorcyclist at Mile 2 Oke. This affected her limbs. She has since been confined to a wheel chair," she lamented.

The case of the Aigboas family from Ekpoma, Edo State is worse as they lost the mother of the house in a one-way related accident that also left their 12-year-old grandson hospitalised.

The head of the family, Mr Sunday Aigboas, who is still mourning the tragic loss of his wife, informed that the incident happened precisely on March 14, 2018 at Sanya Bus-stop while she was on her way home from Sanya market where she was a petty trader.

### Tragic loss of his wife

She was said to have left Sanya Market at about 7.30pm and was on her way home at about 7.30pm when she was knocked down by a hit and run motorist, which left her legs broken and her grandson seriously injured. Unfortunately Dorcas died while sympathisers were taking them to hospital. Meantime, the grandson is still in the Intensive Care Unit where he is undergoing medical treatment.

The 59 years old Dorcas was interred on May 5 in her home town, according to family sources. In a chat with Vanguard, the widower Mr Aigboas, said his wife's death has left a vacuum in the family. He said: "My wife died shortly after leaving the market. She was holding our grandson to link the street beside the popular white garment church at Sanya Bus-stop, to Coker/Orile, when she was knocked down. She died on the way to the hospital but our grandson survived the accident though with severe injuries."

He also informed that the late Dorcas, a mother of seven, was said to be a peace-loving trader and some of her co-traders and associates described her as a gentle and hardworking trader.

To be concluded

•Dorcas, victim of one-way accident