

Immigrant killed by hit-and-run driver

Valencia, Mohammed . Afro - American Red Star ; Washington, D.C. [Washington, D.C]12 Aug 2006: A.1.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

Benedicte Kouayip and her friend, Martin Gakam, just left a "sympathe" (wake) around four in the morning on Aug. 6, for a friend who recently passed in Cameroon. The sympathe is a tradition established here in the U.S., where friends and relatives of the deceased who could not afford to travel overseas to attend the funeral would celebrate their lives here in high fashion and African cuisine.

"While all of this looks impressive, our biggest fear is that the authorities will do nothing to solve the murder because [Benedicte] is an African woman who lives in the District. We work hard and pay taxes too. We want a thorough investigation," said Charles Waum from Liberia. His wife, Antoinette, speechless by the ordeal, worked with Kouayip at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Washington. She kept looking at Kouayip's body shaking her head in disbelief with tears streaming down her face.

Madeline Ngotoh sheds tears for her friend and coworker, Benedicte Kouayip, who was killed by a speeding car on New Hampshire Avenue near East-West Highway in Prince George's County, Md. According to friends, Kouayip, a native from Cameroon, came to the U.S. three years ago working two jobs to take care of her children in her country.

FULL TEXT

Headnote

Family and friends want thorough investigation

Benedicte Kouayip and her friend, Martin Gakam, just left a "sympathe" (wake) around four in the morning on Aug. 6, for a friend who recently passed in Cameroon. The sympathe is a tradition established here in the U.S., where friends and relatives of the deceased who could not afford to travel overseas to attend the funeral would celebrate their lives here in high fashion and African cuisine.

Little did the couple know this would be the last "sympathe" Kouayip would attend when she became the eighth pedestrian traffic fatality for 2006 in Prince George's County, Md.

According to an eyewitness, a car speeding uphill on New Hampshire Avenue toward East West Highway struck her in the crosswalk and left Kouayip for dead.

"We came to the crossing at the pole in front of the Wendy's. I went first across the street looking for a sign of a car with lights but I saw nothing. Benedicte was behind me. The car must have been coming very fast because I heard her scream and shout, 'Watch out!' But I was already in the middle of the crosswalk," said Gakam.

"When I quickly turned around, I saw her body hurled very high into the air. She tossed over and over until all of her clothes came off her body before she hit the ground. It was awful," said Gakam, in a soft voice.

According to Gakam, the car sped so fast that he never saw it. However, another witness in a car passing by told Gakam it was a white Lincoln Continental.

Kouayip was a businesswoman from the Bamileke tribe back in Cameroon. She traveled to Paris to buy designer accessories and perfumes before she moved to the U.S. three years ago. Kouayip recently received her official asylum papers to remain in the U.S. to escape the troubles in her country. Those who knew her said all she did was work tirelessly for her four children to come here for a better life.

Prince George's County police were at the crime scene for several hours reenacting the accident, taking pictures

and obtaining information from those who may have heard or seen something.

Onlookers found it very upsetting that Kouayip's dead body remained in a pool of blood from 3 a.m. to 9 a.m. Watching as two police officers moved Kouayip's body to the sidewalk, the crowd of immigrants from several countries including the Cameroon, Liberia, Ethiopia and Nigeria were concerned about what happens after the police leave the scene.

"While all of this looks impressive, our biggest fear is that the authorities will do nothing to solve the murder because Benedicte is an African woman who lives in the District. We work hard and pay taxes too. We want a thorough investigation," said Charles Waum from Liberia. His wife, Antoinette, speechless by the ordeal, worked with Kouayip at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Washington. She kept looking at Kouayip's body shaking her head in disbelief with tears streaming down her face.

"I miss you, Benedicte," screamed Madeline Njotoh, another co-worker at the Hyatt. As the news spread, more co-workers fled to the scene.

"She was a hard, hard worker and a very good person. She worked two jobs to bring her children here from Cameroon. Her whole life was her children," said Njotoh. "She would stop work at the Hyatt and go to another job. She just kept working and working. Benedicte was such a good person. Please help us find out who did this." Emmanuel Bobga Ayaba, owner of the Roger Miller Restaurant in Silver Spring, Md., where Kouayip worked as a chef, closed the business on Sunday to show respect to a trusted employee.

Ironically, Kouayip's husband was killed in a car accident some 16 years ago in Cameroon.

Anyone with information about this case is asked to call 911 if they recognize the vehicle and it is occupied, or 301-333-4000 if it has been spotted with no occupants.

Sidebar

Onlookers found it very upsetting that Kouayip's dead body remained in a pool of blood from 3 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Sidebar

Madeline Ngotoh (right) sheds tears for her friend and coworker, Benedicte Kouayip, who was killed by a speeding car on New Hampshire Avenue near East-West Highway in Prince George's County, Md. According to friends, Kouayip, a native from Cameroon, came to the U.S. three years ago working two jobs to take care of her children in her country.

Sidebar

Benedicte Kouayip, a 53-year old native of Cameroon, was the eighth pedestrian traffic fatality in Prince George's County, Md. Witness accounts said a white Lincoln Continental hit the victim and never stopped.

AuthorAffiliation

By Valencia Mohammed
AFRO Staff Writer

DETAILS

Subject:	Fatalities; Hit &run accidents
Location:	Prince Georges County Maryland
People:	Kouayip, Benedicte

Ethnicity:	African American, Caribbean, African
Publication title:	Afro - American Red Star; Washington, D.C.
Volume:	114
Issue:	52
Pages:	A.1
Number of pages:	2
Publication year:	2006
Publication date:	Aug 12-Aug 18, 2006
Publisher:	Afro - American Company of Baltimore City
Place of publication:	Washington, D.C.
Country of publication:	United States, Washington, D.C.
Publication subject:	African American/Caribbean/African, Ethnic Interests
Source type:	Newspapers
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	News
ProQuest document ID:	369721563
Document URL:	http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/docview/369721563?accountid=11311
Copyright:	Copyright Afro American Newspapers Aug 12-Aug 18, 2006
Last updated:	2010-06-23
Database:	Ethnic NewsWatch

LINKS

[Linking Service, Find It @ Harvard](#), [Linking Service, Find It @ Harvard](#)

Database copyright © 2018 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved.

[Terms and Conditions](#) [Contact ProQuest](#)