

National News

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The morning skies over Kampala were dreary. Then suddenly the rains fell, lightly in many cultures, such sprinkling from the high heavens preceding a notable event, counts as blessings.

This was debatable yesterday. For on the city's eastern Mbuya Hill, grief floated and consumed hearts – of the mighty and ordinary citizens alike. Even strangers.

The knoll is the spiritual home in Uganda of the Comboni Missionaries, whose international charge is to minister to the abandoned and poorest of the world. Yesterday, the priests faced a congregation of different stripe: A-listers in Uganda government, politics, civil service and corporates assembled for a requiem mass for a teenager.

Present was the re-elected Deputy Speaker of Parliament Thomas Tayebwa, Head of Public Service Lucy Nakyobe, Bank of Uganda Governor Michael Atungi-Ego and permanent secretaries Vincent Bagire and Dr Ramathan Ggobi of Foreign Affairs and Finance ministries, respectively.

From the Justice, Law and Order (JLOS) filed in the Director of Public Prosecutions Lino Anguzu, Principal Judge Jane Abodo, the Deputy Inspector General of Police James Ochaya, his Prisons counterpart Samuel Akana, State House Investor Protection Unit Head Col Edith Nakalema, and Police's Deputy Director for Criminal Investigations Beata Chelimo.

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Timothy Muganzi Magambo – son of CID Director Tom Magambo Rwabudongo and Carol Nalwanga Magambo, a senior Ugandan diplomat – was only 18-years-old when his regular swimming adventure with peers turned tragic in New York on May 16, 2020.

"This particular time, I think he (Timothy) developed a problem in the middle of the water. And his friends started looking for him. [When they found him] after 7 minutes in the water, most of the organs were gone [and] the heart [beat] was faint," AIGP Magambo told mourners at Our Lady of Africa Church in Mbuya, relaying witnesses' accounts.

Frantic efforts to save the University of Albany first-year student, which was

In death, Magambo's son stirs love and kindness



The Director of CID Tom Magambo and his wife Carol Nalwanga Magambo lay a wreath on the casket of their son Timothy Muganzi Magambo during a requiem mass at Our Lady of Africa, Mbuya Catholic Church in Kampala yesterday. PHOTO / ABUBAKER LUBOWA



The casket containing the body of Timothy Muganzi Magambo is wheeled out of Our Lady of Africa, Mbuya Catholic Church in Kampala after the requiem mass. PHOTO / ABUBAKER LUBOWA

coordinated by Amb Adonia Ayebare, Uganda's permanent representative to the United Nations (UN), and relatives and volunteers, were futile despite his swift transfer to Stony Brook Hospital, where Timothy was pronounced dead.

"...there are simply no words strong enough to comfort you after facing such an unimaginable loss," Amb Ayebare wrote in a tribute. "Tom and Carol, take heart. It is not the number of years [that] we spend on this earth that matters, but the legacy we leave."

The main celebrant, Rev Fr Hector Busingye, picked on this message to frame his homily, reminding the faithful to be mindful that in whatever they do, they should remain enjoined to Jesus Christ in life as in death.

"All the good Timothy accomplished in this world is accompanying him as flowers. Not these types of [earthly] flowers, but as divine blessed flowers in the presence of the Lord," he said.

The congregation clapped, and the man-of-collar asked for more,

thunderous versions.

The mood was stoic, not a weepy meltdown that is naively expected when a young man of Timothy's electrifying character departs this life suddenly. Except, when the deceased cousin Maria Kemigisa choked repeatedly on her words, becoming inaudible towards the tail-end of her eulogy at church.

Timothy's journey of no return journey, which happened some 11,000 kilometres away in New York, had been preceded for the parents in Kampala with an eerie feeling.

That fateful Saturday found both father and mother in Kampala. Ms Carol Magambo is presently a member of UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budget Questions, an influential subsidiary body that scrutinises budget proposals and financial management on behalf of the General Assembly.

So, their two children – Timothy and Jonathan Magambo – lived with

her and studied in New York. She had flown to Uganda for an interview when tragedy struck in her work city, according to the family.

In Kampala, there had been a premonition, AIGP Magambo said, noting Carol became unsettled inexplicably.

She caught the next flight to New York in the vain hope of finding her first-born, whom she fondly called a "sunshine... kind and loving", alive. She did not. He was gone.

Family members, a legion of diplomats and Pelham community member, among them Timothy's current and former school-mates, without prompting, marshalled to prepare for a wake and funeral service which, to the pleasant surprise of the parents, drew record attendance at Huguenot Memorial Church.

It is in death that Mr and Ms Magambo discovered the values and impact their eldest son, whom they saw at home as an intelligent, enterprising young man and music lover, imbued amongst school mates and Pelham community members.

Bereaved.
I happened to have some task, which I was supposed to do. As I was doing it, my son had also gone. Now, what do you do? Do you tell your troops to cry and run away? As a commander, you become a great grandson of Rwabudongo," he said,"
– CID Director Tom Magambo

"I have been beyond devastated... I have been broken since I got the news, but my tears have been wiped by you who have surrounded us with love," she said.

It came to light at yesterday's requiem mass that the CID director,

who was leading investigations into a litany of allegations against former Parliament Speaker Anita Among, continued to work even after receiving news of the death of his son.

He and main celebrant Busingye said the stolid and warrior trait was inherited from Ireete Rwabudongo, a great grandfather of AIGP Magambo and one of three stellar commanders of then Bunyoro King Kabalega.

Maj Gen Kahinda Otafire, who is outgoing Internal Affairs minister, has been the political supervisor of Magambo, told the CID director to "relax, stop working". "Yes, you must have time to cry. Whatever happens, however strong you are, you need time to cry otherwise you will die of heart attack," he warned.

In a rejoinder, Magambo referenced a generational responsibility to protect the country and extricate it from some undisciplined conduct in politics in order to safeguard the gains of the President Museveni-led liberation war.

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Principal Judge Abodo, whose tenure as DPP was marked with close collaboration with CID for evidence-led investigation, described Magambo as a "twin", workaholic and a professional focused on every assignment.

PS Bagire said Timothy held a future of promise, describing loss of a child as the "most painful" experience for parent.

President Museveni's son-in-law and personal lawyer, Mr Edwin Karugire, said Timothy's death is the "worst experience" to the parents. "While we are there as [your] friends," said Mr Karugire, "you can only find solace in God."