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4 JUNGLE JUSTICE

A seven-year-old boy has been burnt to death in the Badagry area of Lagos State for allegedly attempting to steal garri from a trader’s shop. A certain young man was reportedly burnt to death by an aggrieved crowd for attempting to snatch a motorcycle from a victim in Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom state .Akinnifesi Olubunmi, was accused of being gay and was attacked on the 17th of February, 2016 when he was caught pants down with a politician in Ondo State. He was mobbed, beaten to stupor and ended in the hospital. He died the following day.

Over the years we have heard of similar and even more grievous cases of people taking justice into their own hands . To a person living in Nigeria these happenings have become a day to day occurrence and have even become more popular than court hearings and justice given by the judiciary. A large percentage of the people living in Nigeria will attest to this .This inhumane act is what is popularly known as jungle justice .

Jungle justice or mob justice is a form of public extrajudicial punishment , where an alleged criminal is humiliated, beaten or summarily executed by a crowd or vigilantes. This form of justice is popular in Sub-Saharan Africa, most notably Nigeria and Cameroon. This form of justice is given by angry civilians where the guilty or allegedly guilty are beaten, tortured and most of the times killed .People who feel the need to take justice in their hands and do the job of the judiciary resolve to using this form of justice.

Since the rise in its popularity there has been a division on the issue of whether it is an appropriate form of implementing justice. Some have gone against it while the majority and masses have stood for it. Personally the idea of jungle justice being the order of the day is beyond irritating and antagonizing. Even the name of the act shows it all. The jungle is a place of no order and cooperation . The animals when offended fight with each other or gang up against the offender and beat the offender often till death. This is their form of justice but they are not to be blamed, after all they are just animals. They do not have the capability to be as organised as higher beings so they do what they deem correct. However we human beings being higher beings with a higher intellect, feelings and conscience ought not to behave as animals. Subjecting ourselves to the tyranny of this unruly form of implementing justice is lowering ourselves to the standard and capabilities of animals which is very diminishing to our very being.

One major claim the administers of this form of justice use to justify their actions is that the judiciary is corrupt and actual justice will not be served if handed over to the police. Over the years the trust of the masses towards the administration of justice has dwindled due to some highly suspicious cases . It’s quite normal for people to decide to take matters into their own hands when they feel the people meant to over see the matter are incompetent of carrying out their duties efficiently but the painful truth is that although there might be some hiccups in the way the judiciary resolves issues they will always be more competent than the masses. The reason why is that this people are trained and know the Law while the masses will always act in the heat of the moment. There are different sentences and punishment for different offences while to the masses all offences lead to severe beating which almost always leads to death, burning of the victim and other gruesome punishments. A little orphan boy steals a loaf of bread and you burn him to death, a man rapes a girl and you cut off his genital organ, a woman steals a phone and you publicly shame her by removing her clothes , beating her and leaving her half dead if not already gone. You administer the same punishment for theft, rape and sometimes murder. Although to the masses this looks like an adequate form of justice but is it really necessary. Why do you see a thief who did not even steal anything from you but from another person you don’t even know and the first thing you think of is how to burn the person. It is so sad that the people of Nigeria have lost all their sense of community . A mother will cheer on a person who is beating a 13 years old boy who allegedly stole garri of 100 naira while her own will steal 1000 naira from her purse and she will laugh it off saying he is just a teenager. The child who was beaten to death was also a teenager who had no food, no home, no parents and was very hungry but to her the child is a thief who deserves death . A man will look at a girl put a tyre around her and burn her to crisp while he is receiving phone calls from his child’s boarding school about her recent theft. People rush to clean people eyes when what is in their own eyes is far worse than whatever is in the latter’s eyes. The most gruesome issue is that most of the times the offence the person is convicted for had not even been confirmed but the people go straight to administer their corrupt justice. Killing each other like animals who have no sense of community. If the police is informed and the convict is handed over the person will be tried and adequately charged and sentenced and even if the system is as corrupt as people say will killing a person make the country better.

Most of the times the judges in the administration of jungle justice do not even know the full story but just saw a crowd gathering and their curiosity sparked up . Picking up bits by bits they make a conclusion in the head and fully delve into action not even bothering if their theory is correct. Shouting upon shouting, cursing upon cursing , people acting like they don’t even know how to converse with each other all because of 100 naira worth of good. However what do you expect they are in the jungle taking up the roles of the animals.

The prisons are called correctional centres because they ought to correct a person and develop a better version of that person . They are called correctional centres because not all offences are death worthy and because not all offenders are threats to the society. Between a person who allegedly stole a mobile phone and a person who skinned a person alive because he or she allegedly stole a mobile phone who is more worthy of a death sentence. It is a good sight when a person looks at a thief and sees a person who can be reformed and developed into a better person and not a person who must be killed that very instant.

Nobody is perfect and we all make mistakes. Yes it is good for offenders to receive their just reward but is jungle justice actually just. Apart from it being unconstitutional it is also very inhuman , quite animalistic and very un emotional and uncompassionate. Simply put it is a wicked act . Yes people will raise counter claims but the fact remains that there is no justice in the jungle .