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**RAPE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE AFRICAN SOCIETY**

Rape as we all know is having carnal knowledge of a man or woman without his or her consent, or even with consent if forced, or if put under so much pressure, or if blackmailed into doing it. It has become rampant in our society this days and the cases keep on rising.

Sexual harassment has become rampant in the African society due to the misconceptions surrounding its occurrence. Using Nigeria as a case study, over 31.4 percent of girls admitted that their first sexual encounter had been either rape or some kind of sexual harassment. RAPE exists. It is not a concept formulated by the female minds to justify their weakness when overwhelmed sexually by the male gender. Rape is the act of forcing sexual intercourse upon another person without their consent or against their will.

The legal system of Nigeria makes it hard to convict suspected rapists and blames women then they are victim of sexual assault. Recently, a cry has been made by women in Nigeria with the hashtag #WeareTired. The name Uwa has been in the forefront of this movement as she was reportedly raped and killed in a church where she went to seek refuge. A 12-year-old girl was raped in Jigawa not too long ago and a 17-year-old girl was gang raped in Ekiti State to name a few.

It is unfortunate that the African society lays a solid foundation to which male rapists thrive on. From a young age, girls are taught not to dress in a revealing way which in itself is not a bad advice except when the clause,” unless you will attract the eyes of people to rape you” is added as though the female body is a monument to be stared and taken advantage of. Caution is thrown to the wind when it comes to the boy child as no one tells him to respect women and their privacy, honor their decisions and not take advantage of them because of their inability to protect themselves.

This has caused rape victims in the Nigerian society to be either vilified for their dressing, being at the wrong place at the wrong time or accused of making up their rape experience. It is to this effect that many rape cases against women, men and even children are never investigated because parents want to protect their wards from being stigmatized.

Instead of this, I would advise that parents be mindful of who they leave their children with and watch their neighbors closely. They should also train their male children the importance of consent and the damage that rape or any form of sexual harassment has in the victim for a long time.

Proper legal action should be taken in favor of rape victims as some of them are never the same after the experience. The prison sentence of 14 years by the Nigerian Constitution should be strictly adhered to regardless of who the offender is or his rank.

Finally, the word consent should be imprinted in all. We should learn how to explicitly state if we consent to any sexual activity to prevent misunderstandings that can lead to rape. We should learn to be our brother’s keeper and try to help rape victims get justice and avoid stigmatizing them. Rather we should talk and encourage them and make them feel welcomed.