Ending rape culture via urban pop culture

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Recently a well-known urban music label owner revealed in a radio interview that he has reservations on signing any female artists to his label as he would likely be inclined to engage in sexual activities with her. He went further to state that because of the amount of spending on business-related expenses for his hypothetical female artist and despite her talents, he would have to engage in sexual activities from time to time. Way to go businessman! This was shortly met with massive criticism and later followed up by an apology issued by said rapper/record label owner. Why wait for consequences before righting an inherent wrong? Shrugs…  
  
With the amount of urban pop culture curated and consumed by Nigerian youths, one wonders if these misogynistic thought patterns permeate through the song lyrics, music videos and other forms of imagery into our society. The rape culture is sexist and misogynistic and it thrives mostly in male dominated fields where women seldom get a voice and where unwanted sexual advances are overlooked. Hip hop culture, which heavily influences society especially with today’s youth who become tomorrow’s adults, can be used as a vehicle to shine light on the ills of society or further promote it – one of those ills being rape culture.  
  
In a country with a population of over 180 million citizens, having few convictions is a safety risk to Nigeria’s could-be victims. In rape culture, excuses are drawn up to “justify” sexual assault and unwanted advances, but no amount of revealing dressing or past sexual behaviour ever warrants or permits a man to help himself to sexually violating a woman. Comments like, “She asked for it [by wearing that short skirt]” ring a bell.  
  
  
  
In Africa, 5 to 15% of females report a forced or coerced sexual experience. Recently in Nigeria, a Taxify driver sexually violated a passenger to see if he could arouse her after learning of her sexual orientation. He was reported and later arrested and his contract with the taxi app service company was terminated, but how many of these sorts of cases go unreported and lead to other more severe and damaging assaults like rape or even murder.  
  
In New York city, a 15-year-old girl was raped, not once but twice in the same evening. When she flagged down a vehicle to assist her after she escaped from the first rape attack, the driver, who presented himself as someone ready to help her, became her second rapist for the night. I think of this young woman and the battle in her mind, and all she will have to overcome just to face this world in her future; the amount of trauma that her young mind will have to work through in order to live a normal life after this incident. The veil of assumed safety and common decency that she believed the world possessed, shattered all at once and in such a tragic way. Who knows if it would ever be repaired again.  
  
  
  
Back here in Nigeria, a young lady named Obiamaka Orakwue, 14, was raped to death on July 10, and left in a pool of her own blood in her family house. She was targeted by a group of boys whose advances she had refused while walking home on the road one day; they sought revenge. They waited for her to be left home alone after her mother left the house, before breaking into the home and attacking her. As of now, weeks later, no arrests have been made and no suspects brought in for questioning. Women in Lagos protested to demand justice. But in other places around the world public dissent can be viewed as a misalignment with rule and order which can be punishable by death, like in Afghanistan. Here, a young man was found guilty of rape of a young teenager and the traditional council ruled that the punishment for the crime would be for the rapist’s elder sister to be officially raped by numerous men. This is absolutely deplorable and unacceptable.  
  
Sexual violence negatively affects a victim’s physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health, and may increase vulnerability to HIV. In Lagos, 429 of 652 women with HIV are sexual violence victims. A 2013 analysis by the World Health Organization reported that, “women who had been physically or sexually abused were 1.5 times more likely to have a sexually transmitted infection.” Sexual violence can lead to unintended pregnancies, induced abortions, gynaecological problems, and other sexually transmitted infections. Sexual violence has serious short and long-term physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health problems for survivors and for their children, and leads to high social and economic costs.  
  
Violence against women can have fatal results like homicide or suicide. These forms of violence can lead to depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep difficulties, eating disorders, emotional distress and suicide attempts. Because of the socio-cultural subordination of women, sexual violence will and does shatter families, destroy communities through stigma, shame, displacement and rejection. Social leaders must be conscious and deliberate not to perpetuate rape culture but rather enforce equality measures and anti-sexual harassment language, actions and environments in workplace, via mediums and society.