Menace of rape

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Rape is a barbaric/stone age behavioural trait that continues to rule our present world, despite the numerous sophisticated technological achievements of modern humanity. It is a menace that is neither Eastern nor Western in terms of ontology among other things. This age-old problem, must be confronted with considerable energies in order to engender healthy humanity at all costs.  
  
Rape is a brutal, ugly form of violation of the fundamental human rights of people especially the female gender. This may be vaginal, oral or anal penetration or a combination of all of them, involving the use of physical force or other unlawful methods. Therefore, rape is a devastating blow to the victim who sometimes becomes suicidal from depression.  
  
South Africa with about 500,000 rape cases annually, has the highest rate in the world. This amounts to approximately 132.4 incidents per 100,000 people. United Kingdom has an average of 85,000 rape cases per year. In 2016, Lagos State had about 589 reported cases of rape and child abuse. In 2014, the United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) reported that about 120 million females (mostly young girls) were raped across the globe.  
  
This figure was just the minimum, understandably because most cases were never reported even in the developed nations like America and UK. However, the situation is much worse in Nigeria, where rape is generally considered to be a taboo. Rape victims are also often blamed for indecent modes of dressing, keeping late nights or consumption of excess alcohol. Such a scenario further devalues the victim. This is double tragedy!  
  
Even those victims who are courageous enough to report have a lot of challenges to grapple with. Thus, for example, unlike in the US where there are several Rape Crisis Centres and improved Criminal Justice System to protect or defend the rights of victims, Nigeria has very limited facilities and/or structures to confront rape. Most of the hospitals in the country (Nigeria) have no rape kits that could aid victims during investigation and prosecution processes. Indeed, until recently, the section of the country’s constitution dealing with rape cases was located in the criminal code. Consequently, cases had to be tried within two months. Cases not concluded within this short period were considered ineligible for further hearing.  
  
By this token, rapists often went away unpunished. Today, the situation has improved even though, Nigeria is still light years away. The FCT Abuja operates under the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act. This embraces gender neutrality. That is to say, that rape is not gender-bound. For example, Wanda Ebe, a 36-year old lady told some BBC reporters some time ago, that she was sexually abused at the age of six years by her nanny. The nanny forced her to repeatedly perform oral sex on her. Wanda was also raped by a medical doctor when she was 21 years of age.  
  
Quite frankly, the Nigerian government has not been doing enough to closely monitor the activities of our law enforcement agents. According to reports from Amnesty International, a lot of police officers use their privileged positions to scuttle justice. These officers usually take rape victims to private hospitals for tests at huge costs to be paid by the latter. Government hospitals should be doing that. Police extortion coupled with a gross lack of trust in the judicial system are some of the reasons why rape cases are astronomically high.  
  
A rapist who is influential or related to some influential persons may never be brought to justice in Nigeria. It is thumbs up for some of Civil Society Groups who are now speaking for the voiceless. The shoddy handling of rape cases in Nigeria, is at variance with what obtains in the developed world. In Nigeria, the law is a respecter of persons and this makes a monumental mockery of the principles of natural justice.  
  
Not unexpectedly, rape cases are now reaching epidemic proportions. The minors and septuagenarians are not spared. It seems that demons from all over West Africa have relocated to Nigeria while our ‘wonderful’ leaders look the other way. Our time-honoured values are disappearing at an alarming rate.  
  
Recent cases of rape include that of a 22-year old Uwavera Omozuwa. Uwavera was raped and murdered by a gang of criminals within the premises of the church she used to attend. According to newspaper reports, Uwa, an undergraduate was there to study before she was wasted by these rapists. A suspect was said to have been arrested. But are we sure that both investigations and prosecution would be thorough and fair? We all know that in today’s Nigeria, three persons can be standing up in twos.  
  
What a country! In Jigawa State, a minor (12-year old girl) was raped about two months or thereabouts ago. Abdullateef allegedly raped a 10-year old girl in Okinni, Osun State on May 28. Barakat Bello was allegedly gang-raped and murdered recently in Ibadan, Oyo State. The same thing applies to Ekiti State, where a 17-year old girl was raped recently.  
  
Indeed, on June 9, a tailor called Taiwo Odetunde in Ado-Ekiti allegedly raped two under-aged girls in his house. Also in May, one Musa Anifowose allegedly defiled an eight-year old girl in Ijebu- Ode. Police detectives are still investigating an alleged rape case involving Dapo Oyebanjo (a musician), popularly known as D’banj and a young woman, Seyitan Babatayo in Lagos.  
  
Investigations started in 2018. The list is getting longer daily. Again, some fathers are now raping or defiling their daughters. For example, a 43-year old father, Ikechukwu Ekenta was arrested a few weeks ago for allegedly defiling his four-year old daughter in Onitsha. Satan is always to blame. Although a few Nigerians see the situation as a ritualistic act, this, in my own opinion, may be a manifestation of psychological and psychiatric disorders. Unfortunately, our political class lacks the will power to address the issue with all the seriousness it deserves.  
  
There is need for the government to declare a state of emergency following this upsurge of rape cases. Leadership embedded in the reciprocal centrality/importance of “otherness”, is the defining commonality of all civilised societies. Unfortunately, this high level of patriotism and integrity needed to drive justice, peace and progress are almost completely absent in today’s Nigeria. Rape Crisis Centres have to be established in different parts of the country. Relevant governmental agencies have to craft appropriate models and strategies to combat the menace of rape in Nigeria. In this respect, public enlightenment campaigns are sacrosanct.  
  
Victims of rape need moral and/or financial support, so that they can get out of the trauma. Simple methods of self-defence are also good for Nigerians especially the females. The Nigerian judicial system and police authorities need to work harder to improve upon their image. The judiciary is the bedrock of robust democracy. Consequently, it is most desirable for its members to take a courageous first step in a new direction of integrity, honour and truth.  
  
Nigerians are appealing to them to work for values that last forever instead of joining the gluttonous political class to rock the boat.