Our rape stories –Daramola, Agu, Ibru

Date: 2020-06-13

Source: https://punchng.com/our-rape-stories-daramola-agu-ibru/

Though the scourge of rape has been in the society for some time but social media seems to have given many a voice and stories that would have otherwise gone unheard are now getting public attention. In the past few weeks, the media has been replete with pathetic stories of rape victims who had horrifying experiences. Alas, the entertainment industry has also not been spared as some female celebs had also been victims. TOLUWALOPE KAREEM speaks with some of the rape victims on what can be done to effectively stop the menace  
  
Some people in high place perpetrate rape ―Foluke Daramola  
  
What do you think can be done to effectively tackle the scourge of rape in Nigeria?  
  
Firstly, I thank The PUNCH Newspapers because I had my first interview on rape with the newspaper. When I did that, people were wondering what happened to me. Though it didn’t turn into a big thing then, it has now. It is clear that Africans need to have a reorientation. In the Nigerian context, all animals are equal but some are superior to the others. There are some people perpetrating this act in high places and they feel they are untouchable; that is why issues of rape are handled with levity.  
  
Celebrities are role models to people and we need to practise what we preach. If we don’t do that, there would be no true change.  
  
As a rape victim, how do you feel when you hear about recurring cases of rape?  
  
I’m a rape victor. I had a fight with rape and won. I don’t consider myself to be a rape victim. Whenever I hear of rape cases, I have an understanding of what that person would have gone through. At that point, the person needs counselling for things to heal inside her. Because of stigma and public castigation, a lot of people who were raped chose to keep quiet about it and the longer a rape incident, the harder to prove.  
  
Rape is a sensitive issue. Whenever anyone says they have been raped, the world should not look at that person with disdain, because it takes a lot to talk about it in the first place. If she doesn’t get the right encouragement, she would crawl back into her shell and remain in depression. And that is why many rape victims commit suicide.  
  
What gave you the courage to speak out when you did?  
  
The incident happened when I was 17 years. I went through my university days and first marriage living with it. My first marriage was affected by my rigidity. It was after my first marriage that I met a friend and partner who told me that I needed to talk about it.  
  
I can’t be stigmatised ―Elvina Ibru  
  
How do you feel about the spate of rape in recent times?  
  
It makes me sad. Rape isn’t something that would go away. There would always be rapists (in society). However, we can raise awareness and make a lot of noise to scare rapists. We should also mete out strict punishment to those who rape. It is because they have been getting away with it that we keep having more cases. Whenever I hear of any story, I feel sad and it makes me remember my experience. I feel even bluer that it is a stigma because people who have experienced it usually feel ashamed and don’t talk about it. Many of them feel they have done something wrong and that is not true.  
  
We need to be more empathic towards rape victims and realise that it was not their fault that they were raped. That would give people the confidence to speak out more.  
  
Have you ever faced stigma based on your experience?  
  
No one can stigmatise me. And, that’s what we need to tell women. Once you know that it was not your fault, nobody can stigmatise you. If anyone tries to do that, you should put them in their place.  
  
We often talk about female rape survivors, forgetting that males also get raped. But we don’t pay attention to that. A lot of men were molested when they were kids, either by their maids, teachers, babysitters or other people. Because of how society has conditioned men that they are not supposed to be weak and they are supposed to enjoy sex, they don’t see their experiences as acts of molestation.  
  
Parents need to start talking to their children about what is right and wrong and the inappropriate places where they shouldn’t be touched. Little boys are being abused everyday and no one is talking about it.  
  
How armed robbers raped me –Padita Agu  
  
Actress, Padita Agu, also spoke about how she was raped when she was merely 15 years old. Speaking on her YouTube channel, the actress said, “I was raped at 15. We were attacked by armed robbers in the house and I got raped. That was my first experience and it was horrible. I had no therapy. Nobody talked to me or talked me through it. I just lived with it and dealt with it myself. I didn’t know how to deal with. I just carried on with life from that point. My sex life was messed up until I got married. Before I got married, I told my would-be husband the challenge I had. He said there was no problem and he would walk me through it.”  
  
Agu went on to reveal how she overcame her aversion for sex.  
  
“When we got married, my then-husband got me a book to read and figure myself out. It was a big issue for me. I got frustrated at some point because he was always not happy about it, too. I was depressed for most times because of this. I didn’t know what to do. I tried practising what I read in the book I was given but it didn’t work.  
  
“One day, out of frustration, I reached out to a woman who sold food items in the area where I lived then and told her my frustrations with sex. She told me she was once like that and the simple things she did (to overcome it). She told me that whenever she had sex, she would moan and give her husband the impression that she was enjoying it. At the beginning, she was acting but after a while, she realised she was beginning to feel the things she was acting.  
  
“I learnt from her and began to practise what she said. At first, it didn’t look like it was working but I kept on at it and the story is different today,” she said.  
  
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