Rape is a violent crime, spit it out!

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According to a survey conducted by the National Population Commission with support from UNICEF and the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, “millions of children suffer violence every year in Nigeria – approximately six out of every 10 children experience some form of physical, emotional or sexual violence before the age of 18.” Also, it claims: “One in two children experience physical violence; one in four girls and one in 10 boys experience sexual violence; and one in six girls and one in five boys experience emotional violence.” The aforesaid are clear indications that sexual violence is one of the many incubi that are unsettling our society today.  
  
From all indications, the world is at lowest ebb as a result of the rampaging COVID-19 that stares us in the face.  
  
Sadly, while we are at best a nation at war with itself, trying to wrestle and win the incubus of COVID-19 that is pitilessly sucking our blood (in terms of deaths) and funds (palliatives and funds set aside to battle the virus) in massive numbers, terrorists, bandits, criminals and all sorts of elements are on the offensive, killing, maiming, kidnapping, raping and robbing people with reckless abandon. In the same style, the security forces kill, harass, intimidate and sexually abuse those they are supposed to protect.  
  
On May 27, 2020, the unconscious body of Vera Uwaila Omozuwa, a 22-year-old microbiology student, who had settled for the reader-friendly quietness of her empty church in Benin City, as a place to study, was found in the pool of her blood. As it appeared, in the course of studying, alone, in the church, she was battered, raped and died from the varying degrees of injury and pains she got from the incident.  
  
On the charge of rape, Justice Adedayo Akintoye of a Lagos High Court sitting in Igbosere, on June 1, 2020, sentenced an ex-Exxon Mobil engineer, James Onuoha, to 15 years imprisonment for raping his tenant’s 14-year-old niece. In Nigeria, cases of rape are fast assuming a threatening dimension that requires urgent an intervention.  
  
Laurie Halse Anderson, an American writer, known for children’s and young adult novels, once emotionally said: “I just want to sleep. A coma would be nice. Or amnesia. Anything, just to get rid of this, these thoughts, whispers in my mind. Did he rape my head, too?” This is one of the many belittling and traumatic thoughts that fill up the mind of a rape victim. From depression to morbid thoughts, death; they look for every means to excuse themselves from that physical and psychological torture.  
  
Rape, like other forms of violence against women, is an infringement on women’s rights, privacy, self-preservation and dignity. It is both the violation of a female’s moral and constitutional rights. Violators should be sanctioned!  
  
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Sadly, most females conceal their cases from their parents and the appropriate authorities that should know about it as a result of possible societal shaming that, sometimes, comes with being a rape victim. A meta-analysis of 28 studies of women and girls aged 14 and older who had had non-consensual sex obtained through force, threat or incapacitation found that “60% of these victims didn’t acknowledge” that they had been raped for fear of stigmatisation. We all need to shun the shaming of victims with such watery comments as, “Why did she go there? or Why did she wear a skimpy dress?” Rather, we should lend our voices to the campaign against rape. Imagine if the victim were your sister or wife! Females, rape is not a dirty secret, spit it out.  
  
The solution lies in the hands of the parents and government. The truth is that without moral re-armament, every developmental drive will ultimately result in grand illusion. The home is the first agent of socialisation. Perhaps, rape is a social menace; parents should retrace their steps and adequately train their children, especially the males. Certainly, parents who do not train their male children may have them defile their female children. How would a nation of morally depraved and socially destructive men and women ever attain the pinnacle of glory?  
  
On the part of government, strict punishment should be landed on rapists. Of course, the Nigerian Criminal Code recommends life imprisonment for the perpetrators of rape and 14 years for attempted rape. However, there have been instances where we learnt families pacify the affected family with cash amongst other things. Rape should be treated as: “Government vs Rapist” and not Individual or Family vs Rapist in order to avoid settlements.  
  
Until rapists are, seen, severely dealt with, the menace of rape may not subside.  
  
Even apes do not rape. A man who rapes is lesser than an ape. It is high time we all introspected how we destroy our society including selfish leaders who refuse to take the issue of sexual violence seriously and wayward parents who refuse to train up their children the right way to go and the right things to do. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem.  
  
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