

**PAINTING AS A TOOL FOR CREATING AWARENESS AND CURBING THE
EVIL OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SOCIETY**

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Abstract

Human trafficking has become a problem in Nigeria with little or no solution to the ugly situation. Over the years, different bodies and institutions in the world including the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in Nigeria have used diverse media to expose the inherent evil involved in human trafficking as well as proffering the possible ways to avert or curb the crime of human trafficking. Also, in a bid to fight crime, some institutional mechanisms were put in place to address the menace of trafficking. The crime of human trafficking includes child soldiers, sex slaves, forced labour, illegal adoption and illegal organ transfer. The different means used have not yielded any satisfactory results in combating this great evil. As a result, this study aims to use painting to create awareness about this evil act by showcasing the evil activities of the perpetrators of the crime, the agonies of the victims and the effect of this dreaded act both on the individual and the society. "A painting says to thousand words at a time". The artist achieves the project by depicting the different sides of human trafficking, their activities, trauma and dangers the victims are exposed to.

Keywords: Painting, human trafficking, awareness, society

Introduction

A lot of people fail to understand the underlying meaning of contemporary painting. This is because they tend to see the painting through its form (the way it looks) rather than the content. They view painting as a mere tool for entertainment and decoration. Their attitude blinds them from seeing the painting from its real nature". Painting can be defined as a means of communication through pictorial form which involves direct appeal to the public.

The origin of painting could be traced to primitive cave paintings and has continued to this modern time. It serves as a means of social communication and commentaries. It also tells stories about the history of a people and forecasts the future. Painters are commissioned to execute paintings for moral values, social functions and entertainment purposes. Gentlemen {2002:162} says that "paintings usually are full of colours which is a potent visual stimulus. Painting is an exercise done for its own sake which can be its theme or another purpose than to give visual pleasure". Painting like every other human activity has its roots in the basic needs of man's nature and it provides one of how these needs derive satisfaction. Hence, Carpenter and Graham (1971-87) say that "painting deals with human actions" When the elements of the painting are merged, they form expressive decorative motive that represents real or supernatural

phenomena, interpret a narrative theme or create an entirely visual relationship with the society.

Most painters throughout history have used colour and line to explore the outer world of natural things and events and the inner private world of feelings. In the same vein, painting can interact with society and operate to strengthen the hold of established values by filling man's imagination with forms, colours and symbols suggestive of these values. This is succinctly put by Uzoagba {2003:3} who insists that man responds to colour, surface and mass of things. Painting in any form is an everyday experience that can be found in every sphere of life. Painters have created paintings that give a very huge form of feeling about the unknown and some of these paintings have served as an unofficial visual record that could be used to fight a social ill like human trafficking in our society. One example of such painting is Pablo Picasso's painting entitled "Guernica", which he used to condemn the bombing of the city of Guernica in Spain, during World War II. The relevance of a painter can be seen more in the light of the efficiency of his work in addressing the social maladies besieging his society.

A society is a particular community of people who share the same law which arises among them. In Shepherd (1981:87), it was deduced that "society is the largest and most nearly self-sufficient group in existence." "Every society both ancient and modern has ideas which its members regard to be desirable. These principles and ideas which the members of society hold that relate to their mode of life are referred to as values". According to Hess Markson and Stein (1988:67) "values are central beliefs about what is important that form a standard in which the norms can be the judge". Against this desirable ideas and beliefs are the undesirable and hostile ideas carried out by individuals and groups to undo others. This is known as social ill. The word "ill" is something that is not in good condition, something that is harmful, bad, and unfavourable. Human trafficking is one of the social ill that pose great menace to the social, economic and corporate existence of any society, human trafficking in particular is a crime against humanity. In line with this situation, painting becomes a veritable tool for exposing the evil of human trafficking thereby enhancing the eradication of such nefarious activities of human trafficking.

Purpose of study

The aim of this study will be to x-ray, through the medium of painting, the dangers caused to both the individual and society by the act of human trafficking to enable the public to guard themselves against falling victim to this dreaded evil act. Thus, this research hopes to bring lasting enlightenment on the need to curb and stop human trafficking.

Literature review

Painting is the act of applying colour or assembling a colourful medium of any kind to depict or express one's inner feelings, for conveying a message rather than feeling it through reading alone. According to Ogumour (1993:27), "painting is the techniques of applying paint on a flat surface such as paper, canvas, hardboard and wall". Painting has gone far more than the application of colour on flat surfaces. Painting can involve the assembly of colourful media to

depict one's mind, painting can be seen as the act of using colour to express the inner mind in a visual form. it can also be the arrangement of abstract patterns that see reality as the inner truth and oppose mere appearance. Painting is used to create images and forms that bear meanings, to create order, and structure and to explore aesthetic possibilities which are part of human nature. Paintings are being produced by painters, just as medicine by pharmacists.

Furthermore, among many paintings that were produced by human beings, the most important may be the societies. As the painter consciously uses abstract colour rhythms to express an idea through the arrangement of lines, shapes, colours and textures, he/ she makes efforts to convey to the audience as clearly as possible, her thoughts and feelings about the subject matter. Ozment and Turner (2001:48) in their book entitled "Western Heritage", observe that "paintings often are intended to convey more than what first meet the eyes" Their observation is true because when one is observing a work of painting, there is a tendency to interpret more than what one observes as a visual image into words.

Moreover, a society can enjoy painting without extensive knowledge of history, literature or the Bible. This view is shared by Carpenter and Graham (1971:5) in "Art and Ideal". An approach to art appreciation is that "the ideas expressed by a painter in any age are not only personal; they are the ideas of the society in which he lives and works". In their opinion, a painter tries to summarize in his painting, some activities that are taking place within the society, this is so because painting deals with expressing one's mind concerning what is happening in the environment. However, the crime of human trafficking affects virtually every country in the world and has been associated with transnational criminal organizations, small criminal networks and local gangs, and violation of labour and immigration laws. Historically, trafficking has been defined most often as the trade of women and children for prostitution or other immoral purposes. More recently, trafficking has been defined to include other types of forced labour, fraud or coercion beyond sexual exploitation. It has been further clarified that victims do not need to be transported across international or other boundaries for trafficking to exit.

Types of sex trafficking include prostitution, pornography, stripping live sex shows, mail-order brides, military prostitution and sex tourism. In the same view, labour trafficking is defined as the recruitment, and harbouring of a person for labour services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for subjection to involuntary servitude, debt bondage or slavery. Labour trafficking situations may arise in domestic servitude, restaurant work, janitorial work, migrant agricultural work, construction and peddling.

However, Congress's definition of human trafficking is wide enough to contain most of the areas of human endeavour but can be said to be limited in the sense that it views sex trafficking as one that takes place between a person under the age of 18 years. This cannot be said to be entirely correct since once a person whether under the age of 18 years or above, is forced or coerced into having an unwanted sexual affair with another for the benefit of the assumed master or principal is human trafficking, more especially where the victim does not have the opportunity to protest due to the circumstance he or she is subjected to. On the other hand, congress definition of labour trafficking is all-encompassing, in that once any person of any age is exploited to do any act or labour against his wish or if such consent is obtained by fraud, or force, particularly where such a person has none or limited opportunity to protest, amounts to labour trafficking.

The data and methodology for estimating the prevalence of human trafficking globally and nationally are not well developed and therefore estimates have varied and changed significantly over time. The US state department estimates that approximately 600,000 to 800,000 victims are trafficked annually across international borders worldwide and approximately half of these victims are younger than the age of 18 years. (US Department of State 2005, 2006, 2007).

Additionally, the US State Department has estimated that 80 per cent of internationally trafficked victims are female and 70 per cent are trafficked into the sex industry. (US Department of State, 2005) in comparison, the International Labour Organization has estimated that “At any given time, 12.3 million people are in forced labour, bonded labour, forced child labour, sexual servitude (International Labour Organization 2005). As one can see from the estimate or data on both the US Department of State as well as the International Labour Organization there is a great disparity in the estimate of human trafficking annually. However one of the greatest problems or barriers in getting the accurate date of human being, trafficking annually all over the world is the lack of a stable working institution mechanism all over the world.

There is also no accurate method of collecting and recording data on the subject matter. Therefore, the world agencies responsible for human trafficking should set up adequate data collection networks all over the countries of the world. Also, they should base with the institutions or agencies that deal with trafficking in respective countries of the world so that there will be uniform modes of collection and recording of data in the subject matter.

Methodology

The study employs qualitative and descriptive research methods.

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data collection was gathered through interviews and other oral sources. The secondary source was textbooks, magazines and encyclopedias of arts, the internet and newspaper with issues that will be relevant to the study.

Production Processes: Material and Methods

- A. **Priming of canvas:** Priming of canvas involves mixing top-bond and emulsion paint in equal quantities and applying it evenly on the surface of a well-stretched canvas.
- B. **Concept Development:** This stage is ideation whereby concepts that would best suit the works were thought about and pencilled down. Thumbnail sketches of the topics were delineated. At this stage, many sketches were done and the ones that best suited the topic were picked for further production
However, some additions and alterations were made at this point. Then after, the thumbnail sketches were transferred to already primed canvas or any medium of choice before starting with the painting.
- C. **Colour application:** The researcher’s palette is based on the group of colours that she decided to work with. She tactfully chooses her colours and mixes them in their different

tonal graduation, she uses linseed oil to mix her oil colours and water for her acrylic, poster and watercolour which also she did on a palette board with a palette knife. The researcher applies her colour in stages, allowing one coat to dry a bit before applying another one. This she does using a clean brush to avoid colour muddling and to achieve a bright colour appearance. A soft flat brush was used for colour application.

- D. **Oil colour:** Oil colours are colours that are mixed with oil in the course of production. They are mixed with seed oil before being them for painting. In oil colour, painting, the painter/researcher prepares her canvas and transfers her sketch to her already primed canvas and then commences with the main painting. The main painting has some stages too; first, she brings out her forms using different tones of colour, making sure that she covers the canvas with colour in the first coating. The painter finds out that painting in large sweeps of colour prevents the final painting from becoming too fussy. She uses a brush to apply colour. She keeps on detailing the painting bringing out the forms, light and shade, at different stages until she is satisfied with the composition. The painter uses the right quality oil paint along with a good canvas. This combination gives her a wide range of paint qualities from opaque over painting to transparent glazing painting.
- E. **Acrylic colour:** Acrylic is a water-based colour. In acrylic painting, the same procedure used in oil painting is also followed in the preparation of canvas for acrylic painting. In application, acrylic is applied faster than the oil colour. This is because of its fast-drying nature. Acrylic can be mixed with water before usage but when it is dried, it takes the form of oil colour with a work glossy effect and purity of colour. The painter takes care in applying acrylic colour because of its transparency. The researcher observed that when a light colour is applied on top of a darker one, the darker colour underneath will keep on showing. This shows that lighter colours are transparent. Other steps followed the same as in oil colour.
- F. **Water colour /poster colour:** Watercolour paper for watercolour painting and cardboard paper for poster colour painting. Both paintings follow the same process but with a little difference in poster colour painting which is usually thicker in application than the water colour. The painter uses soft sable brushes for both paintings. With a light pencil, the painter sketched the drawings intended to be produced. Then mixed the colours in their different values on her palette and commenced the painting. After the initial wash, the researcher detailed the figure with darker tones to bring out the contrast. The artist continued with the detailing until she was satisfied with every bit of the painting.

Discussion/work analysis

A war against human trafficking is a protest against disorderliness that encourages hostility to occur in our society. Painting has been used as an instrument for transforming some of the wrong or bad societal forms. Although some other media have been used to condemn some of the ill behaviours of some members of society, the painting appears to be the most effective because it can be used to communicate both literate and illiterate members of society. Some writers have argued that the objective of a painter when he thinks in forms and colour is not to re-constitute anecdotal facts but to

constitute a pictorial fact (Kagan, Ozment and Turner 2001:868) the use of pictorial painting to communicate issues to the public is very educating because it provides a better understanding of that issues.

The following are in-depth analyses of the paintings used for this project. The effectiveness of the painting as a medium for societal change is brought to the fore. The analysis is divided into two broad categories to facilitate the understanding of the reader. These two categories are: Issues of human trafficking and

ISSUES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

1 -Bondage

This work is a monochromatic and abstract painting that depicts female figures enclosed in a spherical form. At the opposite sides of the form are two huge figures carrying the circular form with the females positioned in the middle. The female figures symbolize the Nigerian girls who are being trafficked both locally and internationally for prostitution. These young girls are quartered in various brothels and massage parlours, bars and the highways where they sell their bodies to men for money. The two prominent figures carrying the circular shape symbolize human traffickers who recruit these girls from Nigeria. Some of the girls while travelling are deceived by these traffickers who pretend to be sending them abroad for studies. The traffickers connive with corrupt immigration officers who issue them with passports and visas. On getting to their destination all their documents are seized and their eyes are now opened to the reality of their migration. They are there, just to make money for their masters (the traffickers) through prostitution.

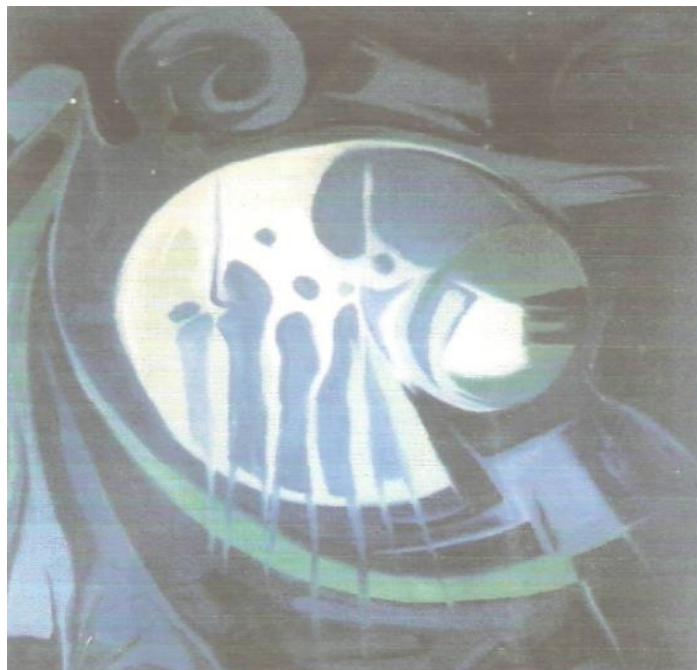


Plate 1: *Bondage*, Okonkwo Chinonyelum, oil on canvas, 60cm x 90cm, 2011, Source: The Artist

The artist's choice of blue in the monochromatic painting is symbolic. It depicts sadness. Contextually, the message speaks against sexism in our society. The figure enclosed in a spherical form signifies sex bondage. The light inside the sphere around them comments on the good life they left behind before they were deceived.

2 – Dreamer

The Dreamer is an abstract painting that is demarcated into three segments. The first segment depicts a female figure in a hopeless mood, the second segment depicts a nude female figure and two other figures in the third segment. A shadow cast at the opposite sides of the central figure contrasts the two figures in a pathetic mood. The centralized lady depicted in bright colours along with other bright portions of the painting symbolizes the illusive castle which she built in the air. The other dark portion of the work symbolizes her failed dream, while, the upward-looking figure in blue colour portrays her initial ambition before embarking on the journey. At another corner is a seated nude figure of a lady in a greenish hue surrounded by two colours -red and dark blue hues. These colours portray her regret after knowing her real fate and that there is no going back. The shadowy upper part of the painting symbolizes her mindset; sorrow, pain and full of agony. She is now regretting having lived the life she is now into. She has realized that she was deceived by the traffickers.

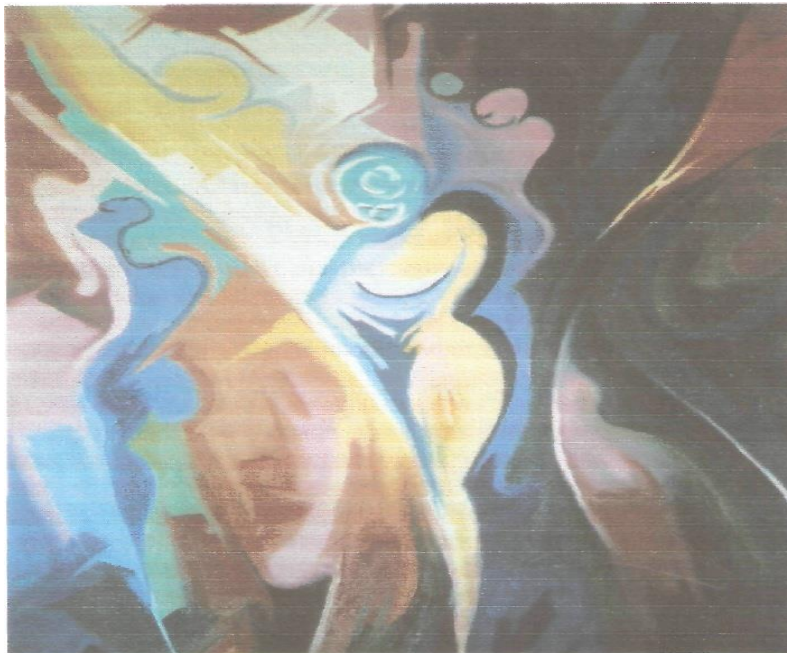


Plate 2; *Dreamer*, Okonkwo Chinonyelum, oil on canvas, 60cm x 90cm, 2011, Source: The Artist

From the context, the painting tries to showcase how the human trafficker sweet-talked and lured some girls into sex trafficking with their deceiving and unaccomplished promises.

3-Regret

The painting depicts lively forms with warm and cool colours that showcase goodness but the figures are emotionally expressed to portray stigma. The main figure is cut into two segments, the upper one, from the shoulder level is in lemon yellow, orange, light green and red.



Plate 3-Regret, Okonkwo Chinonyelum, oil on canvas,60 cm x 90 cm, 2011, Source: The Artist

These colours signify vague or temporal life. The figure, apparently female, faces upward in a mood of regret and confusion. The three figures surrounding her are her partners in crime, all regretting their lives. The bright part of the painting signifies the good life which she abandoned and followed the dark evil path which later brought rejection and regret to her. This work is a condemnation of prostitution and the recruitment of girls to work in sex industries, thereby destroying their bright futures. The prominent female figure is in regret because her life has been rendered useless, and her education has been jeopardized. Other figures in dark hues represent other victims who lived wayward lives and were also regretful.

Depicting the Effects of Human Trafficking

Dark Star: Dark Star is an abstract painting which portrays the victims of HIV/AIDS who contracted the disease through unsafe and commercial sex which they indulged in. as a result

of being trafficked. The painting depicts abstract female figures in a sorrowful mood. The prominent figure is in a dark hue with a light colour shadow. The dark colour of her body portrays her present state of agony and depression due to HIV/AIDS which she contracted through commercial sex. The light hues behind her that act as her shadow were the good qualities and virtues of her which she neglected and wasted. By her right, there are other victims who have destroyed their lives and are now suffering. The dark hues ranging from black, brown, red, dark blue and dark green symbolize the unpleasant and difficult condition in which they found themselves. The little green fading away from her head symbolizes her unaccomplished dreams.



Plate 4 – Dark star, Okonkwo Chinonyelum, acrylic on canvas, 60 cm x 90 cm, 2010, Source: The Artist

The painting in general, is meant to showcase the scourge HIV/AIDS has left in its wake painful experiences by many. Many children have been made orphans by HIV/AIDS **and** have to go through pains, they are supposed not to have experienced. When an orphanage has more children than the staff can cope with, the tendency is to give out many children to prospective foster parents without observing strictly the rules. Some of these children may end up in the hands of the traffickers.

5-Reflections

Reflection depicts a nude female figure in a bent position with her hair covering part of her nudity. The figure's position portrays sorrow, shame or a pitiable condition of life.



Plate 5 – Reflection, Okonkwo Chinonyelum, oil on canvas, 60cm x90cm,2012, Source: The Artist

Reflection is about a young lady mourning and under trauma caused as a result of her experiences as a vulnerable young girl who was seduced and forced into the sex industry. She was forced into prostitution at her tender age and made money for her master. The young girl in a bent position is lamenting, cursing and regretting her life. Her scattered flying hair suggests her state of mind. She could no longer coordinate herself or articulate anything. The green colours surrounding her seem to be piercing her skin with cruelty, and feeling of agonizing pleasure of Sex and fun which brought her to her doom and drew her nearer to her grave

6 –No easy way

The painting is an abstract painting that depicts three figures of young men in abstract form. These figures with their faces in different directions portray people who are subjected to different kinds of hard labour. These people work from dusk till dawn, without receiving any wage or payment for their work and they cannot quit the job, for they are being threatened with death by the traffickers who employed them. The little bright yellow hue at their backs symbolizes the good life that is now very far from them. The dark blue and greenish hues which surround them signify sadness and hopelessness. The dark colour shows that they are in bondage, captive and under slavery.

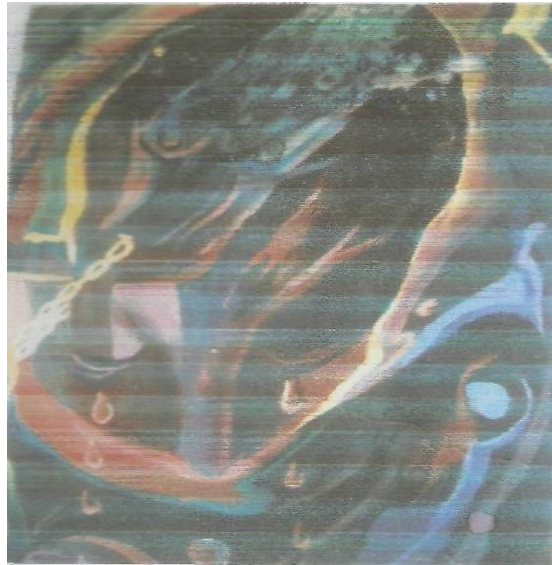


Plate 6 –No easy way, Okonkwo Chinonyelum, oil on canvas, 60 cm x 90 cm, 2012, Source: The Artist

The painting is used to portray the circumstances and conditions, that some of our men, who were taken abroad by some human traffickers, are passing through, from the hands of their masters. The painting tries to warn, and address, some young men who are desperate to travel outside the country at all costs.

Summary/conclusion

The study is based on the use of painting to expose the evil of human trafficking and to acquaint the general public with the aftermath effect.

Painting is a medium of expression, which creates awareness in colourful visual form and tells stories. Painting plays a major role in the development of society, through the provision of effective information and communication to the public.

The analyses of all the paintings reveal that all the paintings were designed to expose and condemn the activities of human trafficking and to promote painting as a veritable tool for social awareness and communication. The study observed that the high rate of social ills and

corruption in our society are the major causes of suffering, fear and loss of confidence among the individuals in the society.

The problem encountered by painting is in appreciation and lack of adequate knowledge concerning painting the issue of neglect on painting as a tool for skillfully communicating such vital information to the entire public. These predicaments prompted this study whose main objective is to portray painting as a veritable tool and a speedy means of addressing the evil of human trafficking in Nigeria. The study advances ways of enhancing and promoting painting as an acceptable way for promoting moral values and condemning social ill.

In conclusion, the great contribution of painting in a society is its rehabilitation of life through drawing attention to its quality experience. The artist does not create paintings just for his consumption, but for society, he strives to satisfy the aesthetic urge of his client, which if achieved, results in giving him personal satisfaction. This notwithstanding, an artist is satisfied by the sheer act of creation. Painting has always been an unpredictable scroll that unfolds many problems associated with societal history, culture, values and socialites. The role of painting in disseminating information is very important and therefore should not be neglected.

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