

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

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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 Person (NAPTIP) in Nigeria have used diverse media to expose the inherent evil involved in human trafficking as well as proffering possible ways of curbing the crime of human trafficking. Also, in a bid to fight the crime, some institutional mechanisms were put in place to address the menace of human trafficking. The crime of human trafficking includes child soliders, sex slavery, forced-labour, illegal adoption and illegal organ transfer. The different means used have not yielded much satisfactory result in combating this great evil. As a result, this study aims at using painting to create awareness about this evil act by exposing the evil activities of the perpetrators of the crime and the effect of this dreaded act both on the individual and the society “a painting says a thousand words at a time.” The artist achieved the project by depicting the different sides of human trafficking, their activities, trauma and danger which the victims are exposed to. The study employed a qualitative research method. Paintings that comment on the evils of human trafficking were produced in the course of the research. The study reveals that paintings could be effectively used as a vehicle to mount an advocacy against human trafficking. This research calls for more studies that will address the issue of human trafficking from various viewpoints.

Key words: Painting, human trafficking, awareness, society, tool.

Introduction

A lot of people fail to understand the underlying meaning in contemporary painting. This is because they tend to see paintings only through their form (the way they look) rather than the content. They view painting as a mere tool for entertainment and decoration. Their attitude restricts them from seeing painting for its true 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 the primitive cave painting and has continued to develop this modern time. It serves as a means of social communication and commentaries. It also tells stories about the history of a people and forecast the future. Painters are commissioned to execute paintings for moral values, social functions and entertainment purposes. Getlein (2002:162) agrees that, “paintings usually are full of colour which is a potent visual stimulus. Painting is an exercise done for its own sake which can be its theme or other purpose than to give visual pleasure”. Painting like every other human activity has its root in the basic needs of man's nature and it provides one of the ways in which these needs derive satisfaction. Hence, Carpenter and Graham (1971-87) states that "painting deals with human actions" when the elements of

painting are merged, they form expressive decorative motive that represents real or supernatural phenomena, interpret a narrative theme or create entirely visual relationship with the society.

Most painters throughout history have used colours and lines 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 value by filling man's imagination with forms, colour 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 paintings is Pablo Picasso's painting entitled "Guernica", which he used to condemn the bombing in 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 adhere to that relates 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 judged". Against these desirable ideas and beliefs are the undesirable and hostile ideas carried out by individuals and groups to undo others.

This is known as social ills. 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 ills that pose great menace to the social, economic and corporate existence of any society, it 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.

Purpose of the study

This study aims at to x-raying human trafficking through the medium of painting and its dangers on both the individual and society. This is hoped to go a long way in enlightening the public and concerned governmental agencies on the need to eradicate the problem.

Review of Related Literature

Painting is the act of applying colour or assembling of colourful media of any kind in orderliness to depict or express one's inner feelings, for conveying a message rather than feeling it through reading alone. Ogumour (1993:27), states that "painting is the technique of applying paint on a flat surface such as paper, canvas, hard board and wall". Painting has gone far more than application of colour on a flat surface. Painting can involve assembly of colourful media in orderliness 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, structure and to explore aesthetic possibilities which are part of human nature. Paintings are produced by painters, just as medicine by pharmacist.

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 feeling in relation to 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 turned into words.

Moreover, a society can enjoy paintings without an extensive knowledge of history, literature or Bible. This view is shared by carpenter and Graham (1971:5) in “Art and Ideal”. An approach to art appreciation, 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 trans-national criminal organizations, small criminal network and local gangs, violation of labour and immigration laws. Historically, trafficking has been defined most often as the trade in 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 in order for trafficking to exist.

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

The US congress definition of human trafficking is wide and contains most of the areas of human endeavour, but can be said to be limited in the sense that it viewed sex trafficking as the one that takes place between a person under the age of 18 years. However, 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 falls under 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, the US 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, 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 has 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 age of 18 years. (US department of state 2005, 2006, 2007).

Additionally, the US State department has estimated that 80 percent of international trafficked victims are female and 70 percent are trafficked into 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, bounded 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 that there is a great disparity in the estimate of human beings trafficking annually. However, one of the greatest problems or barriers in getting the accurate date of human beings, trafficked annually all over the world is lack of a stable working institution mechanism all over the world.

There is also no accurate method of collection and recording of 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 collaborate with the institution or agencies that deal with trafficking in respective countries of the world so that there will be uniform mode of collection and recording of data in the subject matter.

Methodology

The study employs qualitative and descriptive research methods. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data collection was gathered through interviews and other oral sources. While the secondary sources were gathered through text books, magazines and encyclopedia, internet and newspaper with issues that were relevant to the study.

Production processes in stages

A. Stage one: Priming of Canvas

Priming of canvas involves mixing of top-bond and emulsion paint in equal quantities and applying it evenly on the surface of a well stretched canvas. The reason for this exercise is to cover the tiny opening in the canvas and to ensure that the canvas is not porous, this makes the canvas ready for the next layer of paint. Also, it helps to bring out the brightness of the colour. Next, the researcher mixes some quantities of oil colour with kerosene and runs it through the canvas using a big brush. This will make the colour to assimilate well into the background in the course of painting.

B. Stage Two: Concept Development

At this stage, the researcher visualizes and imaginatively conceives ideas that would best suit her works. She then produces the thumbnail sketches of the topics which she intends to actualize on a sketch paper. At this stage, many sketches were done in which she later selected the ones that best suited her topic.

However, some additions and alterations were made at this point. Then after, she transferred the thumbnail sketch to her already primed canvas using any medium of her choice and commences with the painting.

C. Stage Three: 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 water colour which also she did on a palette board with a palette knife. She 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. She uses soft flat brush for colour application.

Materials Used and Methods of Application

A. Oil colour: Oil colour are colours that are mixed with oil in the course of production. They are mixed with linseed oil before painting. For oil colour painting, the painter/researcher prepares her canvas and transfers her sketch to an already primed canvas and 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 artist uses 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.

B. Acrylic colour: Acrylic is a water based colour. In acrylic painting, the same procedure used in oil painting is also followed in 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 work glossy affect and purity of colour. The painter takes care in applying acrylic colour because of its transparency. She 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 in nature. Other steps followed as the same as in oil colour.

C. Water colour /poster colour

Water colour paper for water colour 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 artist uses soft sable brush for both paintings. With a light pencil, the artist sketched the drawings she intends to produce. Then she mixed her colour in their different values on her palette and commenced the painting. After the initial wash, she detailed the figure with darker tones to bring out contrast. She continued with the detailing until she is satisfied with every bit of the painting.

Discussion/Work Analysis

War against human trafficking is a protest against disorderliness which 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 for the purpose of condemning some of the ill behaviours of some members of the society, painting appears to be the most effective because it can be used to communicate both literate and illiterate members of the society. Some writers have argued that the objective of a painter when he thinks in forms and colour is not to re-constitute on 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 issue. The followings are indepth analyses of the paintings used for this project. The effectiveness of painting as a medium for societal change is here brought to the fore. The analysis is divided into two broad categories to facilitate the understanding of the reader. These two categories are: issues on human trafficking and effects of human trafficking.

ISSUES ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

1. Boundage

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



Plate1- Okomkwo Chinonyelum, *Boundage*,
oil on canvas,60cm x 90cm, 2011

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The artist's choice of blue in the monochromatic painting is symbolic. It symbolizes sadness. Contextually, the message speaks against sexism in our society. The figure enclosed in a spherical form signifies sex bondage while the light inside the sphere 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 formless shadow cast at the opposite sides of the central figure contrasts the two figures in a pathetic mood. The centralized figure depicted in bright colours along with other bright portions of the painting symbolize 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 mind set; sorrow, pains and full of agony. She has realized that she was deceived by the traffickers.



Plate 2 – Okonkwo Chinonyelum, *Dreamer*,
oil on canvas, 60cm x 90cm, 2011

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 empty promises.

3-Regret

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



Plate 3- Okonkwo Chinonyelum, *Regret*,
oil on canvas, 60 cm x 90 cm, 2011

These colours signify vague or temporal life. The figure, apparently female, facing upwards in a mood of regret and confusion. The three figures surrounding her are her partners in crime. 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 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, her education has been jeopardized. Other figures in dark hues represent other victims that live way-ward lives and are now full of regrets.

B-EFFECTS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

4-Dark star

Dark star is an abstract painting which portrays victims of HIV/AIDS. They contracted the disease through and commercial sex which they indulged in. as a result of being trafficked. The painting depicts abstracted female figures in a sorrowful mood. The prominent figure is in dark hue with light colour shadow. The dark colour of her body comment on her present state of agony and depression due to AIDS. The light hues behind her highlights her good qualities and virtues which are now neglected and wasted. By her right, are other victims who have also destroyed their lives. 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.

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

The painting is a commentary on the scourge of HIV/AIDS and the devastating state of its victims. Many children had been made orphans by HIV/AIDS **and** had to go through pains, they are not supposed not to has experienced. When an orphanage has more children than the staff can cope with, the tendency is to give out some children to prospective foster parents without observing strictly the official rules of adoption. Some of these children may end up in the hands of the traffickers.

5-Reflections

Reflection (plate 5) 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 pitiable condition of life.



Plate 5 – Okonkwo Chinonyelum,
Reflection, oil on canvas, 60cm x90cm,2012

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/mistress. 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 co-ordinate or articulate properly. The green colours surrounding her seems 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 portraying people who are subjected to different kinds of hard labour. These mken work from dusk till dawn, without receiving any wage or payment for their work and they could not quit the job because of the constant death threat by the traffickers. The little bright yellow behind the figures symbolize the good life that is now very far from them. The dark blue and greenish hues which surrounded them signifies sadness and hopelessness. The dark colour reveals that they are in bondage, captivity and slavery.

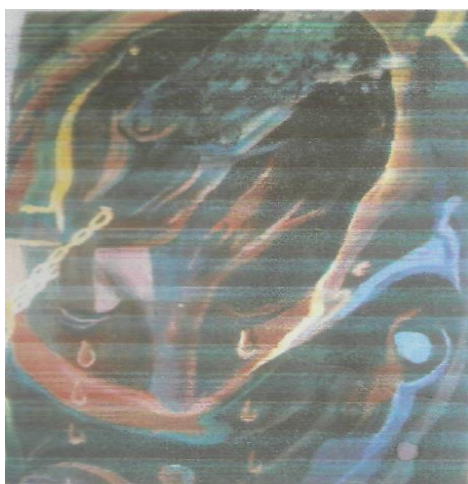


Plate 6 – Okonkwo Chinonyelum,
No easy way, oil on canvas,
60 cm x 90 cm, 2012

The painting portrays some the circumstances and conditions, some of our men who were taken abroad by human traffickers are passing through. This painting also tries to caution Nigerian youths who are desperate to travel outside the country at all cost.

Summary and conclusion

The study is based on the use of painting in exposing the evil of human trafficking and to acquaint the general public about the attendant effect. Painting as a medium of expression, which creates awareness in colourful visual form. It also demonstrates that

painting plays a major role in the development of the 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.

Painting could be a tool for skillful maneuvering of vital information to the entire public. These predicaments in part 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 painting as an acceptable way of promoting moral values and condemning social ill.

In conclusion, a great contribution of painting in the society is its rehabilitation of life through drawing attention of its quality experience. The artist does not create painting just for his personal consumption, but for the society, which he strives to satisfy. According to Chuta (1997:23) “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, value and socialites. The role of painting in disseminating information is very important and should not be neglected.

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