

## Cultural Evil

By Juliana Zhu, Esq.

“A change in a person’s belief system, whether or not that new belief system involves a deity, should not be grounds on which to execute that person.”

Certain cultural norms are plain and females, which means there’s a lack of women for the men to marry. Thus, because of the dearth of women, girls from poor areas in northern India are easily trafficked and sold to be married to men in other regions. Another fate of these girls could be kidnapping and rape by their traffickers. Even if they escape, it is the cultural norm to look down upon the victim, which then causes her employed family members to lose their jobs, and thus the entire family would not be able to earn a living. Where is the justice in that?

Another cultural evil is in certain Islamic countries where Sharia law is adopted or enforced. In those countries, a conversion away from Islam means a death sentence if the government finds out about it. For example, Mariam Ibrahim, a Christian Sudanese woman was sentenced to hang for changing her faith. She was also charged with adultery for marrying a Christian man. Under Sudanese law, the children take on the faith of the father but in Mariam’s case, the father abandoned the family when she was a child. Not only did her father not provide for the family, but because of his imputed religion to the children, Mariam suffers even more because this cultural norm is enforced by the law.

Another recent example of evil is Boko Haram’s kidnapping of more than 300 girls in a Chibok boarding school on April 15th, 2014 in Nigeria, and then threatening to sell the girls. They claim that because Allah says they can sell women, they can sell women. In the past few years, Boko Haram has made dozens of attacks, killing thousands of people at schools, churches, police stations, government buildings, all the while claiming to uphold Sharia law. They have targeted Christians, senior Islamic figures who criticize them and those that engage in "un-Islamic" behavior.

It really is barbaric in this modern age that someone can get a death sentence for changing their belief system. The effect of changing beliefs affects no one other than that per-

son. In fact, it is more of a disgrace if she did not do that versus being a prostitute. In certain places in Thailand, it is culturally acceptable for families that have enough to food to eat to sell their young daughters in order to buy a new TV, just like the ones that their neighbors have. This cultural norm actually makes it easy for traffickers to prey on poor families and to take away these girls as commodities. The fate of the girls is tragic. The violence that follows them throughout their lives is unjust.

The discrimination against women in India, and many other countries, is another evil. Because boys are favored over girls, many parents abort the fetus after they find out the sex of the fetus. This creates a great disparity between the number of males

and females, which means there’s a lack of women for the men to marry. Thus, because of the dearth of women, girls from poor areas in northern India are easily trafficked and sold to be married to men in other regions. Another fate of these girls could be kidnapping and rape by their traffickers. Even if they escape, it is the cultural norm to look down upon the victim, which then causes her employed family members to lose their jobs, and thus the entire family would not be able to earn a living. Where is the justice in that?

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Letter From the Editor

son. By this, I mean that the immediate consequence for one who changes belief is that she changed her belief. Crimes that may warrant a death sentence involve a great evil perpetrated on others, such as homicide or genocide. Of course, someone like Mariam is capable of bringing about changes in the future that will affect the culture of that society, which is why her oppressors perceive her belief system as a threat. A change in a person's belief system, whether or not that new belief system involves a deity, should not be grounds on which to execute that person.

Women around the world face much more suffering and atrocities that would be too long to list. Many have no voice. Speaking up and speaking out for the voiceless is an

important first step to making a change to free them. If the media and social media did not spread the news about some of these injustices, nothing would change. The injustices would go unnoticed, perpetuate and possibly even increase as time goes on.

Sincerely,



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