

The Anvil Magazine

Stripping at 'the box': The salient facts

By DENNIS ONYANGO AND
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The experience he went through has left life long scars in his memory. He has seen too much to remain normal.

A new discipline method has emerged on campus. Male students are easily stripped in women's halls. This young man was a victim. What transpired during the stripping can set anybody off balance.

Stripped

The stripping of a stranger in Hall 12 last week was not the first incident and it will not be the last. Five other students have been stripped before and none of them is willing to talk.

Male students allege that a group of rich and influential females have formed a gang to terrorize them.

Two weeks ago, a source revealed, another male student believed to be from Kenyatta University was beaten and stripped in Box. In stoning women's halls, the male students were settling old scores.

"The whole affair is silly. There are married female students whose husbands can come here any time and stray into other rooms. They will face the stripping just because they are strangers," Evanson Amudavi, a third year Anthropology student says.

A few male students agree that the female students have genuine complaints. However, they say, stripping one another is a joke that has been taken too far.

Many students blame the commercialization of university services. The male students live with the illusion that many female students look down upon them because they are poor.

"Life has become difficult on campus. Male students cannot maintain girlfriends who they believe

An engineering student attends lectures at the main campus in style. He takes a matatu on State House Road, next to Sick Bay, pays ten shillings and drops at University Way. He then moves quickly to class where he avoids contact with anybody. Too proud to socialize?



should come from among their colleagues. Unlike in the past, they cannot go out and 'collect' because they do not have money. Even the 'collections' are aware these guys are broke and mean," a female student said.

Another male student said they have resorted to stripping because when they report such cases, the university takes no action. They have therefore decided to seek strength in unity.

Anomic Behaviour

These are strange times with strange goings on at the campus. Physical fights for girlfriends among students were unheard of at public universities. There are more talks of

rape than was the case before. Today they have become prevalent.

Dr. Lewis Odhiambo, a lecturer at the School of Journalism, says a worrying trend of anomic behaviour is taking grip of the university. This, he says, is a direct reflection of the strange social trends brought by hard economic realities.

"The more people find it hard to meet their economic demands, the more they tend to embrace lawlessness as a way out," Dr. Odhiambo explains.

For the students, he continues, the problem is even more complicated. They have pursued education to this level to have a good future. They react to the sad realization that there is no security in the future.

Part of the problem could also be blamed on the university. Traditionally, a university is a cultural institution. It is identified with both high ideals and achievement. University is defined by its exclusive excellence. "The reduced capacity of the university to provide these norms is being reflected in the students' violent behaviour," Dr. Odhiambo says.

High school mentality

University culture which has been the controlling norm has become less pronounced as the university life continue to face the realities of the larger society.

The absence of a university culture, Dr. Odhiambo says, has led

to a lack of appreciation of what university is or what it stands for. Consequently, high school mentality and unconventional university behaviour have become the order of the day.

Feminist activism

The university appears to be a victim of the gender redefinition of self going on the world over. This is represented by a declining recognition of traditional gender roles. There is increased feminist activism among females and men are the most obvious victims. The result can be chaotic.

The changing definition of roles put men in a very difficult situation hence the bitterness between male and female students. Male students think their female counterparts look down upon them because they are poor. There is lack of economic security among men, Dr. Odhiambo says. This puts men in a tricky situation.

"Men have always been in charge of relationships, this is changing as their economic power declines. They now have to enter relationships as equals or at times as inferior partners, something most men can't imagine, hence the bitterness," Dr. Odhiambo explains.

Dr. Odhiambo also apports some blame to the society, particularly politicians. Recent political and social trends have influenced university students.

The students also seem to have lost confidence in the university to protect their interests. This makes the students survive in a vacuum, Dr. Odhiambo says adding that there are also very few cross gender activities which bring students together. Male and female students continually lead separate lives. Individual strategies is thus the norm.

Chaotic Behaviour

"A part from prayer sessions, where people do not lead their real lives, female and male students have nothing in common. Consequently, they always see themselves as competing with one another," Odhiambo says.

It is seen that the crowded conditions on campus, lack of funding, and playing environments, reduced students and staff contacts all get expression in the conflict and chaotic behaviour on campus, Dr. Odhiambo says.

Theatre production ends in controversy

By HUDSON LIYAI

The successful play staged at the Kenya National Theatre (KNT) ended last weekend on a controversial note, following a disagreement between the director and a script editor.

The Kiswahili play, Kisima cha Kiningi by Mohammed Abdulla, which is also a school set book, was adapted and directed by George Tyson, and supposedly edited jointly by David Mulwa and Kithaka

wa Mberia. For two weeks, it showed for a house full attracting thousands of school groups and other theatre enthusiasts.

Controversy started during the last two days when Kithaka wa Mberia, a linguistics lecturer at the University of Nairobi issued a signed disclaimer that he played any part in the production. "I would like to make known that I neither edited the script as purported nor have I participated in the production."

Talking to *The Anvil* Kithaka

admitted that he had been approached for the particular role but declined because he did not have the time and at the same time, "the author is not my cup of tea," he said. Contacted by *The Anvil*, Tyson admitted that Kithaka did not take part in the editing of the script as earlier agreed. He pointed out that more than a month earlier the latter had agreed, in order to allow the production team to meet the deadlines of printing of posters bearing his name.

According to Tyson this was on

the understanding that Kithaka would later find time to "edit the script on stage during the rehearsals, as he was very busy at the time." Apparently he never did.

Reaction from the National Theatre management did not clarify the matter either. Talking to *The Anvil* in her office the manager, Mrs. Lydia Musyoki, clarified that the management was only involved in providing facilities, financial back-up and publicity for the play.