

**‘THE MONEY-MAKING MACHINES’: CREATING AWARENESS ON
CHILD LABOR IN GHANA THROUGH ART**

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ABSTRACT

As an artist, I consider myself a conversation starter and a conversation changer. My works are a comment on important social issues through the use of graphic illustrations. Growing up in Kumasi; the second largest city in Ghana, I saw the struggles that ordinary people had to go through to make a living. But the most heartrending was seeing little children between the ages of four to thirteen years, who struggled to put food on their family's tables. The notion of this act being the '*norm*' in my culture and society is what I believe to be unacceptable.

In my quest to understand the reasons as to why this situation exists, I create digital illustrations that give my viewers and myself a better understanding through visual storytelling. Aside from using illustrations, I am open to using any other medium that is available to me to communicate my ideas to my viewers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It's been three wonderful years of experience and I couldn't have gone through a day without some wonderful people I have come into contact. And to these people I say thank you. My warmest gratitude goes, first and foremost to God, for seeing me through this period of my life. My deepest heartfelt appreciation goes to my committee members, help from friends, and support from my family. I would like to offer my special thanks and appreciation to my major professor, Gregory Turner-Rahman for his insightful comments, suggestions and ongoing support.

To Susan and John Byrne; with the deepest heartfelt appreciation, I would like to say thank you for welcoming me into your home and hosting me as I went through my final year of graduate school. Thank you for your daily words of encouragements and for urging me on each day. Thank you and may God bless you for being such a blessing onto me.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to all the wonderful children in the world who feel the weight and burden of adulthood in their early stages of life.

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INTRODUCTION

Developing countries continue to battle with child labor especially in productive economic sectors such as agriculture, mining and quarrying, construction and service. In the agriculture sector alone, child labor is rampant with evidence of this phenomena mostly found in the fisheries, aquaculture and livestock. This is buttressed by the fact that in 2008, about 60% of 215 boys and girls involved in child labor happened to be in the agriculture sector including fishing, livestock and forestry (ILO, 2010). About 115million children between the ages of 5 and 17years work in dangerous industries across the world (ILO, 2012).

Indeed, there have been several international initiatives aimed at combating child labor. Among these are: the 1924 declaration of Geneva, the creation of UNICEF, ILOs 1973 minimum age convention (No.146), 1989 UN declaration on the rights of the child, 1999 ILO convention to combat the worst form of child labor (No. 182) (Kolk & Tulder, 2002). In Ghana, there has been several child labor monitoring mechanisms to ensure the elimination of all forms of child labor with the most recent one being the Community Child Labor Monitoring System (Sertich & Heemskerk, 2011). However, in spite of these initiatives, child labor is still on the rise especially in developing countries such as Ghana.

It is against this backdrop that this thesis seeks to make an intervention in Child labor issues in Ghana. The study makes a case for the use of art as an effective communication tool to create awareness of child labor and to further limit this problem in Ghana. Following the introduction, chapter one focuses on the inspiration for this work, starting with my story and a brief history and development of Child labor. Chapter two will examine the issue of child labor with the aid of my studio works and explorations. Chapter three discusses the money-making

machine process of child labor and the last chapter draws conclusion to this thesis with a call for the involvement of more art work in addressing pertinent societal issues.

CHAPTER 1: INSPIRATION

My story

The first time I talked to my mother about the topic for my thesis, the few words she said to me were: ‘I am not surprised by this.’ I laughed and inquired about her reason for saying this and she reminded me of an incident that happened during my middle school years; how I used to ask her and my father if they could adopt the little children who were my age but had to work on the streets with their families to make ends meet. It was not a story I remembered, but I believe that serves the basis for my interest in the topic of child labor.

Growing up in the second largest city in Ghana, Kumasi, I was exposed to many social injustices. As a graphic artist, I have concentrated on addressing these issues through my art. I use storytelling as a way of communicating my ideas and concerns about the issues that interest me. The stories that I tell are centered on the realities of complex social situations. Through the various stories that sprout out of conversations with random people, including my family and my friends, I help spark interest in abhorrent social issues.

As a visual person, I represent these issues more visually to all people throughout society who might be able to relate better with visual content. Since my goal is to make complex social issues more accessible to people in both the Global North and the Global South especially Ghana, most of my illustrations consist of simple images that can be easily understood at a glance. It is my fervent hope that these images will resonate with the viewers. Ernest F. Schumacher said; “any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent but it takes a touch of genius and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction” (1973).

The main theme of my thesis is child labor. According to Grace Abbott, “Child labor and poverty are inevitably bound together and if you continue to use the labor of children as the treatment for the social disease of poverty, you will have both poverty and child labor to the end of time” (1932). Whenever there is a discussion on child labor, the issue of high poverty seems to be where we lay the blame. Although poverty is considered one of the major contributors to child labor in our societies, we cannot rule out other major and more severe contributing factors such as crop failure, natural disasters and economic downturn (ILO, 2013).

The use of cheap labor has been recorded in most industries especially in industries located in the Global South. Some industries use children as their labor force and pay them the lowest wages in order to keep their businesses running. For instance, Neilsen (2005) asserts that in 1992, export industries - specifically the garment industry in Bangladesh engaged the services of about 50,000 to 100,000 children below the age of 14 years. This was attributed to widespread poverty, the poor state of the education system and the absence of day care options in the region.

Brief history and developments

The children of the world are innocent, vulnerable and dependent. They are also curious, active and full of hope. Their time should be one of joy and peace, of playing, learning and growing. Their future should be shaped in harmony and co-operation. Their lives should mature, as they broaden their perspectives and gain new experiences. But for many children, the reality of childhood is altogether different (UNICEF, 1991: p. 53)

Child labor is embedded in poverty and social injustices making it difficult for the problem to be tackled in isolation. Child labor in this regard is seen as when a child is involved in a work which is likely to interfere with his or her health, physical, mental, spiritual moral or social development; or expose the child to an environment not conducive to his or her development (Afenyalu, 2010). Ghana is no exception to the issue of child labor. It comes as no surprise that about 20% of children of school going age are involved in work classified as child labor. Out of these, over 242,074 are engaged in worse forms of child labor that may put their health at risk (Ghana Child Labor Survey, 2003). Some examples of child labor found in Ghana are forms of slavery and similar practices including sale and trafficking of children; debt bondage; work that is likely to jeopardize the health, safety, or morals of children; work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse; children working under water, or engaged in carrying heavy loads; work in an unhealthy environment; work under particularly difficult conditions, such as work for long hours, or during the night, or where the child is unreasonably confined to the employer's premises (Kukwaw, 2013).

The dominant discourses around child labor have been categorized into four areas: Labor market; Human capital; Social responsibility; and Children-centered (Weston, 2005). The labor market discourse is inherent in the view that child labor occurs when work meant for adults are performed by children and this brought into existence the 1973 ILO convention No. 146. This convention brought into existence the minimum age required for children to work. The human capital discourse explains that children can engage in work if that particular work does not harm the human capital of the child. The focus is on seeing apprenticeship as a measure to not threaten the human capital of children. The social responsibility discourse also dwells on the fact that children engage in child labor because of social exclusion, herein social exclusion

means the marginalization of children in societies which leads to alienation, exploitation and child oppression. The child centered discourse stands for the rights of children and is entrenched in the advocacy for the abolishment of all forms of child labor. Strategies that could lead to ensuring the wellbeing of children are addressed in this discourse (Weston, 2005).

A limited number of reports focus on the general or worldwide phenomenon of forced labor and human trafficking in the fisheries sector. One of the first of these was the International Commission on Shipping (ICONS) Report *Ships, Slaves and Competition* published in 2000, on labor exploitation and abuse on board seagoing vessels, both merchant and fishing vessels (Morris, 2000). The report is based on extensive consultations with stakeholders and makes particular reference to the fishing sector. The report concludes among others that, “the worst abuses seem to be associated with fishing” (Morris, 2000: p. 2). With regards to Ghana, the fishing industry contributes significantly to the economy. In light of this, fishing in Ghana is classified as the inland and mainland fishing and it makes up for about 5% of agriculture contribution to GDP. On the whole, fish make up about 60% of the animal protein consumed in Ghana (MOFA, 2008). However, this sector is seen as exhibiting a higher form of child labor. In both the inland and mainland fishing, children work on the boats, feed and harvest fish, prepare nets and boats, sell fish and unload catches (Kukwaw, 2013). For example, in February 2015, an NGO known as Challenging Heights intercepted a boat seen to be using child labor and about 17 children were rescued from hazardous forced labor on Lake Volta. This is evidence of the fact that even in 21st century, slavery still exists in Ghana (Peacefmonline, 2015).



Figure 1: Children working on the sea and streets of Ghana

Ghana unfortunately does not have many artists that address the issue of child labor and its inherent problems to the individual and the nation. Very few people have been inspired to address this issue based on past experiences or inspirations from stories that they have read. In my opinion, majority of people who have been insistent on change in the system and how its children are treated have been brushed off by society.

In Ghana, figures like Anas Aremeyaw Anas who works as an investigative journalist; although not an artist, has helped to unravel many social injustices in Ghana. His main motive is to expose individuals that are involved in corrupt practices in Ghana. One of his video documentaries was on child trafficking and child labor in Ghana. Children that are trafficked with the hope and dream of becoming famous soccer players but end up being sold to companies that engage these children in various forms of work. With emerging Ghanaian activists like Anas Aremeyaw Anas, such cruel acts are exposed and the response to these exposures will definitely help end child labor and other forms of child abuses. Findings from his work are

usually broadcast on national television stations thereby reaching diverse individuals within the country and beyond. His work sets conversation on the issue investigated which triggers government's attention in uprooting the canker.

Government's response to Anas's work has been weak, although many families are becoming more and more aware of the dangers that their children are likely to face if they give their children aware to such organizations that make them these promises. On many occasions too, these cases are taken to court and there is no follow up while others are acted upon by government agencies. Most of my recent illustrations compliment the efforts of Anas in pointing out negative social issues that pertain to the welfare of people.

As Ana's videos may be viewed once on national television, it leaves his viewers with a lasting message that it carries and while artists like myself make illustrations that are used in books , billboards, posters and the likes, they become a constant reminder of the problem to our viewers. Meaning that, with repeated exposure, viewers become more sensitive and increasingly aware of the problems of child labor.

Another artist whose work inspires me most is Luis Quiles, whose main area of interest is in illustrations. He uses controversial illustrations to draw attention to current world problems. While Quiles's illustrations can be very disturbing to look at, they are very directional in the points that he raises. His works are extremely eye opening. His works make conversations on issues regarding child trafficking, how social media controls today's youth, dirty politics amongst other social issues. Quiles' illustrations show the horrid acts and mostly physical and emotional pain that is inflicted upon the ordinary people in society.

In figures 2 and 3, Quiles's illustrations bring to bear the conversation around child exploitation and manipulation. The shadow represents people in higher positions, including adults and parents who use their power to exploit these children. He gives his viewers the room to project themselves into the figures he uses. In image 3, the holes in the wall in the background may represent bullet holes, but in addition to that interpretation, I see the holes representing the broken system. Also, his use of the pillow in image 2 intelligently reminds his viewers of the saying that 'not all that glitters is gold'. This image reminds me of the maltreatment that most of these children have to go through. When most of these children have to put up happy faces to show the outside world that they are being treated well by the people who make them work. Even their pretentious happy lifestyles become a burden. It almost becomes a cross they have to carry each day of their lives.

This is important for viewers to see because with much knowledge in how they are treated, viewers become more sensitive to the issue and hence their desire to help eradicate child labor and any form of child abuse.

I first stumbled upon Quiles's Illustrations through the social media; Facebook, to be precise. Over the years, social media has been patronized by a lot of artists because of the never-ending circulations of their works. Social medias like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have been a big help to promote art works that raises the conversation on social changes due to people '*sharing*' these images on their '*walls*'. These images circulate on these social media and tend to draw a lot of attention on them when people have conversations on them. In today's world, it is relevant to promote artworks, especially once that carry such messages to the world on platforms that are used by a good percentages of people in the world.

Although, it could be argued that some of these works can be provocative, works by artists like Luis Quiles are much meaningful when they cut right to the chase. Topic like child labor, child prostitution, child trafficking amongst some of the worse forms of abuses are not to be lightly touched on.



Figure 2: Luis Quiles, Unknown Figure 3: Luis Quiles, Unknown

My illustrations in previous projects have explored the use of bright colors and more realistic human forms as Quiles's. I have always been drawn to art works that are realistic in nature and easy to interpret. Most recently, I stumbled upon Kara Walker through conversations with my professor. After looking through some of Kara Walker's cut-paper silhouettes, she immediately became a big influence in my recent art works. Kara Walker explores race, sexuality, violence, gender and identity in her room-size tableaux of black silhouettes. I find a lot of similarities in the issues we both choose to address. Her use of black and white imagery creates a strong contrast that helps to make the message she carries in her work clear and

understandable. Her imagery is easy to interact with and relate to because of their vivid life-sized representations.

Black and white versus colored imagery

Growing up, I have been drawn to black and white imagery and for so long I never really explored its use in my art. After seeing Kara Walker's imagery, it brought out an immense passion for explorations with those two striking contrasting colors. The use of black and white imagery shows excellent detailed and noticeable visual and graphic appeal. Works of art that are mostly in black and white, the two very simple colors but very showing.

Although these are two contrasting colors, their use in an art piece can evoke different emotions. I personally enjoy white on black backgrounds rather than black on white backgrounds. When a white image is on a black background, the intensity of the contrast makes the image more powerful.

Many artists have used outdoor and indoor murals or wall paintings to present their arts to the people of the world. Kara Walker has used her indoor murals, acrylic and water color paintings, drawings, books and likes as a platform to discuss the many social injustices in the world and one of my all-time favorite works of hers is 'Gone-An Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred between the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart.' This work addresses Margaret Mitchell's novel written in 1936. This novel, set at the time of the American Civil War, tells the story of a young lady, Scarlett O'Hara who sought to use every means possible to graze herself out of poverty.

Kara Walker tells the story of this young woman's struggle and her determination to survive in the world around her in her Mural. Somewhere in the image, there is a child that's seems to be choking a duck which she offers to a woman whose lower body is a boat. We also see a young black girl that seems to be giving oral sex to a young white boy, possible the girl's (slave girls) master's son. And then again, we are introduced to another young girl who raises her leg while she pops out two babies.

All these suggests to Kara Walkers viewers the struggles that slave girls and women had to endure in the hands of their masters. This is enlightening for people all over the world because it creates more visual compelling stories of the past. From the moment you set your eyes on this piece of art, the black and white imagery immediately captures your attention, draws you into the immersive life-sized silhouette and then detailed information that is captured within each silhouette.



Figure 4: Kara Walker, Gone-An Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred between the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart

For younger generations, works like Kara Walker's can be used in history classes to discuss the topic of slavery and the abuse on women that lived in the era of slave trade.



Figure 5: Banksy, Slave Labor Mural

In most cities and communities, wall paintings or murals have brought artistic works including works about social injustices to public display. Many street artists have *splashed* vibrant paint colors on walls and made graffiti arts as a way to start conversations on specific topics. Popular graffiti artists; Banksy, is one of my favorite contemporary graffiti artists. Real work of art is considered to be art that causes real change in society and that seems to be the British bases graffiti artist's focus. He also uses his art as a tool through which we see the challenges of the world. All his works are controversial since they mostly target social issues. For instance, Banksy succeeded in painting his mural on the west bank barrier in UK which sparked debates as to whether that should be considered a criminal art or that should be regarded as a mere work of art (Sliwa & Cairns, 2007).

Although Banksy's identity is still unknown, his works are always identifiable. His style usually involves minimal color use and his illustrations are realist in nature.

CHAPTER 2: STUDIO EXPLORATIONS

Through a review of my previous explorations, I will share some of the topics that I have used my skills in illustrations to address. I began my studio practice at the University of Idaho exploring topics such as sexuality and gender binaries, child labor, terrorism, and others that have been flaunted in the media in Ghana. Every design that I made sprouted out of a story. I started every illustration by looking for images over the Internet or by flipping through magazines that have pictures that I could use as reference. I sketched out every idea and I cleaned it up through the use of Adobe Photoshop. I have done some other illustrations that required me to draw directly into Adobe Photoshop. These processes make me gain more familiarity with the characters that I create and also to give me a better understanding of these topics.

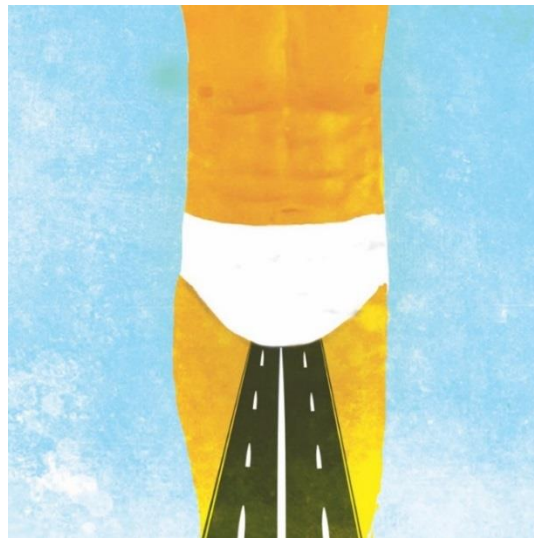


Figure 6: Patience Mensah-Bonsu, The Man Whore

'The Man Whore', is one of my earlier editorial illustrations of a male figure that has the image of road directed between his thighs towards his sexual organ. In most societies around the world, a woman who is explicit in her sexuality and her sexual explorations is considered to be a whore whereas a man is *'just experimenting.'*

In an era where women are getting a better understanding of their own bodies draws much interest in exploring it. But this has raised a bigger issue where the woman is being condemned for exploring her own body. Society's gender binary has left the woman to be less open about expressing her sexual experiments and desires. I found an article in a magazine that condemned women who openly discussed their sex lives while uplifting and encouraging the opposite sex by stating that it is okay for men to openly converse about their sexual explorations. Men are glorified for sleeping around while women who do the same thing are identified as whores. This is just another societal "rule" that has been pounded into our culture for years, which needs to end. Females have been suppressed, controlled and dehumanized in every way possible as though their existence is given second-class status.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a novelists said in a speech,

“We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls: "You can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful, but not too successful. Otherwise, you will threaten the man" Because I am female, I am expected to aspire to marriage. I am expected to make my life choices Always keeping in mind that marriage is the most important Now, marriage can be a source of joy and love and mutual support But why do we teach girls to aspire to marriage And we don't teach boys the same? We raise girls to see each other as competitors Not for jobs or for accomplishments, which I think can be a good thing But for the attention of men We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way that boys are Feminist: a person who believes in the social Political, and economic equality of the sexes”.

In her speech, feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie describes all the expectations of a woman in this ‘man’s world.’ She goes on to talk about how girls are raised and taught that they cannot be sexual beings in the way that boys are. Conversations like these raise many eyebrows in different cultures.

Roads are usually public assets and therefore assessable to all individuals. It is easy to use and sometimes unquestionable to use especially when it is a public road. The male figure used is symbolic to all males in the many cultures around the world where a males pride and dignity is based on the number of women he is able to lure into his bed. This editorial illustration was created to give viewers an idea of the story they in the article.



Figure 7: Patience Mensah-Bonsu, Forgotten Love 1

Figure 8: Patience Mensah-Bonsu, Forgotten Love 2

Forgotten love is a series that explores the value that is lost in the modern expression of what love should be. In most African cultures, love has been expressed through the devotion or time that's invested into acts like cooking, breastfeeding, spending quality time with family and friends, and the like. But our fast paced world today eliminates these essential acts. Forgotten Love starts a conversation about how much humans have drifted away from these acts and the need to stop for a moment or two to reflect on how and what we can do to reconnect with each other.

Figure 7 is an image of a nursing mother who is surrounded by feeding bottles. Breastfeeding, which is a part of every culture around the world and also serves as one of the easiest means that mothers bond with their newly born babies seem to be discouraged in today's society.



Figure 9: Patience Mensah-Bonsu, Watch Me Labor

Figure 10: Patience Mensah-Bonsu, Labucation

Some aspects of society do a great deal to raise awareness of issues that are out of the norm or out of the ordinary. We bring them up through conversations, through dramas, movies and music but when it comes to addressing the issue genuinely in order to have it discontinued, we tend not to go that extra mile. My illustrations usually rely on a lot of metaphor. In figure 9, the image of a young girl who has been poked with these sharp tools represents all the external factors that contribute to the impact that our society has on children. The image has adults who are standing by and looking unto this helpless girl.

In figure 10, is also in response to an article from a Ghanaian newsletter where they discussed the negative effects of a society full of child laborers. These earlier works explored the effects of child labor on the individual as well as the nation as a whole. Children lose their focus in life without proper education and this act is passed on from generation to generation. Poverty, one of the major driving force behind the child labor canker can be attributed to generations of child laborers who pass on their 'trade' to their younger once. This representation let me on to the next illustration, figure 11.

We see a generation of family members, from the oldest to the youngest passing on their 'education' which has been presented metaphorically as a sheet of paper. The broken ladder represents the broken system that society has put in place and also shows the struggle of these individuals to make it against all the odds.

Figure 12 shows two children; a little school girl and a little street boy. In this image, I sought to present the two kinds of children that our society can expect and its effects on that society as it encourages child labor. The school girl passes by the community and everything seems bright and clean and as the little boy approaches, the town seems to be in disarray. I used dark colors to represent the filth that our uneducated citizens and especially,

our children can generate as opposed to the bright colors that suggest the clean environments that we can expect to live in should all our children be given the much deserved education and not encouraged to labor.

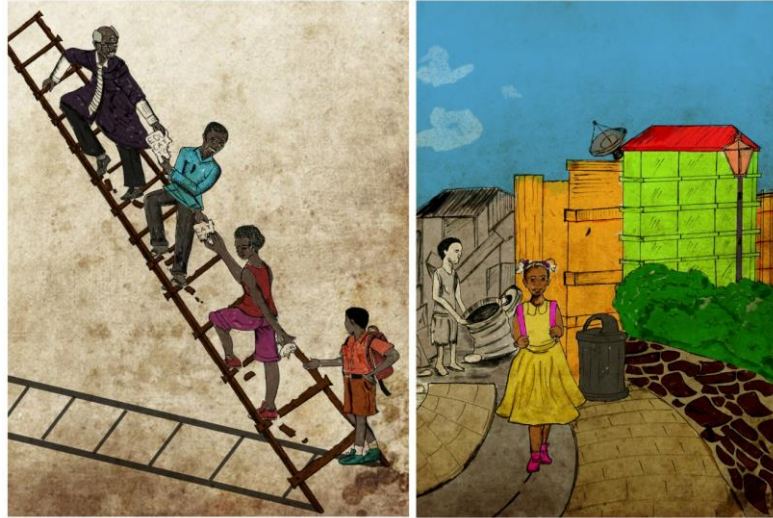


Figure 11: Patience Mensah-Bonsu, Untitled Figure 12: Patience Mensah-Bonsu, Untitled

According to ILO (International Labor Organization) there are over one million children who work in the mining and quarrying sector and the number is increasing by day. It is morally and psychologically risky given that the mining often takes place in remote areas where law, schools and social services are unknown, where family and community support may not exist, where “boom or bust” conditions foster alcohol abuse, drugs and prostitution. A lot of these children are left to take upon themselves the lifestyle of adults while they disregard their education.

The stages these children go through to become child laborers usually vary from situation to situation. There are children who are drawn into child labor as a result of running

away from their home for specific reasons. There are others that go into it because of family trade. There are also other children who are lured into the act by their friends because they fancy the lifestyle that these children live out of the little money they make from working. Some of these children are burdened with the thought of helping their families financially and hence forfeit their education and resort to labor.



Figure 13: Patience Mensah-Bonsu, journey to a better life

Figure 13 walks my viewers through the journey of the children who are taken from their homes with the promised of a better life. I used the fishing tools, the fishing net and the fishing hook to show because the idea for the illustrations came from an article I read about a fishing community in Ghana. Parents that were financial incapable of catering for their children were convinced by an organization to give them better education while providing the children with accommodation in a shelter. Desperation to give their children

the best, led some of the parents to give their wards away. Some of the children were eventually sold to farmers and fishermen in some fishing communities.

I used both male and female characters since both sexes were victims of this acts. The first image shows the child being separated from her family, and eventually started '*school of labor*'; which I represented as a child carrying a backpack full of fishing net. The next images shows working tools; tools that are meant to be used by adults. The next image shows a child that has been hooked by a fishing hook, which represents the dangers that these children face in the labor. The final image shows the child entangled in a fishing net which signifies the deaths with see as a result of child labor.

CHAPTER 3: THE MONEY-MAKING MACHINES

Artist statement

This body of work is a narration of my interpretation from the social issue, child labor and my memories of the daily activities of child laborers. Growing up in Ghana, I befriended kids who struggled to make money to feed themselves and their families.

It's unfair for children to be subjected to harsh labor while being denied their childhood.

I make these works of art to remind myself of their daily struggles and also to tell their untold stories to the world. These art works also depict the idea of the forgotten relevance of their education and children's health in my country and around the world. The unconcerned attitude of the adults who witness the agony and deprivation that these children go through plays a big role in my work too. My large painting expresses the activities, behaviors, emotions, and the spirits of these children through their work load, body forms, and facial expressions created in acrylic paint. My poster designs tell the realities or behind-the-scenes of how most of these children are treated and overworked.

My short story, 'Noela and the Money-Making Machines' tell the story of a child who loses his life as a result of working as a child laborer. This story depicts the reality of most child laborers. My hope is to create more awareness on the subject of child labor and its effects through my works.

EXHIBITS

It has always been my desire to write and illustrate short stories that depict the harsh realities I witnessed as a child growing up in Ghana. *Noela and the Money –Making Machines* is a short story about a little girl who was born and raised in the United States of America. She relocated to Ghana with her parents when she was 10 years old. She visits her grandmother in the village where she witnessed the untimely passing of a young child laborer. Noela is exposed to the bizarre way in which this child's death is treated as a normal thing and how she is persuaded to speak up for the children of the town. Although this is a fictitious story, it does have some elements of truth and true reflections of what some of these children go through.

I created my main character; Noela, who happens to be my niece, born and raised and currently resides in the United States of America because I wanted a character that had lived in a different environment and had never witnessed children who work at such tender ages. I wanted a character that could not fathom the thought processes of adults that encourage these acts. In the end, Noela voices out her opinion to the entire community in hopes that the elderly will eventually act against the act of child labor.

This short story illustrates a lot of realities that most child laborers are faced with or bound to experience at some point in their lives. There are also many instances where the story reveals a lot of Ghanaian traditional values and cultural aspects. The story was written for all age groups since the topic of child labor affects each and every one of us, directly or indirectly.

Aside the cultural values that this story introduces to readers from different cultural backgrounds, there are a lot of lessons to learn from reading this story. The introduction of the Kente cloth; which is a colorful woven cloth with intricate design patterns, introduces people of other cultures to the some of the rich cultural heritage. Children's books are known to be a necessity for a child's growth because it is through stories that a child is taught how to build their confidence level, introduced to other languages, develop their imaginations, taught how to cope with their feelings, amongst others. While all these are very good aspects of a child's development, hardly do we see children's book that introduces a child to some harsh realities of life.

The highest point in this short story is at the very end of it where Noela is pushed into confronting the adults in the society by making them know what their negligence is causing the younger generation. It is most successful because it took a younger person to point out the problem to the adults. It is arguable that the adults may not necessarily accept and head to the little girl's advice, but at the very least, they will be forced to think a lot deeper about it.

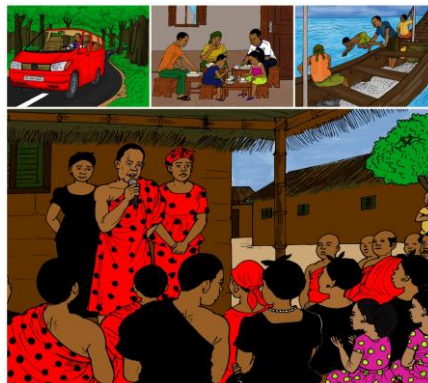


Figure 14: Patience Mensah-Bonsu, Illustrations from 'Noela and the Money-Making Machines'



Figure 15: Patience Mensah-Bonsu, Selfie

‘Selfie’ is a series that reveals the realities or ‘behind-the-scenes’ of what really happens to child laborers. In May 2015, I travelled to Ghana to conduct research on the activities of child labor. I had the opportunity to interact with some children and their stories were heartbreaking. After several minutes of interactions, some of the children confided in me on how their masters maltreated them. One of the children, a young boy who worked with a fisherman was punished for leaving his job post to play with some of his friends. For his punishment, he had to go through the rest of the day without food. As I talked to this boy, I could feel the intense fear in his tone. He would occasionally look around to make sure his master does not see him talking to me.

Many of these children were subjected to several punishments; physical and emotional pain was also used as a control mechanism on these children. Their masters sometimes treated them nicely when there are onlookers, but it is a reverse situation when they are left alone with them. Most of these child laborers, especially the children that work for strangers, are usually made to put up a happy and smiling face so for the world not to know they are treated poorly. This further buttresses my earlier thoughts that these adults are very much

aware of their actions and its effects on these children. Growing up in Ghana, I realized that most of these adults were subjected to one or more of these similar treatments in their childhood. It comes as a surprise that they do nothing to make the situation better for the younger generation.



Figure 16: Patience Mensah-Bonsu, Memory lane

Memory lane is a large mural that expresses the activities, behaviors, emotions, and the spirits of child laborers through their workload, body forms, and facial expressions created in acrylic paint. This image describes my memory of some of the typical daily activities of some of the children that I got the privilege to interact with as I was growing up in Ghana.

I created this image on a large scale to remind myself of the conditions and situations that these children go through. The image was created to seem like a town or village or even a city, filled with children who are doing all kinds of jobs. The image reflects the inability of the children to escape this reality. They have been placed closely and there is a lot of overlapping, which suggests the impossible free movement of these children, and how their futures are predetermined for them. I used black and white in this image to create high

contrast and also to set the mood for my viewers on the dark story that emerges from the imagery.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Nelson Mandela's quote, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children," reminds me of how society contributes highly to the assault of these innocent ones. We look on and do very little to address the issue of child labor, child abuse, child prostitution and the likes.

One of my objectives for writing this paper has been to discuss some of the ways that art has been used as a tool to make conversations on social issues. I stand firmly at this stage with the notion that art can change society. The process to this change may be slow, but it can definitely have a positive impact on people through in the long run. As an artist, I constantly battle myself with questions like: how can I change things? How can I do something for a small community? One of the questions is: should I do something good for somebody, and not make myself rich?

Society will do a lot better should the issues surrounding a person's development be addressed at the earliest stages of their lives. While there are many physical dangers related to child labor, the psychological effects are perhaps an even bigger problem that must be examined and addressed. Without awareness of such effects, many children who are subjected to this harsh reality will grow to become the very group of people that society despises.

Artists have used art as a social call and it's been effective in its course. My hope is for many artist to join in this course and used our creativity to inspire the worlds to effect change. To record the world, to give form to the intangible: ideas, philosophies, mythology, feelings,

to reveal hidden truths, and to help others see the world in a new way is what I believe art has to target. I believe that many of us have survived today because of the ever-growing desire of mankind to cause a change and make a difference in every way possible. Hence, my desire to use my art to effect changes in society.

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