

YOUNG **HUMAN RIGHTS** **REPORTER** **OF THE YEAR**

Albinism- is everything black or white?

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Then they came. There was a bang and I woke up with a start. There were two men: one holding my husband down and the other holding a machete. I stared in horror, unable to move. Suddenly, a ghastly sound broke through the wall which separated me from my children. Finally, the sun rose and the men no longer had the discretion of the darkness. They ran. I rushed to the aid of my children. There I stood and watched my world fall apart before my eyes... there lay my child, one of three, her legs gone and they seemed to have taken her soul. Falling to my knees I cradled the empty cage.

Whose story is this? This is the story of Mary Mathias- the mother of two young albino girls. She lost her third daughter to what seems to be a ritual human sacrifice. Surely only a delusional, cold blooded killer would have the mind to plot something as horrific as this? Well after the police investigated further into Eunice's (aged 14) death, they uncovered the shocking truth that her own father had planned her assassination.

Unfortunately, this story is one of many. Why? The bones of PWA (people with albinism) are supposed to have magical properties. Gold miners bring bones down into the cave. Fishermen pour potions into canoes. Witch doctors supply these sacrificial atrocities. The average price of an arm or leg can sometimes come to £2,500. Eunice's body is now in a concrete sealed coffin deep underground with no headstone because of fears of grave robbers. Is that right?

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So, what is albinism? Albinism is a genetic skin defect that affects skin pigmentation. They suffer abnormally high rate of skin cancer and super sensitive eyes making it nearly impossible to go out in daylight. Tanzania is one of the places where PWA live in fear the most. Unfortunately, albinism is among the highest in the world at one in 1,400 in Tanzania. In Tanzania a report from Under the Same Sun shows that from 2006-2012 there were 119 reports which included: 71 murders, 31 survivors; most are severely mutilated, 15 grave robberies and 2 failed grave robbery attempts.

Many charities work in Tanzania improving the lives of the 270,000 albinos. But what can you do? How many more stories do you need to hear before you leave the popcorn on the sofa with the remote and do something about it? How long will it before witch doctors are brought to justice? Tanzania is not the only part of Africa where albinos live in fear. Look it up. How many stories can you find? How many heartbroken families remain?

Years ago albinos lived in fear of the sun's harmful rays. Now they live in fear of their lives: that they might go to bed and not wake up in the morning. To any PWA reading I ask you- What are you more afraid of, Day or night?