

The chang'aa brew essay



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drinking culture tends to persist in many African cultures.

3. The effects of chang'aa. As mentioned earlier, certain additives put into the drink during its preparation are the ones which make changaa lethal. For example, the rate of fermentation of maize and sorghum is sometimes increased by adding Jet fuel or battery acid. The drink is also sometimes contaminated with methanol, and faeces are also used to contaminate water for making the drink.

According to a reporter, Daily Nation, Monday June 28, 2010 page 4, When 13 people in Shauri Moyo, Nairobi were killed after consuming illicit liquor in late May 2010, some of the chemicals found in the drink were methanol, propanol, and ethanol. These chemicals are usually used in industries for industrial purposes and when they are added to changaa it is not surprising to see that they evoke some very fatal effects on the drinkers. The Economist also reports that when the police recently carried out raids on changaa dens in Nairobi, decomposing rats and women's underwear were found in servings of changaa.

The writer adds that the price and the potency of the drink are more tempting than the heavily taxed bottles of beer that are the staple of richer Kenyans. The effects of changaa are varied.

They include blindness, psychological effects, loss of control, rampant spread of HIV/AIDS, poverty, and in extreme cases, death. Methanol in the drink is believed to be the one that causes blindness. Ten milliliters of methanol can burn the optic nerve and the higher the dose, the more fatal the effects.

Because of excessive drinking of changaa, the drinkers often lose control of themselves and engage in sexual relations without protection, thus facilitating the spread of HIV/AIDS. Changaa drinking also contributes to poverty because the drinkers do not look after their families and the little money they get, they spend on the drink. Joy Wanja reports that the women in Muranga are deeply saddened by the harm that cheap liquors has caused to their sons and husbands.

Money earned by the young men hardly reaches home because they spend their wages on alcohol, leaving their children and wives in hunger and desperation. Some high octane fuels added to changaa are very potent. For example, lead, found in the fuels usually does irreparable damages to the drinkers. Dahn Batchelor, a Canadian Newspaper columnist and Lawyer, in his article 'The Dangers of drinking homemade alcoholic brews,' notes that Lead poisoning results in blood-pressure increase and damage to vital organs, especially kidneys, hearts and brains.

The victims of lead poisoning eventually die, and if not, they suffer from mental retardation. Ethanol is very toxic; it causes blindness and death. When consumed in changaa, it causes damage to anyone who has it inside his or her body. The brewery owners also experience some indirect effects. They cannot sleep because the hangaa customers are always coming and they are usually very noisy when drinking. 4.

Possible solutions to changaa drinking.

As seen above, the effects of changaa on its drinkers are very lethal and need to be averted in any way possible. Some solutions to this vice can be

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proposed as follows: Police have often carried out raids in changaa dens, many litres of changaa are usually destroyed and the brewers charged in court. But still, changaa drinking has proved to be hard to control. The raids are sometimes not successful because of corruption. In a recent development, Members of Parliament in Kenya proposed a