

Superstitions that kill

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“ Innocent people are being killed. My friend was chopped up like a potato, cut, cut, cut, again and again” said Josephat Torner, an albino activist from Tanzania, in the documentary film “ In the Shadow of The Sun” by Harry Freeland. Albinism, which is a genetic condition in which there is a lack of melanin causing one to become pale, is the main cause of brutal killings in east Africa.

Tanzania which is dominated mostly by dark skinned africans is famous for witchcraft. These witch doctors believe that the limbs and arms of an albino will bring luck and fortune. Such controversies and myths leads the albinos to live a dangerous life filled with fear. Superstitious africans believe that the body parts of an albino is worth a lot of money, therefore they are compelled to hunt and kill these light skin humans in return to gain wealth. Witchcraft is the main reason these africans seek fortune in albino limbs. It is said that the arms and limbs of an albino is worth from \$500-2, 000 dollars in the black market.

When questioned by Torner, the witch doctor replies “ We call you a spirit because a white person like you is called the devil”. Outraged by his answer Tornor fires back “ you’re saying I’m a white demon? we are demons?” , “ yes, because you’re white” declares the witchdoctor proudly. Many witchdoctors like this one strongly believe in this incredulous myth. The body parts of an albino is made into potions for healing and removing evil spirits. Since 2007, 57 albinos are reported murdered in Tanzania. These murders include adults and childrens from various age groups.

Activists like Josephat Torner is raising awareness to this horrendous act. Although it is illegal to kill albinos, some find a way to get around the law. However the killings have decreased from 2000 to 2013 due to the involvement of media and press which captivated the attention of many civilians that now fight against this cruel act.