ACHOM
AND THE ONLINE BULLIES

A STORY BY SAFE SISTERS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE TTAALA PROGRAM UNDER DEFENDDEFENDERS
ACHOM IS A MASS COMMUNICATIONS GRADUATE WHO HAS JUST BEEN PLACED AS AN INTERN AT A HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATION.

NEEMA ALSO RECENTLY JOINED THE ORGANISATION AS A FIELD RESEARCHER AFTER FINISHING HER JOURNALISM DEGREE.

FAHEEMA IS AN ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER WHO HAS BEEN AT THE ORGANISATION FOR 3 YEARS.

WAIRIMU HAS BEEN WORKING AT THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PAST YEAR AS AN IT SYSTEMS ADMIN.
THAT IS TODAY’S WORKLOAD DONE!

NOW IT IS TIME FOR SOME CHILLING AND RELAXING.

LET ME CHECK SOCIAL MEDIA.

Priest to reward virgin girls

743 likes

User99
Women should get married by age 25 and start having kids

User79
Do women belong in the workplace or the kitchen?

User42
My wife cooks and cleans and I take care of all the bills.

User20
I’m single and happy.

Relevant people

Maggie Peterson — Following
I am a social media junkie, I love to read, write, and play with my cat.

Trends for you

#100Days

LOL!

HAH HAH!

PEOPLE ARE NUTS.

TWEETS DON’T SLEEP.
Repying to @News101

Before I even think of getting married, I have to buy my own plot of land, my own car and my own retirement plan.
LEAVE SOCIAL MEDIA ALONE.

SHUT DOWN

AND WE GO GET OUR DRUNKOWNERS.

CLOSE OF BUSINESS IS CLOSE OF BUSINESS, ACKNOW.

YOU NEED TO LEARN THAT.

OKAY, OKAY.

LET'S GO GET THOSE DRINKS.

I'VE SHUT DOWN.
I don't know why you think I could wake up something like this.

Hah hah hah!

That is what the man told me!

Achoo!

What did we agree about phones and coffee-time?

Okay, okay. I'll put the phone away.
That was a nice evening.

De-stressing with the girls.

SO RELAXING.

NOW, LET ME CATCH UP WITH THE SOCIALS.

Abdul
Now, who does this woman think she is? She is even ugly!

Show replies

Ojan
Go back to your grandfather's cave, you beast!

Omersha
Feminist! You just need a man to get you!

Karmu
This she-goat! We know you live in Nauliya alone!
A SOUL PERSISTS WITH HIS INSULTS, IN FACT, HE TOO GATHERS A GROUP OF T‘TROLLS’ TO EXPAND THIS ATTACK ON ACHOM. AFTER 9 WEEKS OF CONSTANT ABUSE, ACHOM IS FORCED TO GO OFFLINE.

A DAY AFTER SHE MADE THE DECISION TO SELF-SENSOR, SHE WAS WALKING INTO HER DRIVEWAY CORRIDOR AND FOUND A BOX MARKED WITH HER NAME AND TELEPHONE NUMBER.
For the next two days she was confined at home and was very afraid to go to the nearby shops or say hello to her neighbors.

Am I being followed?

Could these men actually make a move on my life?

She remembered the time when she was a child and faced bullying from her classmates about her weight and appearance. It had been a long struggle to regain her confidence and self-esteem, but even that seemed better than this.

At least then she knew who her attackers were and had the opportunity to speak with them face to face.

This was different. Finding a dead cat on her doorstep on top of weeks and weeks of online abuse was too much. She felt hopeless and alone.

She thought as she cried herself to sleep that night.
I am actually afraid of going online today.

That was traumatizing!

ACHOM!

I have been trying to call you all day!

Your phone is off!

Neeha, I am even afraid of switching it on.

You don't know the hell I have been through.

What is going on?

That tweet I posted two weeks ago! It feels like the whole world is coming after me every minute for it.

Someone has just harassed me a few minutes back.
WHERE IS THIS ACHOM?

YOU, WHY IS YOUR PHONE OFF?

DO WE HAVE TO COME AND LOOK FOR YOU IN YOUR OFFICE?

SHE IS HIDING FROM HER PHONE BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE ATTACKING HER ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

YOU GUYS,

I AM GETTING ABUSED AND THREATENED!

PEOPLE ARE MAKING STATEMENTS ABOUT MY FAMILY, MY BODY.

IT IS CRUSHING ME!

THOSE ONES?

JUST IGNORE THEM.

THEY ARE JUST SCREED GUYS WITH NOTHING BETTER TO DO.

YOU KNOW WHAT YOU SHOULD DO?

FIGHT BACK...
I CAN’T!
IT’S OVERWHELMING!
I AM DROWNING IN ALL THE NOISE!

YOU GUYS,
I COULDN’T HELP BUT OVERHEAR.

SO THAT IS WHY YOU HAVE NOT SEEN YOUR USUAL CHEERFUL SELF, ACHOW.

BECAUSE SHE IS OVERREACTING.

I DON’T THINK YOU ARE OVERREACTING.

Cyber-harassment can take a massive toll on a person.

Warimu decides to offer her friend some advice and shares with her a post about Safe Sisters. In 2018 Warimu had applied and enrolled into the Safe Sister Fellowship Program where she gained skills and knowledge about online safety and other aspects to do with online and offline security.
YOU THINK THAT IS IT?
CYBER-HARASSMENT?

YES.
AND IT IS A BIG PROBLEM, ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN ONLINE.
IT CAN RESULT IN ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, AND HAVE LONG-TERM MENTAL HEALTH PERCUSSIONS.
ACHOM, YOU CANNOT JUST BRUSH THIS OFF.

THE NOTIFICATIONS ARE STILL COMING!
OH MY GOD, ACHOM, THE STUFF THESE PEOPLE ARE SAVING IS DISGUSTING!

BUT WHAT CAN I DO?

YEAH WAITING IS RIGHT.
THIS IS TOO MUCH, WE MUST DO SOMETHING.

I KNOW OF AN ORGANIZATION CALLED DEFENDDEFENDERS, THEY RUN A PROGRAM ON SAFE SISTERS.

SAFE SISTERS IS A FELLOWSHIP THAT TRAINS WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS, JOURNALISTS, MEDIA WORKERS, AND ACTIVISTS, TO BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO DIGITAL SECURITY CHALLENGES THEY FACE IN THEIR WORK AND DAILY LIFE.

THROUGH A COMBINATION OF SELF-STUDY, TOOL PRACTICE, MENTORSHIP, WORKSHOPS, DEEP SHARING, AND SMALL GRANTS, THE PROGRAM SUPPORTS WOMEN TO JOIN FORCES TO TAKE ON THE MOST PRESSING DIGITAL CHALLENGES THAT ORDINARILY WOULD ENSNARE THEM FROM BEING ABLE TO LIVE AND BE SAFE ONLINE.
THANKS GIRLS.

LET'S VISIT:
HTTP://DEFENDERSDEFENDERS.ORG/
OUR-WORK/TECHNOLOGY-
AND-DIGITAL-SAFETY-/SAFE-
SISTERS/
AND APPLY TO JOIN THE PROGRAM

ACHOM SEES THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY
TO COME OUT OF HER SHELL, AND IS CONVINCED THAT
IF SHE JOINS SAFE SISTERS,
SHE WILL BE HELPS TO COMBAT
THE BULLIES ONLINE AND ENCOURAGE OTHER WOMEN.

SO, SHE SUCCESSFULLY APPLIES FOR THE SAFE SISTERS' PROGRAM.
SHE ATTENDS THE TRAINING AND MEETS
VARIOUS OTHER WOMEN WITH WHOM SHE SHARES HER STORY.

THROUGH THEIR SHARED EXPERIENCES AND INTERACTIONS,
ACHOM EMERGES RE-ENERGIZED AND MORE RESILIENT TO
START A CAREER IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONTINUE HER HUMAN RIGHTS WORK,
READY TO CONFRONT BULLIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSERS HEAD-ON.