

Yvan Darcy Iteriteka

Tujenge Scholars Program

### **Challenge the common view, and do what is right**

It was in the night around 8pm, when a friend of mine called Patient and his siblings perceived loud voices of people outside the gate. They rushed outside to find out what was going on. When they opened the gate, they saw many people surrounding a person who was lying down on the ground. They immediately assumed the person had fainted or was drunk given that it is common in the neighborhood.

As they approached, they saw a young lady lying down in agony and defenseless after receiving beatings. My friend Patient quickly asked one of the people in that crowd what happened to the young lady and why they were beating her, spitting at her, and abusing her with all kinds of insults. He was told that the lady on the ground is a housemaid. She tried to commit suicide and was found lying down on the street after drinking poison.

The first people who found her lying down and shivering gave her milk in an attempt to revive her, but she refused. Once people found out she tried to end her life and refused to take milk, they were very upset with her. After her refusal to drink the milk, the crowd agreed to force her to drink the milk which resulted in beating her when she resisted. They were just angry at her and none of them tried to see things from her side or talk to her in a sympathizing and concerned manner. All they could see was a stubborn girl who wanted to kill herself and did not want any help. What they did not know was that she was pregnant and the one who impregnated her denied her.

Seeing how she was being treated, Patient decided to give her a hand. He went where that lady worked as a housemaid. Once he reached that house, there was only one girl in her twenties called Rebecca. She was aware of what was happening but she was confused and did nothing. He asked her if she had money and she told him that she only had five thousand Burundian francs (about two US dollars). They went together where the housemaid was laying in the street. Rebecca stayed with her and Patient went to call a taxi so that the housemaid could be brought to the hospital.

When Patient brought the taxi, he was shocked to hear some people telling the driver not to transport the lady because she was about to die, and she may die in his taxi, and then he may also have problems because of this. They said this to make him afraid so that he would refuse to transport the lady. The taxi driver was declining to take the five thousand francs that he and Patient had already agreed on. The driver seemed to change his mind due to what the crowd was telling him, and began asking for twenty

thousand francs instead. This was a way of denying to take her, because he knew that Patient did not have that much money.

Patient eventually convinced the driver to take her. They put the lady in the car, accompanied by Rebecca. The next day, Patient received a visit from the housemaid's boss. She came to praise him for the good he did because if he was not there on that day, the lady could have died. She told him that she was not around when the incident happened. She also informed him that the lady was healthy and she was about to leave the hospital and return to her village. He was ecstatic to hear that his simple actions saved somebody's life.

This story made me realize how we can easily confuse right and wrong if we base our judgment solely on the obvious or popular view. If my friend Patient had not taken that bold decision in helping this young lady, those who were beating her would not have realized that what they were doing was wrong. Although they intended to help her at first, they were doing it in the wrong way.

This incident enlightened me that the line that separates right from wrong is sometimes blurry, and therefore, we should be very careful when deciding what action is the right thing to do. I learned a great lesson from my friend's action that the right thing is not easy and may not always be obvious. Often, people judge someone's action to be right or wrong based on the common view of the majority before carefully and objectively evaluating the full story and understanding why someone took a particular action. Similarly, we often decide what it is the right thing to do based on prejudice. But each story is unique. In this story, people were very quick to judge the housemaid, and did not put in any effort in trying to understand why or what lead her to decide to commit suicide. I learned that the right thing does no harm and comes to the rescue of those in danger. To do the right thing also requires self determination to challenge the common view in search for the truth, and to put ourselves in other people's shoes when making judgments.