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Fact to Fiction: The brutal truth about the practice of stoning

By Brooke Sikula

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"Like humans void of soul or mind, they jeered and yelled as they went about selecting their most jagged stones." - David Hearne, excerpt from *Hulagu's Web*.

Stoning is a brutal and outdated practice that is kept alive only by Muslims under Sharia rule. Although it has been practiced since biblical times, every other culture has systematically ceased the practice in favor of more humane forms of punishment. The torturous sentence leaves the victim in agony. David Hearne, in his book *Hulagu's Web*, shows us how painful it can be. "Terror ripped through her mind...then suddenly the first stone smashed into her..." (*Hulagu's Web*, 64) The only solitude the punished has is that they will soon die.

Stoning is typically a punishment for adultery, although it can also be use for cases of incest and other sexual or "moral" crimes. Typically, a stoning victim is first wrapped in cloth and buried up to the waist for men, or up to the chest for females. Then the crowd is to throw stones at the victim. However, it is very important that, "... no stone should be thrown that should kill with the first or second blow, or so small as a pebble to do no injury to the condemned." (*Hulagu's Web*, 64)

Stoning is a unique form of punishment in that there is no single executioner. The simplistic act of gathering the victim's peers around him creates killers out of everyone.

Today, stoning is only practiced in Islamic culture in order to maintain the submission of its women and those in the lower cast. Only those impoverished or socially unimportant are punished by stoning. This barbaric act parallels those of the 4th century Theodosius who punished those who did not share his religious views. He ordered all non-Christian temples be destroyed and that all heathens be executed unless they convert. His decree now lives on in the hands of religious Islamic tyrants that now employ the brutal act of stoning. These acts of barbarism and violence far outweigh the moral transgression of those condemned.

Stoning has been in practice since biblical times. In the Old Testament, God is quoted as requiring stoning as a punishment for breaking one of the Ten Commandments, particularly for committing

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adultery. However, in the New Testament, Jesus is believed to have replaced that type of punishment for a more humane punishment. He is quoted as having challenged, "he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." This is why stoning has slowly been replaced with punishments that require less involvement of ones peers. As we realize the impact of such a brutal death, we realize that we have no right to take part in killing another when we too have sinned. This imparting of sin on all those who partake in it is the very reason most cultures have abandoned the practice.

We already see a disintegration of the practice of stoning in Islamic culture. Only those under Sharia rule still practice it. In this culture, there is no distinction between religious and governmental law. Religion is governmental law. More information on Islam and Sharia law can be found at <http://answering-islam.org.uk/>. Among the countries that still practice stoning are Afghanistan, Iran, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates. Other Islamic countries denounce the

practice as inhumane and indicate that the Qur'an provides no grounds for such a vicious practice. Those who practice stoning claim that it is demanded by Islam and have gone so far as incorporating it into their countries penal codes.

From these deep rooted laws regarding stoning, there have been a few recent cases of global interest where stoning has been received as a punishment. In December 2004 a woman in Iran was scheduled to be stoned to death after spending five years in prison for committing adultery. She was one of over 100 to be stoned to death in Iran last year alone. In Nigeria, a woman was sentenced to stoning after giving birth to a baby more than nine months after divorcing. To her good fortune, this sentence was overturned. More instances of recent convictions resulting in stoning can be found at http://www.religioustolerance.org/isl_adul1.htm. With international efforts to stop stoning, the rulings are being overturned with more frequency, hopefully giving less credibility to Sharia law.

David Hearne shows us a heart-wrenching account of a stoning in his book *Hulagu's Web*. He shows us that not only does the victim suffer the agony of the stoning, but also her anguish is unfelt by the executioners who relish their license to kill. "A spray of blood and spit now accompanies her cries of pain...The gore pleased [him], and he gleefully watched the proceedings to ensure that no one used a stone of the wrong size." (*Hulagu's Web*, 64-65) Through this account we can see that the emotional involvement of crowd creates the wrong message. Instead of invoking fear of being stoned themselves, the crowd comes to enjoy a good stoning and thrives off of it. In this fashion, stoning is no longer a form of punishment, rather a form of entertainment that breeds murderers out of ordinary people.

For those doing the stoning, it is a social event that becomes more of a religious sport than a true act of moral self-righteousness. An actual video of a stoning can be viewed at <http://www.iran-e-azad.org/stoning/>. The footage taken in Iran illustrates a party like atmosphere of those carrying out the execution. It is reminiscent of the family picnics at the old Wild West hangings or the popularity of people watching the slaughter of gladiators in early Rome.

Like other diabolical methods of torture, stoning has gone out of style as society realized that having others participate in the punishment of another, even a criminal, devalues life. Stoning also creates fear and terrorizes the minds of others. The Guillotine, whipping, pouring acid on someone or gouging their eyes out with iron have all been gleefully practiced over the ages by zealots. Regardless of the

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how brutal, none of these punishments have stood the test of time. Even those founded in the name of religion have died out because they are cruel and inhumane.

As these diabolical methods have failed, it is important to note one punishment continually in practice: Jail. Imprisonment has been a popular form of punishment because having "...her face pulverized by the stoning," (Hulagu's Web, 64) seems a little extreme no matter what the crime. Even though so many cultures have migrated towards this type of punishment, it is hard for westerners to understand why Sharia Muslims still sanction a punishment this inhumane.

As stoning is done in the name of Allah, Hearne has his character yelling "God is great." (Hulagu's Web, 63) The crowd is egged on even more as they become more involved with the stoning. Perhaps the worst part about stoning is that it brings ordinary God fearing people to actually fear life itself. They are put into a perpetual state of fear such as Hearne's Senator Laforge who imagines her own stoning in a nightmare. (Hulagu's Web, 63) Unable to let the memory go, people in these countries under Sharia rule cower and are plagued with fear of their life ending in such a brutal manner.

Stoning is an act of insanity and must be stopped. That humans should gather around and throw

stones with the intent to take another human life is a hideous thought. Though fiction, David Hearne's book shows us that an individual can be gripped with fear over governmental prosecution. It is the passion shown in his book that gives us cause and hope for change in the world.

For more information on joining the international fight against stoning, visit the following links:
www.stopstoningnow.com/
<http://www.free-minds.org/stoning.htm>

After traveling to over 20 countries, Brooke Sikula has finally settled down in Ventura, CA. She enjoys quilting, home improvement projects and spending time with her husband and 1 year old son. Brooke has a B.A. in History and Spanish and currently works as a freelance writer.

Science Fiction DVD

By David Evermon

The world of Science fiction is a vast one. Millions of fans enjoy their science fiction collection for many different reasons. For example, a science fiction DVD may have tremendous monetary value, sentimental value, or just the value of enjoyment. Whatever the reasons science fiction fans have raised the popularity of owning their own science fiction DVD.

One extremely popular reason of watching science fiction DVD's is that they can be watched over and over again. Some of your favorite television show episodes have now arrived on DVD, which means you can watch your favorite show as many times as you want to, commercial free. Furthermore, fans of science fiction take great pride in owning every science fiction DVD available in a certain category, movie, of a specific actor, or of a television series. They make for great bragging rights when you

attend your next sci-fi convention.

What is great about a science fiction collection is that it can be steadily built, with very little monetary investment for the most part. Now do not get me wrong, some specific science fiction DVD may cost you quite a bit of cash. However, for the most part, you can build an extremely vast collection without much of a dent in your wallet. For example, if you are looking to build your science fiction collection or start one for the first time, you could consider looking online to find a cheap science fiction DVD.

There are many places you can look, for example, there are complete websites available to you on the internet that caters only to science fiction fans and movies. Furthermore, you can save even more money by visiting auction sites such as eBay or find a wholesale distributor to save money on a science fiction DVD. Some other places you may be able to save big money on your science fiction collection is in general merchandise stores such as Wal-Mart or K-Mart.

You do have the option of shopping at specialize movie stores; however, you should expect to pay a little more money at these places. You could also find a cheap science fiction DVD in a video rental store. It may be a previously viewed movie, but it will still be cheaper than buying elsewhere.

Many fans looking to buy a science fiction DVD, may not even watch the DVD at all. It may be a special part of their collection. After all, many things are worth more when still in the original packaging, in mint condition, and has never been opened or used. This gives the science fiction more trading and selling power. Trading a science fiction DVD is a popular activity in the collecting world. Perhaps one person has a real desire to have a DVD that is in your science fiction collection, while they may have something of equal value that you have been looking so hard for. This again, gives you trading power, especially if the science fiction DVD is in good to mint condition.

David Evermon has been involved in many environment related projects, writing on many subjects including his science fiction hobby, David writes articles at



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