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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

This is a recent event that took place in 2020 and it brings to fore problems that communities face when confronted by reckless and mob mentality driven by youths operating in groups.

These deindividualized persons have become a big problem in both urban areas and the quite rural villages. In the villages, people cannot afford justice in the courts and can only accept the vicious outcome of mobs and group activities while waiting upon the supernatural judicial system to enforce judgement.

Achiengy

HOMA BAY BODA BODA RIDERS

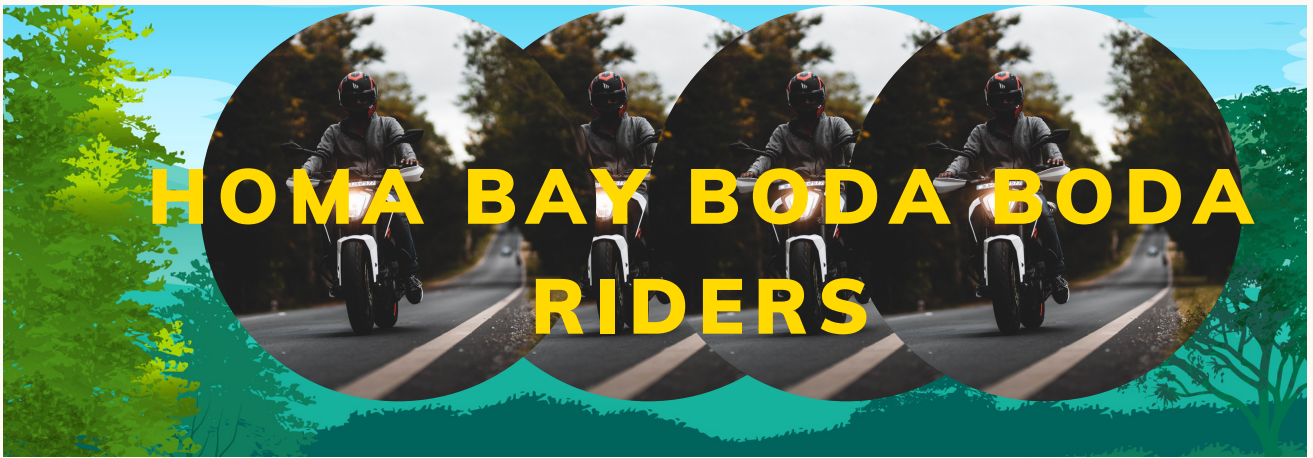


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Achiengy



In the County of Homabay in the year 2018, a boda boda rider weaved his way into the Ramba hills into the small village of Kanyikela to drop off a customer. He came to a stop when he realized that his motor bike was not going to climb the hill with the customer and his many luggage.

He pleaded with the customer to get off so that they could finish the journey on foot as circumventing the downhill path was not going to be easy on the motorbike. He promised the customer that he would help carry the luggage to the destination. It was not far and the customer agreed.



He then moved his boda boda near a home and packed it on a nearby tree close to the gate of the home. He could not see anybody whom he could tell that he was leaving his motor bike behind and so he left it, after all, he was not going to take long. Putting the customers' luggage on his back, he carried another piece on his hand and with the customer leading the way, they proceeded on a journey that was expected to take about 20 minutes.

Min Ajwang had gone to fetch water from the nearby stream. Carrying water on her head, she entered the compound and set the water on the ground. The first thing she saw was the boda boda at the gate. She called out to the children she had left in the house and having no response, she concluded they must have left for school.



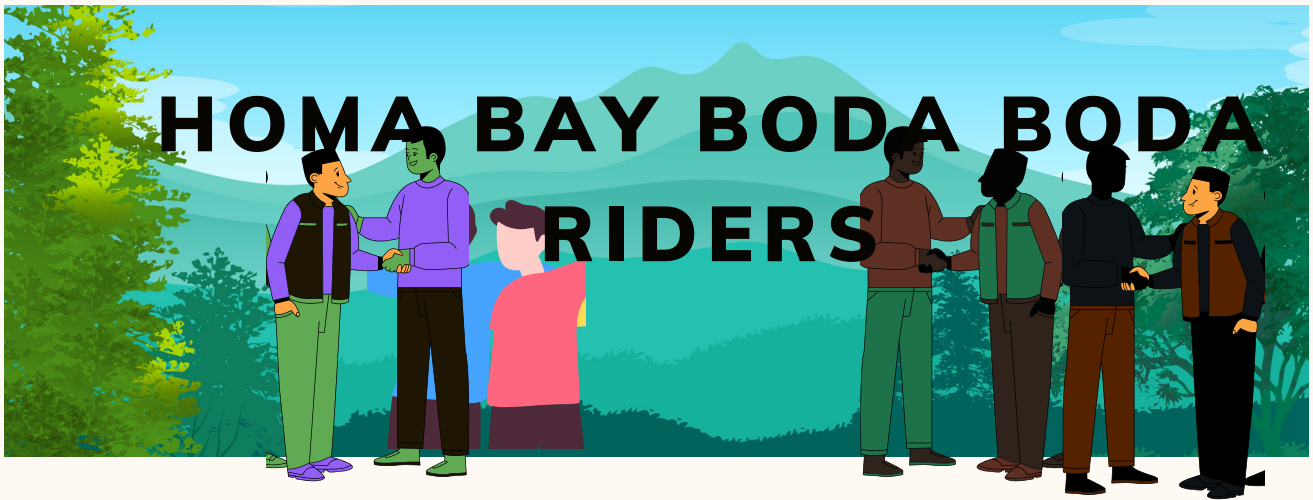
HOMA BAY BODA BODA RIDERS

She went to the gate to look at the boda boda and realized that there was no one nearby. She asked loudly, “yawa, mato kare apiko nga”, she wondered loudly. She went inside the house to store the water that she had just brought from the river. She came out again and looked at the gate and the boda boda was still there. She swept the house and cleaned the ground. She then went and picked a b hoe to go weed the small kitchen garden, which was not far. As she was walking to the garden, the boda boda at the gate was still in her mind and she kept on thinking, “ who is the owner and why did he leave it at her gate”. Suppose someone steals it, she wondered?. Eventually, she decided to bring it into the compound for safekeeping. She wheeled it into the compound and kept it under a tree.

HOMA BAY BODA BODA RIDERS



She thought that whoever owned the boda boda, would have to come to the home and inquire. It was better it was kept safe than being left on the road where someone could steal it. She then proceeded to the garden. Shortly afterwards, the owner of the boda boda came and was shocked to see the place where he had kept the boda boda empty. He searched as far as he could with his eyes and even went into the compound. He did not even see the boda boda leaning against the mango tree. He tried to retrace his steps, and climbed the hill to see as far as he could from the lofty position. He remembered that he had not heard any boda boda being driven away as he was always within hearing range.. It was better it was kept safe than being left on the road where someone could steal it. She then proceeded to the garden. Shortly afterwards, the owner of the boda boda came and was shocked to see the place where he had kept the boda boda empty. He searched as far as he could with his eyes and even went into the compound. He did not even see the boda boda leaning against the mango tree. He tried to retrace his steps, and climbed the hill to see as far as he could from the lofty position. He remembered that he had not heard any boda boda being driven away as he was always within hearing range.



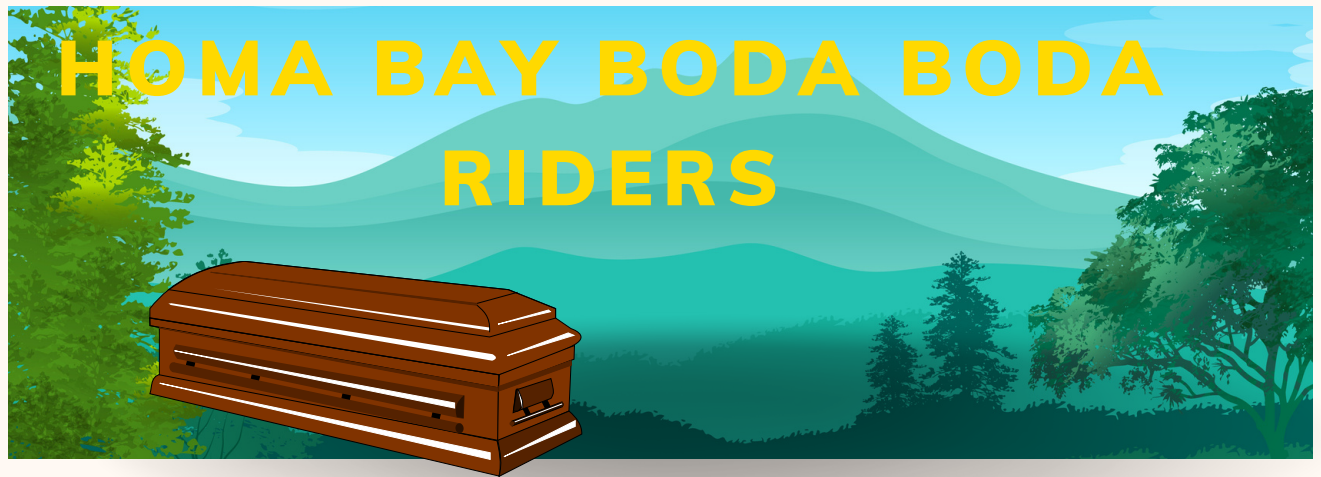
He then decided to go to the shopping centre where other boda boda riders normally packed and shared the story with them. He told them, “ngato omaya piki piki”. They all gathered around him to hear this astonishing story. He narrated the story of the journey and what had happened and then they all decided to go to the scene of the incident. A big convoy of boda boda made their way to the place where the boda boda was lost. On the way, they met a young boy who was carrying some maize to the maize mill.

They stopped him and asked him if he had seen any boda boda going past or anywhere nearby. He told them that there was a boda boda which had been packed at the gate of mama Ajwang and he had seen her taking it inside the gate. The group was furious and they quickly arrived in the home of mama Ajwang. A quick search revealed the boda boda packed beside the mango tree hidden from sight. They started shouting, thief ! thief! thief! . This commotion brought mama Ajwang out of the garden.



She rushed to the compound to find out what was going on. The huge group of young men shouting , clenching their fists, weapons in their hands scared her completely. They told her, are you the one who stole this boda boda. You thought we would not catch you. She tried to explain that she had not stolen the boda boda but had only moved it in for safekeeping. It fell on deaf ears and before she knew it, she was being hit and eventually she was lynched to death.

The young boy coming back from running the errand was shocked to witness the beating and he ran to call for help. It was too late as the boda boda people set the home on fire and left hooting and celebrating. Much later on, he was to narrate to the villagers how he had helped min Ajwang take the motor bike for safe keeping and now the owner of the boda boda had brought thugs to kill her.



It was the most tragic event ever witnessed in this tiny quite hidden village in Ramba, Kanyamwa in the county of Homabay.

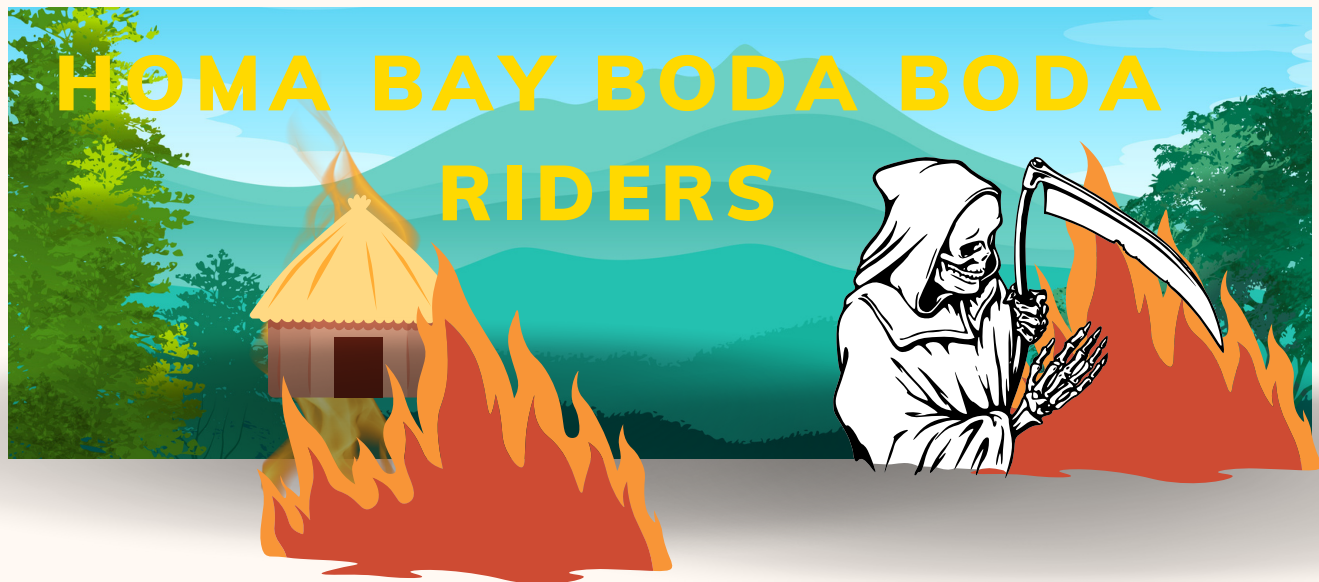
The villagers were inconsolable and the family deeply grieved. They had to deal with deep pain at the cruel nature of the death of Min Ajwang and having no means to pay for justice, they let it go and left it to Nyasaye, God.

They needed space and time to rebuild and heal. Even though the police came to record statements, the case never moved beyond the initial recording. The boda boda drivers who performed this cruel act were shocked at the cruelty of their mistake and while some were remorseful and weighed down by guilt, others managed to shrug off the feeling of shame and guilt more quickly.



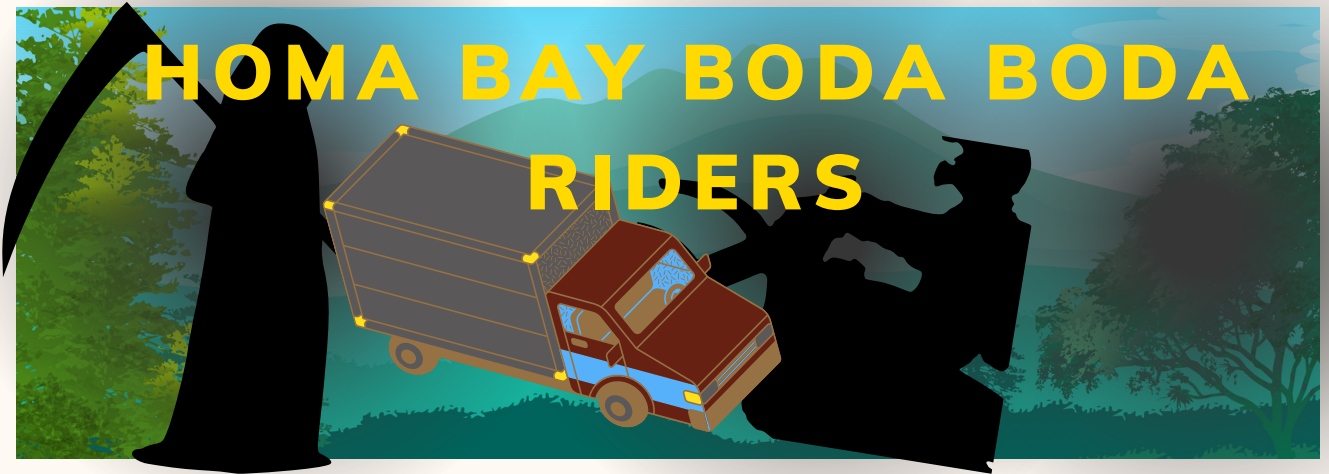
Every innocent blood shed cries out for justice. Every blood shed on the land is never unresolved. It is blood for blood and death for those who kill. The boda boda driver who was the cause of the whole incident put on a brave face but was secretly weighed down by guilt for a very long time. However, over time his conscious eased. And he was able to shake off the feeling of guilt and began to feel more free and less burdened.

One day he was riding home having gone to collect his wife and children from his mother in-laws house. He was carrying them on his boda boda. He was driving at an even pace conscious of the fact that his wife was pregnant with a baby boy.



How he had longed for a son!. At long last, he was now going to be able to establish his home. He was going to be ever so careful on this drive home that was just about 25 Kms. Under normal circumstances, such a journey would take him just under 10 minutes but this time, he was going to drive very slowly. He was carrying his whole family on his back.

A fleeting thought came to him that perhaps, he should have had a friend drop them. A cloud of darkness passed through his mind and he felt a deep sense of foreboding. But he quickly shook it off and decided to go even slower. He was almost on the last corner to his home when for no known reason, the motorbike swerved, got a strange lift of its own and **as he struggled to control it, he lost control completely.**



He ran into a fast on-coming lorry that was ferrying marram. Every member of his family perished, the pregnant wife and his two daughters. The man barely made it to hospital where he kept on asking about his wife and children. No one had the courage to tell him that they were no more. He did not make it past midnight. Justice for the blood of the innocent min Ajwang had just been served.

Accordingly, varying punishment was also visited upon people who took part in the death and destruction of the home and even those who went and only witnessed the vicious act. They did not intervene to stop the brutality and so, they too suffered as they faced the spill-over of the wrath of Nyasaya. In Luo spirituality, there are no innocent bystanders to a brutality. You either stop it or ran away -- those are the ordinances.



The Boda Boda Riders



LESSONS LEARNT

Today, the situation in Luoland is grim. The elders have shut up! There is increased crime and violence in Luo villages where people otherwise used to live in blissful peace and houses did not even have gates or locked doors. There is no knowledge to guide and consult on what should be done about these destructive forces in the community.

Hands that shed blood- bloody hands have far reaching consequences to the culprit and his family !

It is disturbing that the culprits are unaware that their actions have life destroying consequences to themselves and their families. After their vile deeds, they go back to their homes and behave as if nothing happened.

The intransigent nature of a youth that cannot be corrected or advised fuels the fire. They are rowdy and self-destructive and seem to seek a “futureless future”.

Achieng