



Arts & Ink

- A JOURNAL

STORIES



Non-fiction,
Small poems,
Commentaries.

ART



Painting,
Charcoal, Pencil
Art.

EMOTION!



Feel! Get angry.
Make a difference.

Issue 1:
- A commentary on
sexual violence.

“

Lonzen Rugira
@LonzenRugira
(Twitter)

The threat of rape is already violence. The idea that a woman should feel threatened by the potential of rape when in contact with a man is already violence.

we got to get to the root of the problem: cultural conditioning that sustains that threat.

”

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Dedication

For Women.

We set out to do so much with this issue.

But this was a first attempt, and through the many curve balls, this is what we ended up with. We're proud of it.
We're proud of you.

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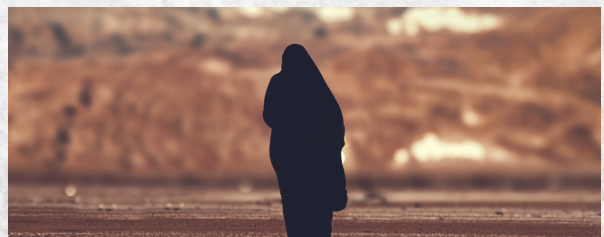


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Editor's note

Consent;
Verb

Definition-to agree to do or
allow something: to give
permission for something to
happen or to be done.

Because too many women
have had to say #metoo.
Because our bodies belong to
us. Because silence is a tool
of oppression.

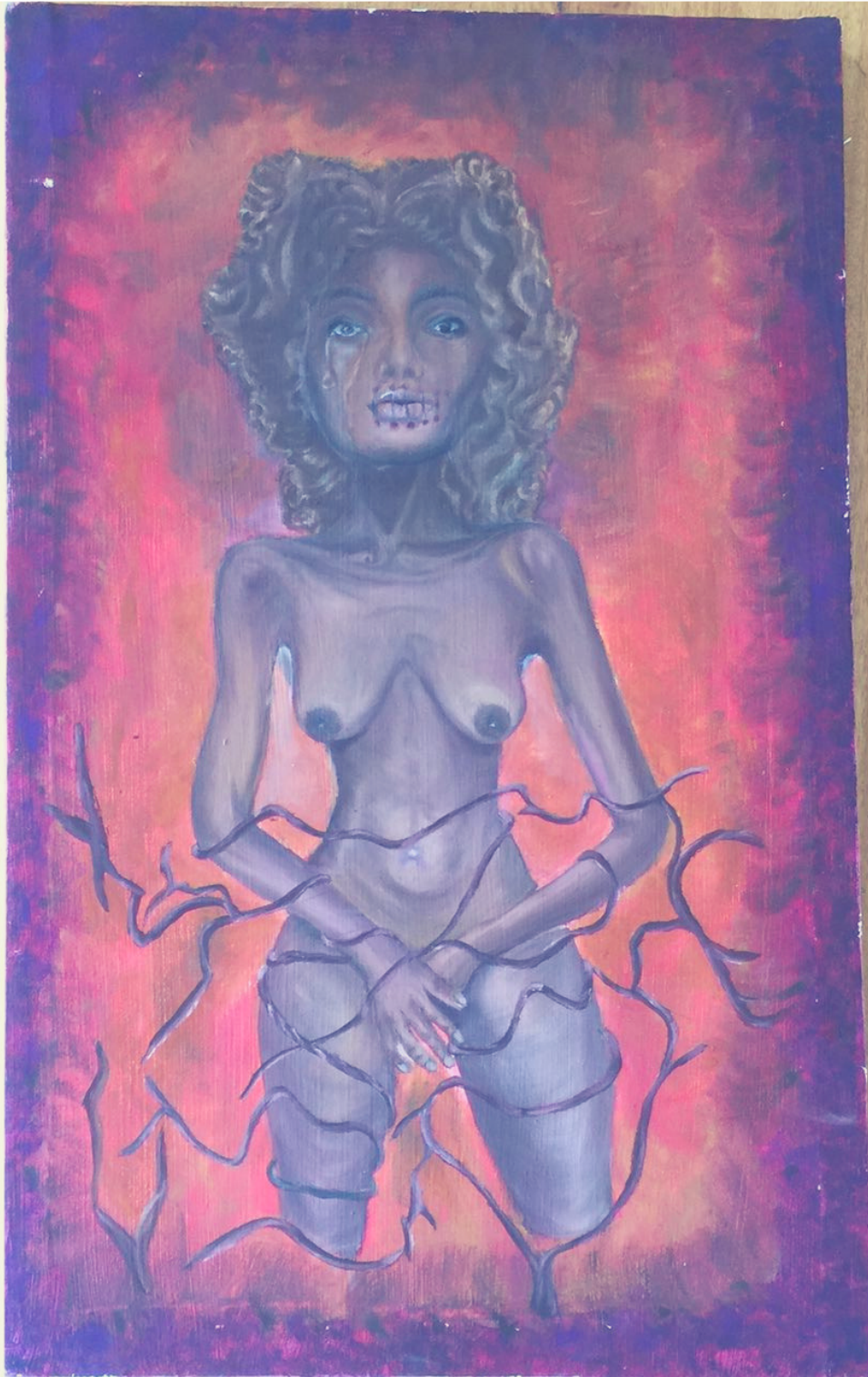
Talk. Hell, scream!

We give you a humble,
amateur attempt at a digital
publication.

Enjoy.

-Clarie-

Trapped



Trapped

THE ART COMMENTARY

I spend my nights awake in bed not for lack of trying, but because I can't possibly sleep//yet all I want to do is sleep, because when I sleep I will forget everything. Nothing is going to matter because I'm asleep. Instead my head is spinning. My mind buzzing with a million thoughts. I feel trapped in my own skin...should I quit my job because my boss won't stop touching me inappropriately, should I move out of my apartment because my landlord brushed his arms knowingly against my boobs, should I walk home because the motorbike guy spanked me....but wouldn't that put me in a more precarious situation

And more importantly. Who's to guarantee that wherever I go the situation is going to be better, I feel so objectified. So dirty. We are taught to embrace our femininity and our sexuality. But men my age all classify us as "hoes" when we try to. What should I do? What am I going to do? How am I going to survive? I can't talk about it. The world is definitely going to blame me. After all. I exposed too much of my curvy and delectable body...I just want to sleep...please let me sleep. All I want to do is sleep. Nothing is going to matter if I do.

_Sandra

Of all injustices
A lack of choice
Has to be the most
robbing of human
dignity.

-consent

*You were nine when he cornered you and made you show him your
vagina.*

He said the only way he'd stop nagging you to go play with him and his brother was if you showed it to him. You were exhausted and creeped out by how he kept showing up in your room. More than anything, you just wanted to go back to reading your book. You lifted up your skirt, stretched your underwear and he giggled. Later that evening as you sat in your veranda, watching the sun caress the hills beyond as it set, you whispered a prayer that he wouldn't tell his friends at school the following day. School was already hard enough being the introverted, misunderstood nerd, you couldn't add vagina-flasher to your list of sins. He was eleven, and even though you couldn't label that knot in your stomach as fear, you were scared. Because after-all, he was kind of your friend. No one is scared of their friends. If boys that age could harass you, the teachers in school would have told you. Your mother would have told you.

You were nineteen when this guy, claiming he liked you, pressed himself way too hard against your breast as he hugged you.

As far as you could remember, you've never liked people touching you. People sitting next to you makes you anxious and queasy. But you liked this one, hell you even wanted to kiss him.

So why did this hug feel so wrong? Were you not being a crazy bitch for feeling offended when just a few seconds ago, you didn't mind hugging him, not so much anyway. Was this harassment? Did it count if you liked him? If he liked you? What kind of indecisive person says yes to a hug, then gets offended mid-hug? A few weeks later, he dared you to kiss him. He was tipsy, you were sober. You agreed to a kiss, he caressed your breasts. You told him to stop, but he was tipsy and you were pressed against a wall. Later in the shower, scrubbing your breasts profusely, cursing your lapse in judgement; for being alone with him, you promised all the deities that were listening that you'd remain celibate for the rest of your life if they shrank your breasts somehow.

*You were four when your sixteen year old neighbor showed you his
penis.*

He told you there is a magical place in your pants, he could insert it and it would feel good. You lay on your mother's bed, he kept asking if it was inside. You couldn't feel anything, but you said yes. He was polite, he asked how it felt, you told him he was heavy. You held on to the bed, stared at the ceiling and waited for him to be done. He heaved, groaned, patted you on the cheeks and slithered out the front door. Later that evening, your mother complained that her cover felt sticky. You couldn't understand why. You forgot about it. You were seventeen when you woke up shaking from yet another recurring dream. You stayed in bed and cried and tried to understand how is that you felt so hurt, twelve years later, when the act itself wasn't even painful. Was it rape if you didn't bleed? Was it rape if he asked how you were feeling? Why were you so emotional, all the goddamned time? What did it matter twelve years later anyway? Who would believe you anyway?

You were eighteen when a boda-boda guy commented about your breasts.

He licked his lips and made a honking motion. You smiled, half-embarrassed, half apologetically. You didn't want to appear ungrateful for the attention. You didn't want to offend him and risk his aggression. While walking away, you heard him remark at your exceptional ability to take complements unlike most women these days. Later, at a sporting event, when a group of high school boys ganged up on this female acquaintance, insulting her because she spoke rudely to a boy who'd catcalled her, you felt the bile in your stomach rise all the way to your throat. They said she wasn't pretty enough to refuse to be objectified. You sat there, fighting tears because you had graciously accepted objectification and still felt ugly. You cried for your gender. You cried for your voice. For being the kind of woman that smiled, instead of causing a scene; screaming, cursing, hell, crying.

You have gone through life feeling like property.

Your mother tells you things like, “don’t wear that short skirt when going to a male friend’s house.” “You left the house in a sleeveless dress? Are you trying to disgrace me, a couple bare arms at a time? Do you not care about your safety?” You wonder if she’s forgotten what it’s like to be a woman. How they have made obsessively worrying about safety the threshold of femininity. Does she not reflexively clutch her keys when the sun sets just in case she’s attacked? Does she not alight a matatu when she finds she’s the only woman on board? Does she remember what it’s like to have male friends that think you owe them sex? Friends who think being a woman’s friend isn’t worthwhile unless they get sex out of it. Does she notice how you sometimes slip up and place a premium on your body depending on how sexually desirable it is to men? Does she notice when you use your clothes as insurance against being slut-shamed? Does she notice how scared you are? Do you forget that she’s scared too?

You were twenty two when she told you it wasn't your fault

You were walking down a busy street when a hawker approached you, haggling you to buy a really large flashlight. The way he held it, it reminded you of your four year old self, stumbling after her breath when your sixteen year old neighbour flashed his penis. You flinched. You panicked. You whispered, begged the hawker to leave you alone. He clicked. He told you to suck his dick. You lost your balance and she steadied you. She stood with you for a while, offering you a bottle of water, telling you not to let it ruin your day. That the hawker is a jerk. That anyone who makes you feel worthless is merely projecting, that it's never about you or because of you. This beautiful stranger on the street, reaffirming that you aren't to blame. Saying, "Hey, you are a person. You are a person. You are a person!" Later that night, you prayed for the first time in years. You begged God, to keep her safe. To keep you safe. To keep women safe.

-Powerless



Respect

Everyone wants to be respected, men command respect simply with their voices, but it seems from the minute we are formed, born and morph each and every day into adulthood, we women have to fight tooth and nail to eventually claw our way into a world where just about a dozen people (men) will treat us with respect. We have to literally beg for respect. Why does it have to be so hard to get men to STOP & LISTEN!!

Why is it so darn hard for you to treat us with respect? After all, isn't it supposed to be a basic human instinct?

-Sandra

There was a full moon and an array of stars the night you misplaced your mind. Three men blew a hole through the wall and forcibly took it away from you. You fought, you begged, but he still made you pull down your pants. He smashed your strength, from your waist, all the way down to your toes with the other end of an axe, and once you were immobilized, he had his way with you. While you didn't feel anything and the doctor at the hospital said it could have been much worse, your mind never fit quite right in your head afterwards. It kept swelling up with questions and agony. Was this the universe's way of welcoming you into adulthood; a gross violation and a God who sent the stars and the moon to illuminate it?

At the hospital, they had to do an MRI right after you swallowed the emergency pills and had your genitals subjected to a procedure the doctor apologized for as it would be the second-most invasive thing you go through that night. Unlike your thighs, your head had gotten the sharp end of the knife. They brought a wheel-chair to wheel you to radiology and in that moment, knowing that part of your hairline had been shaved off, thereby completing your condemnation to a lifetime of strategically styling your hair and lying to overbearing inquisitionists, you were determined to not be the cripple. So you crawled and only after your mother's assurance, that it was merely fatigue and not a life-altering condition, did you settle on that wheelchair. You however, refused to spend the night in the hospital. It didn't matter what the doctor said; how she kept asking if you were sure you were okay to go home, but you really had no idea how you were doing so you said you were. You however did text your friend, who didn't know what to say, but he gave you an outlet. And that was refreshing, because you had screamed so much that night, being finally listened to was a breath of fresh air.

A friend of your dad's drove you home from the hospital. None of your parents asked how you were feeling. Your mother perhaps, had a good reason; she had been raped too. Your father had his reasons too, but discretion wasn't one of them. He told everyone that cared to check up on your family how his daughter had been raped. You just sat there, listening to him tell your story, give away your pain like there was a medal in return, wondering how it was possible to feel so much hate for a parent.

There is no honour in rape, there's no valour in being victimized. All you get is flames in your throat, cracks in your soul and shame that clings to you like soot in a chimney.

You finally got home and there she was, your elder sister, engulfing you into a hug and you cried so much, so hard in a span of one minute. She too, didn't ask how you were feeling, not then, not in the coming days. Taking a shower proved difficult. You didn't know what to do with the lower part of your body. So you just stood there, unsure on how to clean yourself, afraid to touch your skin. Because lathering your skin is easy, erasing your shame, cleansing your hurt, how does one do that?

You found your underwear thrown over the fence a few days later. You took it and hid it in the same place you hid your shame and your guilt; nowhere sufficiently safe. Just like your shame, you were afraid your neighbours had seen it. That it reeked off your pores and everyone could tell just by looking at you.

You've gone back to school. Therapy helped. You testified and helped put one of the culprits behind bars. You are HIV-negative. Your mind isn't tearing itself to pieces anymore. Tall, dark men in hoodies don't make your skin crawl. You are leaving town at nine o'clock in the night and you are going to board a matatu and the darkness and uncertainty that comes with public transport hasn't made you a recluse. It took years but you are finally, genuinely okay. And you know that if you met the guy who did this to you, you'll probably just walk past him and you won't let it ruin your day.

It gets better.

You are a woman however, and that means you are prepared, and strong enough for worse.

-Okay



Scars

THE ART DESCRIPTION

If I woke up and went out and about my day walking with all these scars on my face, I'd be revered, people would avoid contact with me the whole world would go out of its way to stay out of my way or try to make me 'feel' comfortable, because human beings feel guilty and uncomfortable in the presence of other people's ugly scars and pain...in any case, at least then I would have peace of mind and a sense of tranquility in my life

But I'm a sight to behold, I am beautiful. For lack of a better word, and yet I know no peace, and nobody knows of the scars within my heart. They don't know what the men in my life have put me through since i can remember. Heck, it's all I can remember half the time. And it doesn't get any easier. All because my scars are unnoticed. Sometimes it feels like a crime to be beautiful in my world. In this world. Well, on earth.

-Sandra

Darling,
Yes counts for nothing
If no
Isn't free of repercussions.

-no

Before we go..

Creating and compiling this issue was as gutting as it was cathartic.

We had to wade through a tonne of painful, enraging stories and experiences. At the end, we ended up with only a couple for this first issue.

The stories and ideas portrayed in this issue are personal and unique as they are common. That last reason is why we chose to do this. And so while we may have chickened out and couldn't put ourselves into the creative space to tell your stories, we hope you know that your courage, to go back and write about and share some of the most horrendous and violating periods of your life is saluted.

We will do more journals of this nature. We intend to start conversations that need to be had. We intend to make a difference.

We're thrilled to have you with us. To ensure you play a more direct role in the telling of your stories.

*Just because you've
had to grow thorns
doesn't mean you're
no longer soft.*

