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## Art Against Violence: Raising Awareness about the Global Pandemic of Violence Against Women and Girls

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## **Art Against Violence: Raising Awareness about the Global Pandemic of Violence Against Women and Girls**

By Joy Walker<sup>1</sup>

### **Overview of the Project**

This project involves the use of Artworks as a platform to address violence against women and girls in its various forms, but domestic violence in particular. The Activist Art (ARTivism), a is crucial media platform for bringing critical and emotional attention to entrenched societal problems. ARTivism artworks enable viewers to empathize with the Artists, their messages and associated emotions. These artworks build a connection among the viewers, the Artist, and the social issue under artistic scrutiny. Thus, art is a form of therapy where the aesthetics of the artworks, not only appeal to our senses, but also have the power to heal.

The idea is to create a bridge that connects people from their own worlds to the harsh realities of the global violence against women and girls. It is intended to inform, educate, create awareness and light a fire for change around the worldwide and persistent pandemic of violence against women and girls.

### **Objectives of the Online Platform**

The objective of using the online open-access platform of the *Journal of International Women's Studies* (JIWS) to publish the art is to create a unique opportunity to access and address domestic violence. This online exhibition allows artists of all stripes, from all over the world to participate without the barriers of time and distance. We live in a global village that allows us to share a common experience no matter where we live. We seek to call attention to Policymakers, schools, advocates, government and nongovernmental organizations, community leaders, and stakeholders as well as the general public, who can enact change through civic engagement.

### **What is Domestic Violence?**

Domestic violence (also called intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic abuse or relationship abuse) is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control

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<sup>1</sup> Joy Walker is Founder of Women Issues Communication Services Agency (WICSA). A 501(c)(3) organization empowering women to succeed. [www.wicsacom.org](http://www.wicsacom.org)

In 1989, Joy created a travel museum of paintings and sculptures to fight the evils of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Nigeria. Nigerian artists of various stripes submitted different artworks to the theme of "Female Genital Mutilation: The Suffering. The Sorrow. The Setback". The Art exhibits first opened in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1989 and at the IUPUI, Indianapolis, Indiana, before returning to Nigeria. By 2000, the artworks traveled to various parliaments in Europe, such as the British and European parliaments and also showed at various universities. In 2006 the exhibits showed in select United States universities such as Bridgewater State university, Harvard, Brandeis and Cornell universities to mention but a few. The exhibits have contributed immensely to the continuing eradication of FGM and shine light on the plight of victims and those at risk.

over another partner in an intimate relationship<sup>2</sup>. It does not discriminate. Anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion or gender can either be a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence. Domestic violence can happen to people who are married, living together or who are dating. It affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels<sup>3</sup>. Sometimes, domestic violence occurs between family members where it is known as family violence.

Domestic violence takes on different forms such as emotional, physical or economic behaviors. It does not have to be physical. The perpetrator does not have to inflict a physical injury for a victim to be abused. A victim can be subjected to sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional abuse, economic deprivation, immigration related threats, and the threat of child marriage. Many of these different forms of domestic violence/abuse can be occurring at any one time within the same intimate relationship. Domestic violence is any form of oppressive behavior that harms and intimidates the victim into doing what the perpetrator wants.

Although we address domestic violence in its entirety, these exhibits focus on women and girls (including transgender women and girls) who have suffered, suffering or know someone who had suffered domestic violence.

### **Why do People Abuse Others?**

People who abuse others feel like they have power and control over them. They enjoy the power they get from seeing their victims squirm and beg for mercy. They believe their needs are more important than that of their victims and make their victims feel less valuable and deserving of respect in the relationship.

### **How Does One Become an Abuser?**

Abuse is a learned behavior. No one is born an abuser. People learn to become abusive from what they see around them. Sometimes, an abuser may be addicted to drugs and alcohol, which is not an excuse to abuse others. No matter how an abuser comes to be, he or she has a choice, to be an abuser or to rise above it.

### **The Power and Control Wheel<sup>4</sup> Diagram**

The diagram of the wheel below shows the tactics an abusive partner uses to abuse and control the victim in the relationship. The behaviors inside the wheel show the subtle, continual actions that are not physical, the behaviors in the outer Wheel represent physical and visible violence.

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<sup>2</sup>What Is Domestic Violence? (2020, May 16). Retrieved from <https://www.thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/abuse-defined/>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> ibd



Although the Wheel is very representative of Domestic Violence, it is not all encompassing. It is a veritable guide in recognizing abusive patterns. It is hoped that these artworks light a fire within you to propel you to action. It is important that survivors of domestic violence know that there is light at the end of the tunnel.