



VOICE OF THE YOUTH FOR A WORLD
WITHOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Transcendence through the Prism of Youth

AN ART EXHIBITION BY SARA SALEEM DAREDIA & PAUL MICHAEL RIMMER (18 YEARS OLD)
FEATURING RAYANNE IRVING & ANTARES (LIVED-IN EXPERTS/SURVIVORS)

THE RATIONALE

June 23 at 6 pm to June 26, 2022
Innerpeace, Rue de Saint-Léger 22 (Old Town) / 1204 Geneva, Switzerland

The idea of a survivor has always intrigued Paul and I. Around three years ago, Rasha Hammad, CEO and founder of Youth Underground, came to our school with a survivor of human trafficking. We were all moved by his story, but above all, by his courage as he shared his experience with such honesty and detail. Having spent much time together at school, Paul and I had had conversations around how such stories of hardship, gradual acceptance and empowerment greatly inspired us.

Rayanne and Antares are two survivors who have experienced trauma in distinctive ways, at different times and in different places. However, their healing journeys have been turbulent in similar ways. Rayanne was trafficked at age 16 in Vancouver, Canada. 1998, Rayanne was raped for the first time by her boyfriend and his friends. Coming from a dysfunctional family, she was desperate to find the love and affection she felt deprived of at home. She joined a gang with friends that allowed her to feel a sense of belonging. Spending most of her time on the streets, she was eventually taken in by a pimp. Then from one pimp to the next, she experienced severe physical and mental torture as a child forced into prostitution. However, the true struggle began after she escaped the pimps, left alone to deal with her past and build her future. Her healing journey consisted of self-blame, anxiety and drugs. What kept her going was her love for horses, dogs, nature and books. Today, Rayanne is a 40 year old professional horse trainer, advocate, writer, consultant, and host of Focus Forward the Rayanne K. Irving Podcast. She is a lot more than just a survivor of human trafficking. An inspiration for many.

Antares was abused by his father at the age of two. When he would be done using Antares for sexual pleasure, he would share him with his friends. Antares forgot about everything for 20 years. He was very difficult to manage at school. While all his actions seemed to be those of ADD, he was actually suffering from trauma. Life seemed meaningless and he could never

understand why he felt that way. He tried every drug possible because even though his mind probably forgot, his body and soul remembered it all. Antares had his first suicide attempt when he was 14 years old and his last one in 2018, after which he decided to seek therapy which he believes was his best decision. Today, the 26 year old Antares is doing his masters in computer science and business, a part time job and is an activist inspiring people through his blogs and social media presence.

Paul and I have tried to understand and interpret their stories, taking material significance into account, and experiment with various formal techniques, leading us to our six final pieces (three pieces to depict the healing journey of each survivor). Together both stories break many preconceptions about survivors of trauma. Antares being a European white male and coming from a financially viable, intellectual family. Rayanne on the other hand, was trafficked and forced into child prostitution in her early teens in Canada. The pieces are displayed in a linear fashion, taking the viewers on two journeys. While most of them might not be able to relate to the exact experiences of Antares and Rayanne, their emotions are very human. The erratic nature of their healing journeys and the severe anxiety that both of them experienced can be relatable to many struggling with mental health.

In 2021, 934 suicide cases were recorded in Switzerland which was 40% higher than the number of cases recorded the year before.¹ Majority of these suicide attempts are made by the youth.

The aim is to help the viewers feel a sense of empathy towards survivors of trauma. It is an effort to bring a change in society where instead of viewing survivors with pity, their courage is seen as an inspiration. Rayanne's and Antares's dedication to making the world a better place, can be a source of hope for many.

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Sara Daredia and Paul Michael Rimmer © Youth Underground, July 2022.

¹ <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/psychiatrists-worried-about-mental-health-of-swiss-youth/47252882>