DANCE IS MY VOICE

South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan on July 9, 2011 after decades of bloodshed. Unfortunately, the jubilation of independence did not last long. Two years later, a civil war broke out in the capital of Juba leaving hundreds dead and thousands displaced. Defenseless citizens such as women, children, and the elderly were devastated. One in five women in the protection of civilian camps reported being sexually violated since the outbreak of the conflict. Sexual violence quickly became an epidemic throughout the country. Rape is one of the tools being used for ethnic cleansing with absolute immunity. The government works against the interest of its citizens by turning a blind eye to these incidents. The people in South Sudan have fled to other nearby countries to escape the violence.

Violence against women and children in South Sudan inspired me to bring awareness to the situation. My piece is representing the many voices of women and children who have faced sexual violence and felt displacement in their own country. However, my dance navigates the concepts of struggle, displacement, physical violence, and fighting for freedom as stand-alone concepts, without political leanings. The piece is a storytelling, showing the struggle that the women of South Sudan face every day. I wanted as many dancers as possible but decided to focus on eleven dancers because of their strength and courage dancing this material. The costumes I chose highlight the contrast between the villagers and the army in South Sudan. The music is a combination of live singing, live drumming and recorded music. I chose to incorporate all three mediums because I wanted the power of the live performance.

There is still hope for South Sudan that one day everything will come to an end. If there is a God, there is a way.