



KEEP YOUR
HANDS OFF
MY THIGHS,
SSEBO



AKINA MAMA
WA AFRIKA

Hivos
people unlimited

KEEP YOUR
HANDS OFF
MY THIGHS,
SSEBO



Foreword

“This is the first time since my experience that the media has portrayed me in a positive light. It is so comforting to know that I am believed.” - **Racheal Njoroge**, after **Akina Mama wa Afrika** ran the 'We Believe Ad' in support of victims of sexual harassment.

It is rare that women are able to tell their stories through conventional news media. It is even more complex when these stories are about sexual harassment despite the fact that women, world over, continue to face unchecked sexual harassment on a daily basis.

Keep Your Hands Off My Thighs, Ssebo is a compilation of fictionalized accounts of women who have experienced abuse at the workplace, intended to provide a basic and simplified understanding and context of sexual harassment at places of work from a feminist perspective.

These stories of fear, shame, blame and silence depict how the impunity around sexual abuse in the world of work has perpetuated a culture where women constantly bear the burden of public judgement and disbelief. Where you, dear reader, or a woman you know has experienced a form of violence shared here, all the ink in the world cannot express how much we believe you. While it is not our intention that you are triggered, receive love and light in the event that this happens. We stand with you.

These are also stories of courage, solidarity, speaking truth to power and a world where violence against women is not reduced to secrets and whispers in corridors. A world where women are not rendered disposable by their employers when they speak out and where access to justice is not a myth. The book gives life to the ability of women to stand against harassment, reshaping narratives around the vice.

On closing this book, you will be armed with some of the information you need to break the silence on rape, sexual assault and harassment, with full awareness that silence is not an option. Whether it is by suggesting the book as reading text for your next book club, believing a woman who confides in you and supporting her to access justice or starting a petition against sexual abuse at your workplace, your building block to the movement that is stopping sexual harassment at the workplace in Uganda is recognized and appreciated. A world in which workplaces are safe for women and where women work under decent working conditions is possible.

Acknowledgement

The development and publication of this comic book was made possible with support from **Hivos** under the auspices of the **Women@Work Campaign** which advocates for decent work for women in the horticultural sector.

Story by **Pauline Kahuubire**

Illustrations by **Pitch Black Studio**

ONE MORNING...



LATER THAT DAY

THAT IS WHY WE HAVE TO GO OVER THIS ONE LAST TIME TO MAKE SURE IT'S PERFECT. PULL UP THE NUMBERS, PLEASE.

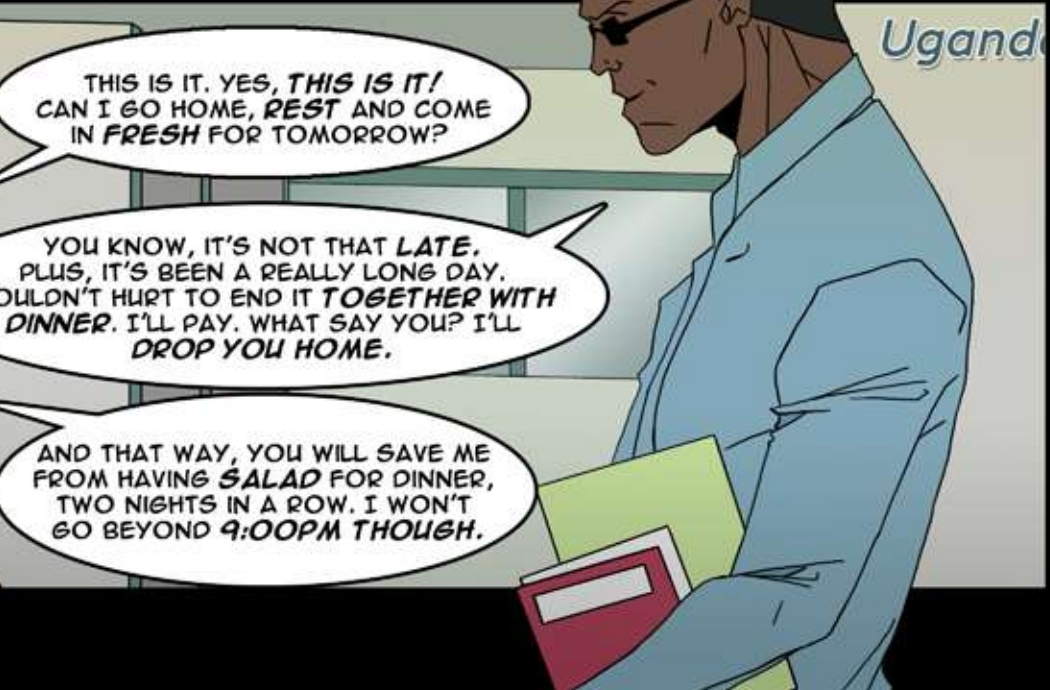


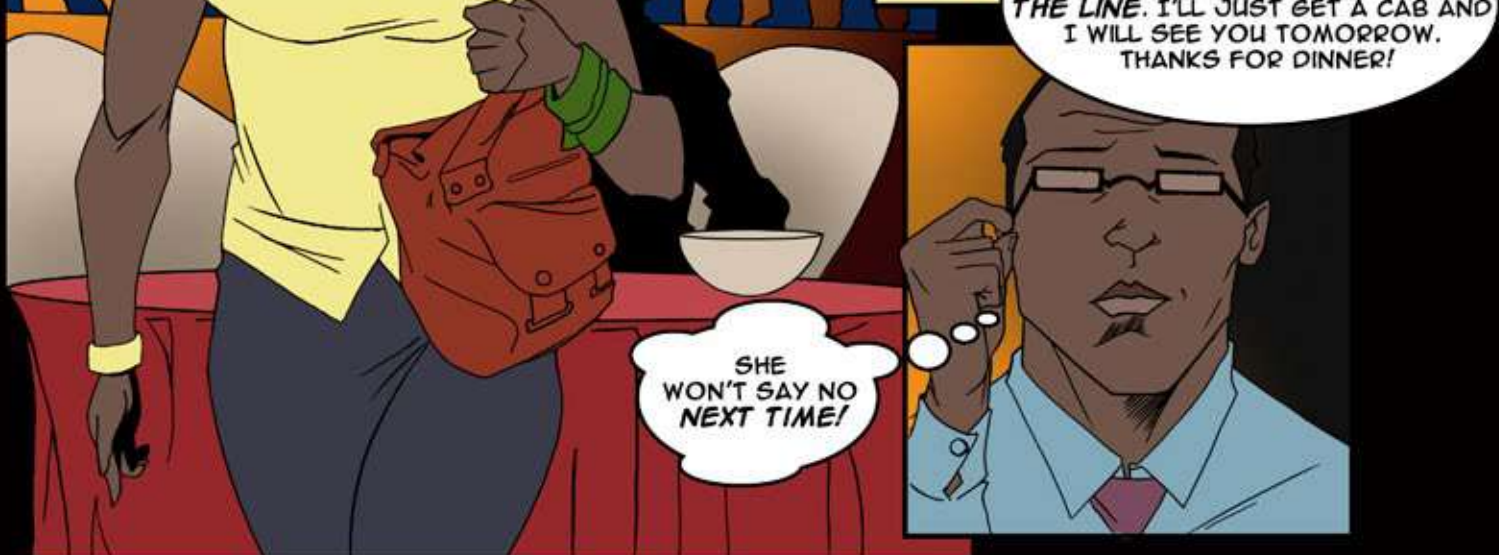
ONE HOUR LATER

THIS IS IT. YES, THIS IS IT! CAN I GO HOME, REST AND COME IN FRESH FOR TOMORROW?

YOU KNOW, IT'S NOT THAT LATE. PLUS, IT'S BEEN A REALLY LONG DAY. WOULDN'T HURT TO END IT TOGETHER WITH DINNER. I'LL PAY. WHAT SAY YOU? I'LL DROP YOU HOME.

AND THAT WAY, YOU WILL SAVE ME FROM HAVING SALAD FOR DINNER, TWO NIGHTS IN A ROW. I WON'T GO BEYOND 9:00PM THOUGH.





THE NEXT DAY...



HEY AKEI, THE PRESENTATION WENT WELL. DIDN'T IT? LET'S GO TO MY PLACE AND CELEBRATE WITH SOME WINE! A BEAUTIFUL GIRL LIKE YOU SHOULD SPEND HER NIGHTS IN THE COMPANY OF A FINE MAN LIKE ME.



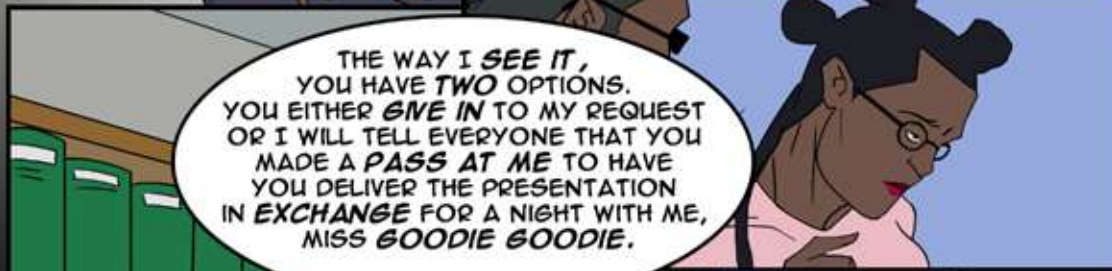
NO OKUMU, THAT IS QUITE INAPPROPRIATE AND I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF YOU STOPPED PESTERING ME.



THE WAY I SEE IT, YOU HAVE TWO OPTIONS. YOU EITHER *GIVE IN* TO MY REQUEST OR I WILL TELL EVERYONE THAT YOU MADE A *PASS AT ME* TO HAVE YOU DELIVER THE PRESENTATION IN EXCHANGE FOR A NIGHT WITH ME, MISS *GOODIE GOODIE*.

BUT....BUT.... THAT'S... NOT TRUE.

CAN I EVEN REPORT THIS? WHO WILL BELIEVE ME?







IT'S GOOD THAT I HAVE COMPLETED MY CHORES EARLY TODAY. AFTER THIS, I'LL SWEEP THE HOUSE AND THEN I CAN CATCH UP WITH THAT NEW TV SHOW BEFORE MADAM COMES BACK.



I CAN ALMOST SWEAR THAT SOMEONE WAS STANDING THERE JUST NOW. IT MUST BE MADAM'S BROTHER. I ALWAYS CATCH HIM STARING AT ME, WHATEVER HE WANTS!

LATER...




KOONA...
...KOONA



EH, SSEBO, YOU STARTLED ME! ARE YOU LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?





JUST YOU MY LOVE!
HAVE I TOLD YOU THAT I LOVE
THE WAY YOU SHAKE YOUR
BUM BUM?

AH, WHAT IS THIS YOU
ARE TALKING ABOUT?
ALL MADAM TOLD ME TO
DO IS TAKE CARE OF
THE HOUSE.

SPLOOSH!



BUT WHO IS TAKING
CARE OF YOU? GIVE ME
SOMETHING SMALL AND
I WILL MAKE SURE THAT
YOU WORK HERE
FOREVER.

THAT WAS NOT
MY AGREEMENT WITH MADAM
AND I DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO
JEOPARDIZE MY WORK HERE.
I NEED IT.



Close-up of the woman's face, looking determined and angry.



WHAT YOU
ARE DOING IS MAKING ME
UNCOMFORTABLE AND IF
YOU CONTINUE, I WILL HAVE
TO TELL HER.



LOOK AT YOU!
DO YOU KNOW THAT WITH JUST ONE **SNAP OF MY FINGER**, I CAN HAVE YOU FIRED. I WILL TELL YOUR MADAM THAT I FOUND YOU IN HER BEDROOM PICKING HER CLOTHES FOR YOURSELF.

WHOM DO YOU THINK SHE WILL **BELIEVE?** HER BROTHER OR A **STRANGER?**

I AM NOT LOOKING FOR ANY TROUBLE **SSEBO**. I REALLY NEED **THIS JOB!**

THAT NIGHT...



DO I **SUFFER IN SILENCE** FOR THE SAKE OF MY JOB? BUT I AM NOT SAFE HERE.



ONE MONTH LATER



THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR MY SALARY MADAM ...UHHMM...UHHMM... BUT THERE IS **SOMETHING** I NEED TO TELL YOU.



WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS BEFORE, I AM **NOT INCREASING** YOUR PAYMENT

NO, IT'S **NOT ABOUT THAT MADAM.** IT'S JUST THAT -



- YOUR BROTHER, MR. MALE, WHENEVER YOU ARE NOT AROUND, **HE (STAMMERING)...** HE, GRABS MY **BLM** AND MY **BREASTS.** I EVEN TOLD HIM I DO NOT LIKE IT BUT HE CONTINUES DOING IT. SOMETIMES, HE WAITS OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM WHEN I AM **TAKING MY SHOWER.**



HOW DARE YOU SAY THAT ABOUT MY BROTHER? WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT HE WOULD EVEN BE **INTERESTED IN YOU?** THERE ARE MORE ATTRACTIVE WOMEN IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. YOU KNOW WHAT, PACK YOUR BAGS AND **LEAVE MY HOUSE.**



NO, MADAM, PLEASE LISTEN, PLEASE I NEED **THIS JOB**



I WILL NOT LISTEN TO ANY OTHER THING FROM YOU. **LIAR!**



LATER



AT OFFICE

TIME FOR THAT *FIELD TRIP* AGAIN. I NEED WELL-BEHAVED COMPANY THIS TIME ROUND. *THE GIRL* I WENT WITH LAST TIME WAS SO *DODGY*. HOW DO I GET MY HANDS ON *EASY PREY*? AHA, THAT *MUTES!*, SHE SEEMS TO BE SO *EASY GOING*.

THAT AFTERNOON

MUTES!
REMINDE ME, HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A *LAWYER*?

I GRADUATED TWO YEARS AGO, *SIR*.

WHERE'S THIS *GOING*?





TWO YEARS? TWO YEARS IS GOOD! THREE COLLEAGUES AND I ARE TRAVELING TO GULLU NEXT WEEK FOR THE LEGAL TRAINING. I WOULD LIKE YOU TO COME WITH US. IT'S A 2-DAY TRAINING, MIND YOU.

THE BOSS IS ASKING ME TO BE PART. I CAN'T LET THIS OPPORTUNITY PASS.



YES, YES, I'M AVAILABLE, SIR!

THE NEXT DAY



CAPTAIN INC

HEY, JUST CHECKING, DID THE BIG MAN TELL YOU THAT HE WANTS ME TO GO WITH HIM FOR NEXT WEEK'S TRIP?

THIS MAN NEVER STOPS, DOES HE?

THAT'S FINE WITH ME. BE CAREFUL OUT THERE.



ONE WEEK LATER

TODAY WENT WELL, BUT PARTICIPATION WAS LOW COMPARED TO YESTERDAY.

I THINK IT'S THE LANGUAGE. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN GREAT IF WE HAD AN INTERPRETER.

WELL, THAT'S SOMETHING TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION NEXT TIME. THIS IS MY STOP. GOODNIGHT!

SEE YOU TOMORROW!

FINALLY, WE ARE ALONE. I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT FOREVER!

SIR, SIR, PLEASE STOP!



STOP WHAT?
DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY
WOMEN WOULD FIGHT TO BE IN
YOUR POSITION? ASK ALL THE
WOMEN WHO HAVE *SLEPT* WITH ME,
MY RECORD *SPEAKS FOR ITSELF*.
I WILL LEAVE YOU UNABLE
TO WALK!

SIR, PLEASE!



I'M GOING
TO HAVE TO
REPORT THIS



NO YOU *WON'T*.
WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO BE
PROMOTED? KEEP THIS
BETWEEN US AND YOU'LL
HAVE A NEW CONTRACT ON YOUR
DESK BY MONDAY!



THEY SAID THAT IF I
DRESSED RESPONSIBLY
NO ONE WOULD TOUCH ME.
LOOK AT ME, *COVERED FROM*
HEAD TO TOE BUT THAT
DID NOT STOP HIM FROM
TOUCHING ME!



THE NEXT DAY



EH MUTESI, YOU'VE BEEN VERY QUIET TODAY. EVERYTHING ALRIGHT WITH YOU?



I THINK I HAVE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE. IT'S MY FAULT. IT'S MY FAULT. WHY DID I LET HIM BRING ME ALONG?



I DON'T UNDERSTAND, MUTESI. IT'S NOISY HERE, LET'S GO OVER THERE AND TALK PROPERLY.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?



IT'S MUKWASI. I DON'T RECALL EVERYTHING. IT HAPPENED SO FAST. HE HARASSED ME! I SAID NO, BUT HE DIDN'T STOP.

OH NO, I AM SO SORRY YOU WENT THROUGH THIS. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU AT THE MOMENT?



I WANT TO REPORT HIM SO BADLY. I DON'T EVEN CARE ABOUT HIS PROMOTION NOW. BUT HE THREATENED ME. WILL ANYONE ELSE EVER HIRE ME?



NOW THAT IS SOMETHING I AM FULLY BEHIND. I HAVE BEEN SILENT ABOUT THIS FOR TOO LONG . I AM GOING TO HELP YOU REPORT HIM. SO MANY CAREERS AND DREAMS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED BECAUSE OF THIS MAN. WE MUST PUT A STOP TO THIS.

I AM SO AFRAID



DO NOT WORRY. YOU WILL RIDE BACK WITH ME AND WE DISCUSS EVERYTHING. WHEN YOU ARE READY TO REPORT, DO LET ME KNOW. NAME ME AS A CORROBORATOR. I AM A SENIOR MANAGER LIKE HIM, MY WORD SHOULD COUNT FOR SOMETHING. I WILL LOOK FOR MORE SUPPORTERS, PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BACK YOU, BELIEVE ME. AND EVEN IF THEY DO NOT, I AM HERE.

FACTORY...



GET WORKING PEOPLE! COVID-19 IS STILL OUT THERE AND WE HAVE GOT TO CLOSE TODAY WITH 20,000 MASKS! GET MOVING, GET MOVING!



IF ONLY YOU WOULD ALL BE LIKE KOMUHENDO HERE, WE WOULD HIT OUR TARGET SOONER THAN LATER.....



.....ISN'T THAT RIGHT KOMUHENDO?

I WISH THIS MAN COULD GET HIS HANDS OFF MY SHOULDERS. IT'S SO CREEPY! AND WHAT'S WITH HIM ALWAYS PRAISING ME IN FRONT OF THE REST?



DURING A BREAK



I HEARD THAT.
IT'S NOT TRUE AND
YOU PEOPLE SHOULD
STOP SPREADING FALSE
INFORMATION.



OR WHAT?
WILL YOU REPORT
US TO YOUR
LOVER?



THAT NIGHT

I DON'T KNOW SIS.
I HATE IT HERE. HE MAKES
ME SO UNCOMFORTABLE
AND THE GOSSIP NEVER
STOPS. DO I TELL
THE BOSS?



SOME MONTHS AGO



NAKANWASI,
YOU ARE A LOVELY WOMAN.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE ALONE.
I AM AFRAID THOUGH, YOU'RE A
HIGH RANKING OFFICER.
THAT'S GOING TO KEEP MEN AWAY
FROM YOU. LUCKILY, FOR YOU,
I HAVE A SOLUTION. LET'S
HAVE A RELATIONSHIP,
I WILL SAVE YOU FROM
EMBARRASSMENT.



HA, MASSA,
WHO DIED AND MADE YOU MATCHMAKER?
IN ANY CASE, I AM QUITE CONTENT WITH
MY CURRENT STATUS. AREN'T YOU
EVEN MARRIED?

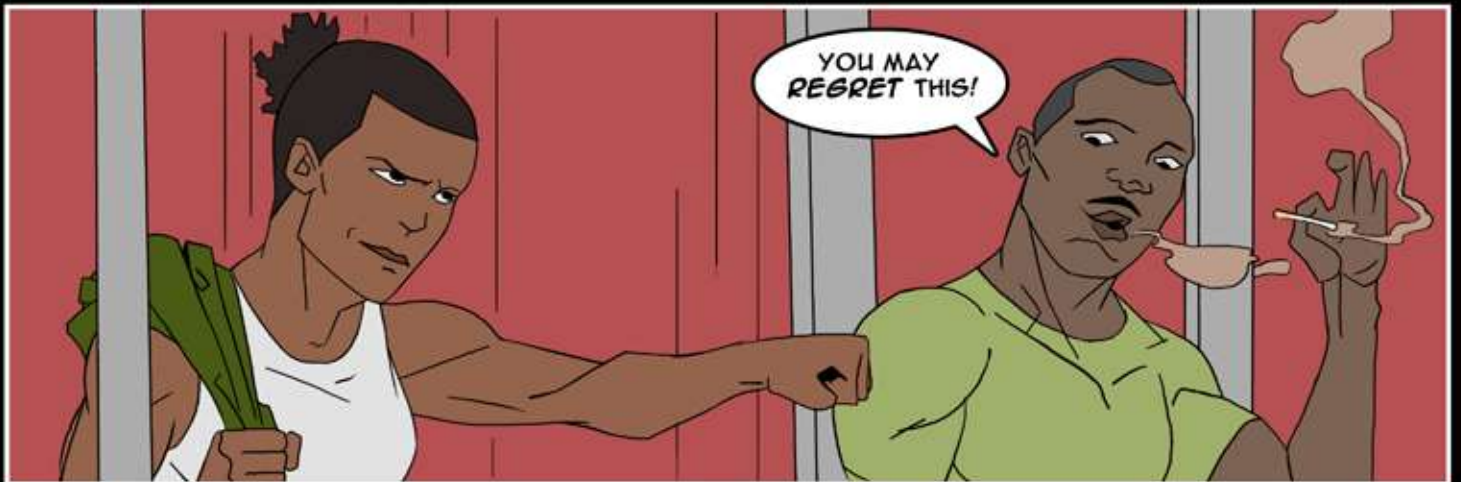


AH, THAT'S NOTHING.
AND I CAN WORK WITH
TWO WOMEN.

UNFORTUNATELY,
I AM NOT ONE OF
THOSE WOMEN.



YOU MAY
REGRET THIS!



NOW..

BELIEVE ME
WHEN I TELL YOU THAT SHE CAN'T
SETTLE BECAUSE SHE IS OUT THERE
SLEEPING WITH EVERY TOM, DICK
AND HARRY



YOU'RE JUST
SAYING THAT BECAUSE SHE
REJECTED YOU.



SHE'S SO UPTIGHT.
SOMEONE NEEDS TO CALM HER
DOWN. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
THREE ROUNDS MAX,
AND HER CONFIDENCE WILL BE
TAMED. WHO SAYS NO TO A
SENIOR OFFICER?

ONE WEEK LATER

MORNING



HOW MUCH TO SLEEP WITH YOU, EH?



AFTERNOON



EH, NAKANWAGI I WAS TOLD YOU ARE ON THE MARKET AND ARE AVAILABLE. WHEN CAN I TAKE YOU OUT?

EVENING



I HAVE BOOKED A ROOM FOR US THIS WEEKEND. WHEN CAN I PICK YOU?

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? I WILL NOT GO OUT WITH ANY OF YOU. TELL MASSA TOO, I'M SURE THIS IS HIS DOING.

WHAT WOULD MAKE EVEN A JUNIOR OFFICER FEEL LIKE THEY ARE ENTITLED TO MY BODY?



ONE WEEK LATER

NAKANWAGI, AS YOUR SUPERVISING OFFICER, I AM RECOMMENDING YOU FOR ADDITIONAL *PHYSICAL TRAINING*. YOU WILL BE AWAY FOR *SIX MONTHS*.

AFANDE MASSA, I JUST CAME BACK FROM TRAINING RECENTLY. YOU WANT ME TO GO AGAIN?

I TOLD YOU THAT YOU WOULD *REGRET!* HEHE

THE NEXT DAY...

8:00pm

New message
Sim card change

SLUT



LATER

CAN YOU COME IN TOMORROW? WE ARE GOING TO NEED YOUR EXPERTISE. I HAVE GOT ANOTHER HARASSMENT CASE ON MY HANDS. I AM SUSPENDING THE ACCUSED, WITHOUT PAYMENT, WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT.

THREE WEEKS LATER

AFANDE MASSA, AS YOU KNOW, WE HAVE BEEN INVESTIGATING A COMPLAINT OF HARASSMENT AGAINST YOU AND SOME MEMBERS OF YOUR UNIT. THE COMMITTEE SENT THEIR REPORT THIS MORNING AND IT IS DISAPPOINTING TO NOTE THAT YOU HAVE A TENDENCY OF HARASSING SOME OF THE WOMEN IN THE FORCE WITH UNWANTED SEXUAL ADVANCES.

HEHE, BUT YOU ARE MY FRIEND, WE CAN DISCUSS A SUITABLE PUNISHMENT. CAN'T YOU SEE THAT MY REPUTATION IS GOING TO BE RUINED HERE?

THAT WILL NOT BE HAPPENING. YOU HAVE BEEN DEMOTED AND YOUR SUSPENSION HAS BEEN EXTENDED FOR ANOTHER SIX MONTHS. IF YOU ARE SEEN AROUND THE PREMISES FOR WHATEVER REASON, YOU WILL BE SENT TO THE COURT MARTIAL. I WILL PUT IT IN WRITING IMMEDIATELY.

IT'S 3PM!



WHEW! NAKAMATTE, IT'S ALREADY 3? EH. I NEED TO CHECK ON MY BABY. HE MUST BE VERY HUNGRY. I LAST FED HIM AT MIDDAY. AT 16 MONTHS, HIS APPETITE IS *JUST SKYROCKETING!* I WILL SEAT UNDER THE OTHER MVULE TREE, THIS KAMPALA SUN IS SOMETHING ELSE.



KATONGOLE, CAN'T YOU SEE I'M HAVING A PRIVATE MOMENT. PLEASE KEEP AWAY



HAVE I TOLD YOU TO STOP? CONTINUE WITH YOUR BUSINESS AND I WILL CONTINUE WITH MINE.

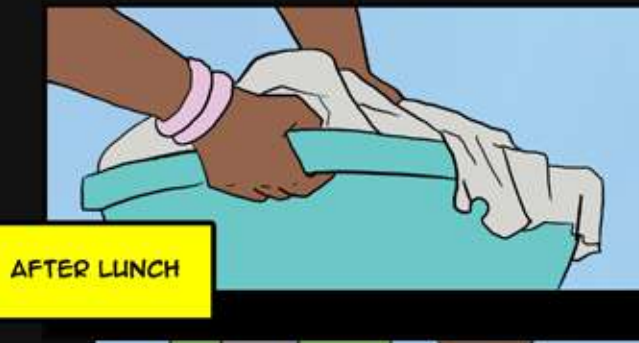
AFTER LUNCH

MY SIZE. MAMA BABY.

I AM THE ONE WHO SAW HER BREASTS. THEY'RE VERY BIG AND JUICY!

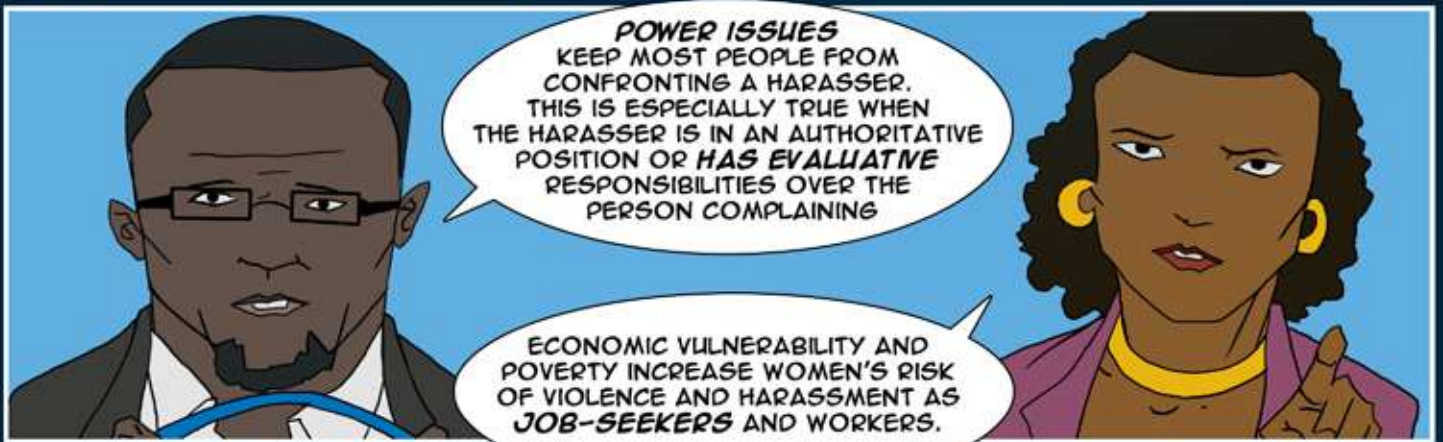
DON'T BE TOO SERIOUS ALSO. WE ARE JOKING! AREN'T YOU THE SAME AKELLO WHO SELLS US DRINKS EVERY DAY? EHEH

GRABBING MY BREAST IS NOT A JOKE!











VIOLENCE AND **HARASSMENT** IN THE WORLD OF WORK **DISPROPORTIONATELY** AND UNIQUELY IMPACTS WOMEN ACROSS THE WORLD, PROHIBITING THEM FROM FULLY REALIZING THEIR **HUMAN RIGHTS**.



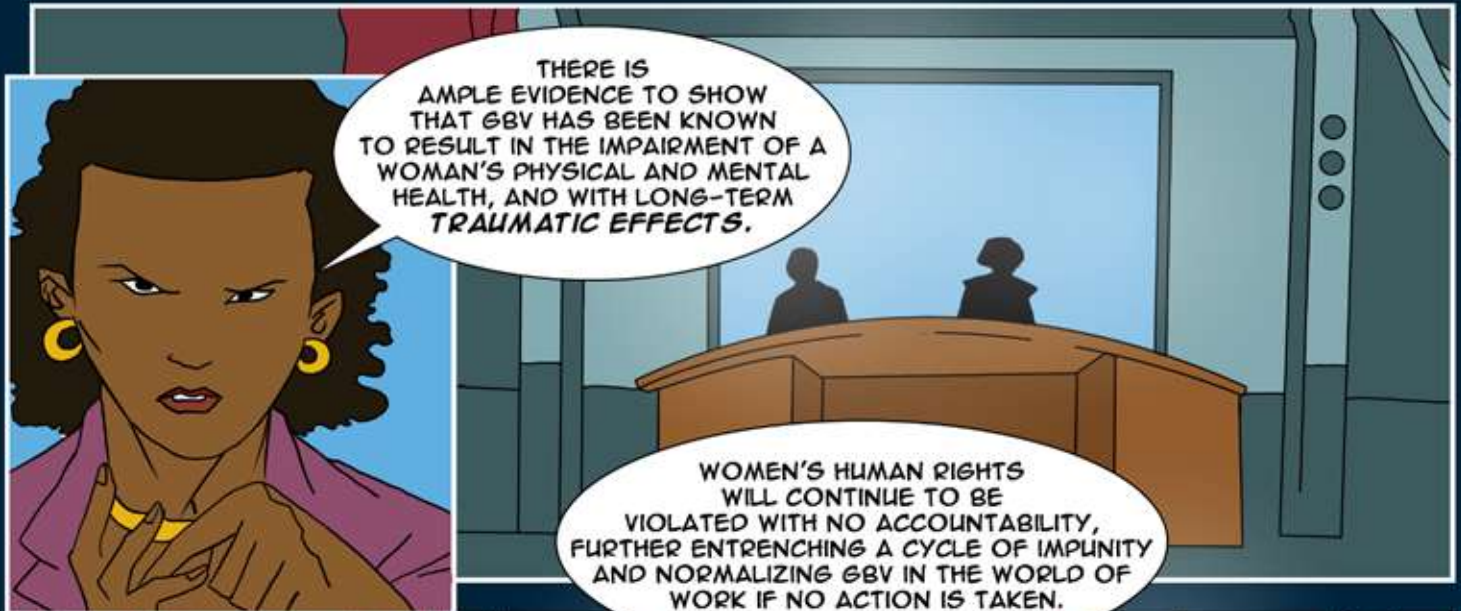
GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN THE WORLD OF WORK IS A FORM OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND A HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION, WHICH **OBLIGATES STATES TO PREVENT, INVESTIGATE, PROSECUTE,** AND PROVIDE REMEDIES FOR SUCH ACTS.



WOMEN MUST BE ABLE TO WORK IN CONDITIONS OF SAFETY AND SECURITY, WITH DIGNITY, AGENCY, AND AUTONOMY.



VICTIMS ARE NOT TO BLAME FOR BEING HARASSED. IF A VICTIM DOESN'T **FIGHT BACK**, THIS **DOES NOT MEAN** THAT THEY WANTED IT.



THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE TO SHOW THAT GBV HAS BEEN KNOWN TO RESULT IN THE IMPAIRMENT OF A WOMAN'S PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH, AND WITH LONG-TERM TRAUMATIC EFFECTS.

WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS WILL CONTINUE TO BE VIOLATED WITH NO ACCOUNTABILITY, FURTHER ENTRENCHING A CYCLE OF IMPUNITY AND NORMALIZING GBV IN THE WORLD OF WORK IF NO ACTION IS TAKEN.

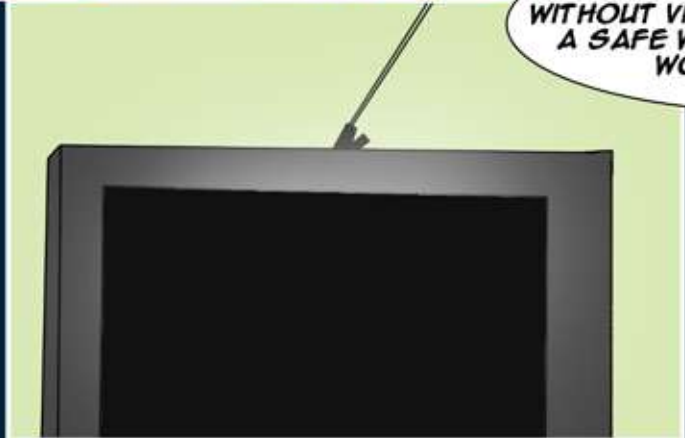


TRADE UNIONS, MEDIA HOUSES, GOVERNMENTS, EMPLOYERS, JOIN IN,, AND MAKE WORKPLACES SAFE FOR WOMEN.



GOVERNMENTS, IT IS YOUR DUTY TO RATIFY THE CONVENTION ON VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORLD OF WORK BECAUSE IT WILL PROTECT ALL WORKERS, ESPECIALLY WOMEN AND MAKE WORKPLACES SAFER FOR THEM.

A WORLD WITHOUT VIOLENCE IS POSSIBLE! A SAFE WORKPLACE IS EVERY WOMAN'S RIGHT.



**NAMES, CHARACTERS, BUSINESSES, EVENTS,
LOCALES, AND INCIDENTS ARE USED IN A FICTITIOUS MANNER.
ANY RESEMBLANCE TO ACTUAL PERSONS, LIVING OR DEAD,
OR ACTUAL EVENTS IS PURELY COINCIDENTAL.**

Akina Mama wa Afrika(AMWA)

Plot 222 Mama Africa Close, Off Kiwatule Road, Ntinda

P.O.Box 24130 Kampala Uganda

Tel: +256 414 543 681|

Mob: +256 789550803

website: www.akinamamawaafrika.org