Shola Ogudugu: Helping Rape Survivors

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Lagos welcomes a new rape awareness foundation, Resilient. Given the ever-expanding public conversation about rape and the growing reports of sexual assault in the media, this is not a surprise but the face behind it is familiar…and unexpected. Shola Ogudugu is known for many things, being the mother of Wizkid’s son most notably, but she’s determined to put the past behind her and be seen for who she truly is.  
  
“I’ve moved on, I’m in a better space now. I wouldn’t want to talk or say anything else.”  
  
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And moved on she has, The Resilient Foundation, a passion project that’s been in the making for years is finally coming to fruition. Shola Ogudugu, the founder and brains behind the operation, speaks to The Guardian Life about healing processes, and rapists’ reeducation.  
  
When did this idea first come to you?  
  
Rape has been a silent killer for a while now and it dawned on me like this could be anyone: me, my sister, or friend. There’s never really any restrictions hence the whole idea of starting the foundation.  
  
Why have you decided to focus on rape?  
  
Rape and sexual assault have been rampant for years. It is an epidemic that needs to be gotten rid of. People don’t pay attention to it because we’re in Nigeria and they feel there are a lot of other pressing issues. Let’s not also forget that Nigeria has a lot of rape incidents that go unnoticed and victims are shamed into not speaking which is why I’ve decided to lend my voice the best way I can.  
  
I want to have a girl child someday and it will be heartbreaking for me to think I can’t trust whoever I’m keeping in charge of my child because of the things happening around. It’s a personal issue, even though it hasn’t happened to me.  
  
Have you ever been sexually assaulted and/or raped and if so, would you feel comfortable discussing it?  
  
No. I don’t have to wait for things to happen to me before I can find a solution. Experience they say is the best teacher but not in all cases. If you know you have the power or the voice to try and do something about it, then why not?  
  
Jada Pollock has recently come out to speak about her experience with domestic abuse while dating Wizkid. While she now claims these were hacks, have you undergone anything similar?  
  
Regarding their issues, I have no comment, but to be fair I’ve never experienced anything of that sort with Wizkid. I’ve moved on, I’m in a better space now and I’m focusing on me.  
  
What do you hope to change with this?  
  
It is my opinion that anyone who is found guilty should undergo the necessary punishment they deserve. If they know that there’s a harsh sanction or consequence awaiting them, I’m sure rape stats will reduce. Especially for paedophiles. The narrative before was ladies have to dress properly, but these days, little children are getting raped.  
  
By creating major awareness with my centre, I hope to drastically reduce rape incidents and make sure that justice is executed once an alleged rapist is charged. I want to create a social body that gives rapists the punishment they deserve because it needs to stop being swept under the mat. I also think rapists need to go through a process of reeducation to help them understand why rape is like robbery or murder.  
  
How do you plan to bring about that change?  
  
At The Resilient Foundation, we intend to help people through their recovery and healing process because some people lose themselves and also help if they want justice. At the moment, we’re trying to build a body that will be able to legally join the fight against rapists.  
  
Is this a non-profit and if so or otherwise, not what spurred that decision?  
  
Yes. We’re trying to help reach out to everyone that needs help so we’re making it free. It will be easily accessible to those who really, really need it. There will also be toll-free lines so that those who chose to remain anonymous can call and share their problems.  
  
Women have a significantly lower financing rate than men, has it been difficult finding sponsors and capital?  
  
Yes, especially in Nigeria, financing for business projects can be so difficult and tasking. It only takes the grace of God and passion to keep going on. Fortunately, we have started raising funds from a few interested people. We hope for the best.  
  
Given your past with Wizkid, you might be accused of doing this to gain clout or money. What do you have to say to such people?  
  
People will always talk, in my absence and in my presence. I’ve come to a realisation that if I stick to what people have to say about me I probably won’t be able to achieve anything in life. I have to stick to my journey. So this has nothing to do with Wizkid, this is a very positive journey and everybody should see the positivity in it.  
  
What do you think is the most important journey in a survivor’s life?  
  
Healing and recovery. Because that’s what a lot of survivors suffer from. It’s so hard taking something that is precious, most of these victims have never even had sexual intercourse before so you can imagine your first experience being taken away from you like that. We want to help you understand it’s not your fault, you’re not just victims, you’re survivors.  
  
Any advice for any rape victims still facing trauma?  
  
You’re not responsible for the situation you’re in, don’t beat yourself up and It’s important to remember that what you’re experiencing is a normal reaction to trauma. Your feelings of helplessness, shame, defectiveness, and self-blame are Just symptoms, NOT reality.  
  
And no matter how difficult it may seem, we, at The Resilient Foundation, would be more than glad to help through the process of regaining your sense of safety and trust and learn to heal and move on with your life.  
  
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