

8 MINUTES TO FREEDOM

A JOURNEY OF HEALING
AND TRIUMPH
AFTER ESCAPING
DOMESTIC ABUSE



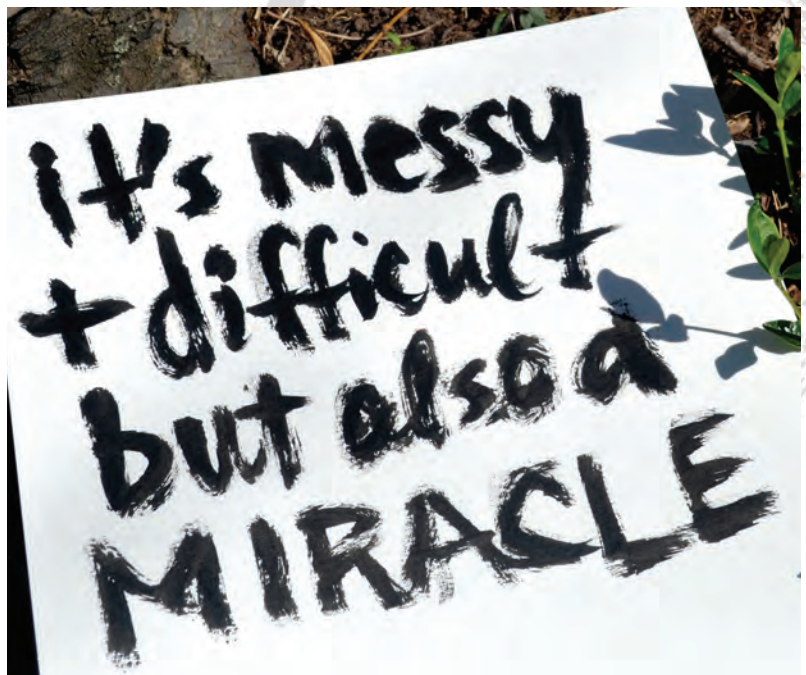
ART EXHIBIT,
MUSIC ALBUM,
& FILM BY
JESSICA
LICCIARDELLO

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAD 8 MINUTES TO ESCAPE?

“The title 8 Minutes to Freedom comes from the exact moment I decided to leave an abusive relationship that I was in for a very long time. It had taken me a while to get to the point of making that decision, and when the opportunity presented itself, I was doing laundry in the basement of my apartment building, and there were eight minutes left on the drying cycle. I just saw that number eight, and I said to myself, that’s it, that’s the amount of time I have to make this decision.



It took everything within me, but I took my clothes once they were clean, and left. That was the moment where the healing process was just beginning.” -JL





ARTWORK AND MUSIC BY JESSICA LICCIARDELLO FILM RUNTIME 09:16



**VIEW
THE FILM**



BREAKING POINT METAMORPHOSIS JOURNEY TRIUMPH



MUSIC FOR THE FILM BY
JESSICA LICCIARDELLO



Original soundtrack
available on major digital
distribution outlets:

Apple Music



amazonmusic



TIDAL

Listen here



“

I was inspired to create this body of work because it was other people's courage to speak up and talk about what they had been through, leaving their own abusive situations, that really gave me the knowledge, wisdom, and courage to ultimately leave. It took me a long time because I thought it was something I was going through by myself, and that no one else has gone through this. But over time I realized this is something that people go through, and that there's actually something really good on the other side of that decision to leave. I knew that when I was ready, I had to share my story. My goal is to inspire others to either leave an abusive situation, or help people who might know someone in an abusive situation, to be informed and know that as scary as it is to make that decision, it is better once you do, and you leave, and you basically save your own life.”

-JL



"Despite more than a year of feeling isolated and disconnected from normal life and the ones we love, this exhibit strives towards connection. It is a hand reaching out to say, "you're not alone, I'm here" and illustrates that the most powerful journeys start with a single and decisive first step. To anyone out there who is feeling hopeless, alone, isolated and trapped in a situation where you are not valued for your true self.... There are answers, there are choices and there is help available and there are people who love you waiting to welcome you with open arms on the other side"

-Bethany Pagliarulo-White, RN, BSN, OCN - 2021



*As featured in
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8 MINUTES TO FREEDOM

AN ART EXHIBIT
ABOUT TRIUMPH
AFTER ESCAPING
DOMESTIC ABUSE

BY JESSICA
LICCIARDELLO



It's messy and difficult, but also a miracle.

That is the mantra that has been in my mind for four years. I escaped, and the healing process was just beginning.

The escape.

There was a long journey that happened before I finally escaped. I had so much to weigh in my mind. I invested time, money, love, energy, years of my life. Dreams, hopes, career aspirations. The relationship was presented as idealized love; it was too good to be true, at the same time, it was too horrible to be love.

How do I unravel this intricate mess? I worked with my family, a few very close friends, my doctors, and an amazing therapist who guided me down the path of preparation, but ultimately, I had to walk through the door, and it had to be my decision and action alone.

You're never 100% ready.

I was doing laundry in my apartment building basement. Things were getting increasingly volatile, and I didn't want to go back into my apartment. I saw the number 8 on the cycle countdown on the clothes dryer, and I knew that was the amount of time I had to make the decision. I paced frantically during those 8 minutes. The buzzer went off, I packed my laundry bags, and left for good. I escaped with two full laundry bags, my purse, and my family to welcome me home. That was my situation. In that moment I thought to myself, "8 Minutes to Freedom." I had no idea what it would evolve into, but it was seared into my memory.



The why.

Before I tell my story, I want to explore why I did this. Why am I creating this body of work and making it public? It was the courage of other survivors speaking up about their experience, along with doctors and professionals who write about coping with abusive relationships, that ultimately saved my life. I feel that if I had to experience this situation, one thing I can do to honor the wisdom that I have gained is to share my story and hopefully reach people who need to hear it.

The art.

I've always expressed my inner mind through art, a visual diary. I relentlessly created art while living through a 12-year abusive relationship. Creating art was my escape but also a way to retain my sense of self.

Being an artist is my identity, and I felt that no one could take that away from me. Isolation is used in abusive relationships. Posting my artwork to Instagram was a way for me to connect with the outside world. As my followers were growing, I was falling apart. It seemed that everyone in the world supported me except the one person who should. At the same time the lines were always so blurred. Was I being supported, or constantly torn apart? Was it genius, or madness?

There were moments of what seemed like support, but the fear outweighed it. I was constantly in a heightened state of anxiety, and my body was rebelling against me. I had to save my life.



The journey.

I spent the next four years reconnecting with friends and family, re-learning how to be myself. I felt excited about the freedom of expressing myself without fear. This expression ranged from my clothing choices and my home decorations to my artwork. As exciting and positive as it was, I also had to battle a lot of internal thoughts that were haunting remnants of my old life.

It's messy and difficult, but also a miracle. I pushed through and kept doing my research on survivors and their stories. I was welcomed with open arms back into the lives of people from whom I was isolated for so long. I wake up every day grateful that this is my reality now, and I can only compare it to having a second chance, a rebirth, a new lease on life.

Portrait of Artist Jessica Licciardello
Photography by Irma Jace, Hair by Concetta Linea,
Makeup by Stephanie DeNisco

The grant.

In late 2019, I was presented with the opportunity for an art grant. I had to come up with a proposal, and I had no idea what the project would be. After a few days of thinking, I was driving to a friend's house in Brooklyn, and had to pull over on the side of the road. "8 Minutes to Freedom!" I exclaimed to myself and started crying.

Breaking Point. Metamorphosis. Journey. Triumph.

I received the grant from Staten Island Arts/NYC Department of Cultural Affairs in early 2020. I was both elated and terrified. I was now committed to this project, and I had to maintain the courage to not only create the work but release it and my story to the public. I knew that it was the courage of the many who have come before me speaking about their experience with domestic abuse that helped me. I knew I wanted to tell the story in a way that was hopeful and uplifting—to use my experience and skills to open a dialogue about a difficult but important topic. I felt a responsibility, but also an opportunity for healing.

The pandemic.

COVID-19 hit. Lockdown started. What could I do now but create the artwork? I used drawings from my visual diaries to be the basis of the larger works. It felt strangely parallel to what we were experiencing as a collective whole. Isolation, uncertainty, fear, trauma, hope, healing. As I was exploring these concepts in my paintings, I felt they were speaking in a new way that was being felt worldwide. To heal, you have to put the work in to tend to the wounds. Healing is non-linear, but it's real, and there is hope.

The film.

What was originally conceived as an in-person exhibit now had to be re-imagined, as galleries and venues were closed. During this time, I confided in close friends. Talking to people was like exploring a metaphysical treasure map. Somehow people said things to me that illuminated the next step in my journey.

Through some brainstorming, the idea was hatched to create a film to exhibit the paintings. I had spent the early parts of the pandemic walking through nature parks on Staten Island, and I discovered many areas that had natural beauty. I decided to film the artwork in locations around the island, throughout the seasons. I composed the music, and in turn the film became somewhat of a love letter to the place I call home.





Redefining joy.

I feel excited and happy when I look at this exhibit. The artwork, the film, the music. When I create the art, products, and prints, there is joy. How can this be? My friend, Bahia, describes it as alchemy. Where I used to feel darkness has been brought to light through creating this work.

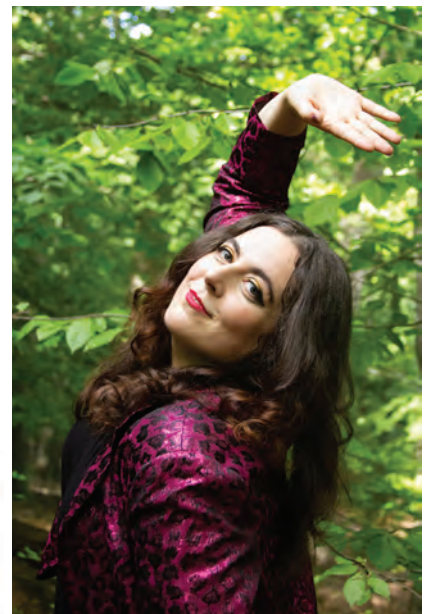
I still grapple with feelings of compassion and grief for the relationship. But I do know that I feel like myself again now, only stronger and wiser. Now, looking back, I realize how strong I had to be. I see my past self and have so much admiration for her. She survived. Maybe I had to go through this so I can create this work and help others.

What I learned by sharing my story is that this scenario is more prevalent than I ever imagined. If you, or someone you know, is in a toxic or abusive relationship, please find hope in this work. My intention is that it helps you make decisions to save your future.

I know that not everyone has a complete support system, but you need to ask for help in whatever way possible. There are resources and people who want to help you. It's a leap of faith that something better is on the other side, and this artwork is a testament to that hope.

Triumph.

You're never alone, please visit
8MinutesToFreedom.com for a list of resources and next steps.





BREAKING POINT



CAGED BIRD



METAMORPHOSIS



FLOWER WITH TIME



GROWTH



FREEDOM

TRIUMPH



This body of work is made possible (in part) by a DCA Premier Grant from Staten Island Arts,
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8MINUTESTOAFREEDOM.COM