



A LETTER FROM *our editor*

Dear Readers,

All too frequently, sexual assault and rape sit in a place of silence and shadows. *Text Power Telling Magazine* is voice and light thanks to our writers and artists. Survivors are the ones who carry the heavy burden of everything that comes with such violence. And they are the ones who must find the courage to speak and walk out of the darkness. No one can do that for them. And often, they become beacons of light for other survivors too.

One such shining example of this is Rachelle Smith, founder of the groundbreaking podcast, *The Silenced Voices of MST*. This podcast is a space for survivors of military sexual trauma to share their stories. We have included a short excerpt from a recent episode. I urge you to listen to the entire interview as it is opening the conversation about how deep the silence and secrets run and their tragic impacts on sexual assault survivors in the military.

Also check out Jenny Olson's poems, including "the bit in my mouth," which describes being controlled and silenced until she can finally say with hope, "hello life, I'm here!" What a privilege it is for all of us to welcome her.

In my interview with the incredible visual artist, Luzene Hill, she states that "breaking the silence that surrounds sexual violence is the first step to ending it." She breaks her silence through her visually stunning art installations. We showcase her work, *The Body and Blood* which is informed by *Ruined*, a Pulitzer Prize winning play by Lynn Nottage, which addresses atrocities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Hill says that violence against women is a global issue, ubiquitous and without boundaries. Most rapes go unreported - **only** 16% are ever reported to the police. In the United States a *reported* attack happens a staggering every two minutes, 720 times a day. Her piece takes up space – it is a complex, audacious piece that is haunting and beautiful. It is decidedly a call out and a clap back to a world that has dehumanized and hurt women.

There is much more work included in this issue that deserves your time and attention – really brave work that has been birthed out of journeys to come out the shadows and finally, into the light.

Love,
Anita