

SELECTED WORKS

- 01 The Colonizer's Trash
- 02 Yako, Girl!
- 03 To Tame a Witch: Hexes

Portfolio of Stephanie A. Kimou

2026

01 / THE COLONIZER'S TRASH

2024 / PERFORMANCE AND WRITTEN WORK

The Colonizer's Trash is a performance and written work in which I asked myself to look within my life and identify objects carrying colonial paradigms that shaped my adolescence and early adulthood. Family photographs, my passport, my Georgetown graduate diploma, and beauty products pointed to inherited ideas about beauty, spirituality, intellect, and success.

It was an exercise in self-excavation: to recognize the beliefs lodged in objects in my home, confront their hold on my mind, body, and spirit, and begin to remove them. If those parts of me could be colonized, they could also be sites for decolonization.

SELECTED PAGES FROM THE ARTIST'S ZINE

THE COLONIZER'S TRASH

ARTIST TEXT

In March 2023, I traveled to Paris, where human and animal feces smeared the streets.

PARIS WAS BURNING.

I didn't take the time to comprehend why trash was piling up and stinking up the City of Lights and "love," but I did enjoy the chaos it inflicted on a place that I found remained committed to anti-Blackness. Seeing the French navigate their precious city, now losing in a coup d'état to 10-foot-high piles of waste, was healing for me. The irony was that I'd inherited so much trash from the French, and they could not reconcile their own shit for months.

I WAS PLEASED.

See, I was born in a city within a country within a continent that had been divided, exploited, and left for dead by colonizers from France, England, Portugal, Italy, and Germany. I was born into a white man's wet dream that did not offer me gold, timber, or ivory from the land of my ancestors, but instead tossed me white supremacy, capitalism, elitism, and environmental degradation as a value system. The colonizers left their subjects the worst type of inheritance: inferiority. The colonial project created laws, policies, cultural norms, and hierarchies that told us being Black, poor, "ugly," uneducated, and queer were reasons for our exploitation and denigration. And today, most of us from these colonized lands still believe in this trash - that being Black, poor, "ugly," uneducated, and queer is to be reversed with bleaching creams, college degrees, plastic surgery, weight loss, and Jesus.

NOW, CAN WE WAKE UP FROM THE WET DREAM?

In this piece, I break down the trash mindsets, complexes, habits, ideologies, concepts, perspectives, and words I/we have inherited from white colonial settlers globally. I want to share my ongoing journey to decolonization, framing my mind and body as primary sites for healing. I use a "database" of physical objects as personifications of larger colonial contradictions that my mind and body engage with daily - like adoring the artistry of Beyoncé while becoming repulsed by, with, and for the insatiability of Black capitalism.

I argue that, as a result of being born into a system of white supremacy, it is our everlasting work to accept ourselves - spirits and bodies - as more than sites for transformation into the image of the colonizer. I want this piece to serve as a reminder that we are more than money, light skin, designer clothing, thin waists, and degrees from racist institutions of higher "learning." We're spirits, and we're healing from generations of colonization, but perhaps the first step is recognizing that this trash was never ours to begin with.

THE WORK IS CLEANING THE DIRT OFF THE GOLD.

THE COLONIZER'S TRASH

FAMILY ARCHIVE

KODAK PHOTO OF ME AND MY FAMILY IN COTE D'IVOIRE (1991)

CATEGORY OF TRASH: MENTAL INFERIORITY

This is not trash; this is my last photo in Côte d'Ivoire before we moved to Maryland. It was taken about 30 years after independence from the French, at the Félix Houphouët-Boigny International Airport. I start here because the mentality behind our departure is rooted in this photo and the inferiority complex that colors it.

We couldn't stay where we were born because it felt empty—no money, no education, no goodness. All those things seemed to be in places filled with whites who didn't want us there. Nonetheless, we felt compelled to chase after all the good stuff. We joined the millions of Africans who left the continent in 1991, working at Holiday Inn, relying on food stamps, and navigating new versions of racism, colorism, and xenophobia.

But it would all be worth it because, in America, money was God. And God is good!

WARNING:
THIS TRASH MAY BLUR YOUR SENSE OF HOME.



ZINE PAGES 8-9

THE COLONIZER'S TRASH

PASSPORT / MOBILITY

AN AMERICAN PASSPORT (2010)

CATEGORY OF TRASH: CAPITALISM/CONSUMERISM, MENTAL INFERIORITY

It took me over 15 years to hold a blue passport—a good passport. When I finally got it, the days of fighting with various American institutions for access or protection were gone, along with the series of embarrassing social events that come with a queer immigration status. The blue passport marked me as good enough to move through the world without being policed by visas, cartes de séjour, and various pieces of white paper.

With a green passport, I was an Ivorian—a person from a developing, third-world, or shit-hole country. No one wants people like us in their clean, white cities, stealing all their social securities and selling our bodies. A green passport meant you arrived somewhere to take, steal, and exploit; a blue passport meant you had proven yourself safe, smart, and upstanding enough to contribute. So, welcome to the other side.

WARNING:
THIS TRASH MAY CAUSE A FALSE PROMISE OF FREEDOM.



ZINE PAGES 12-13

THE COLONIZER'S TRASH

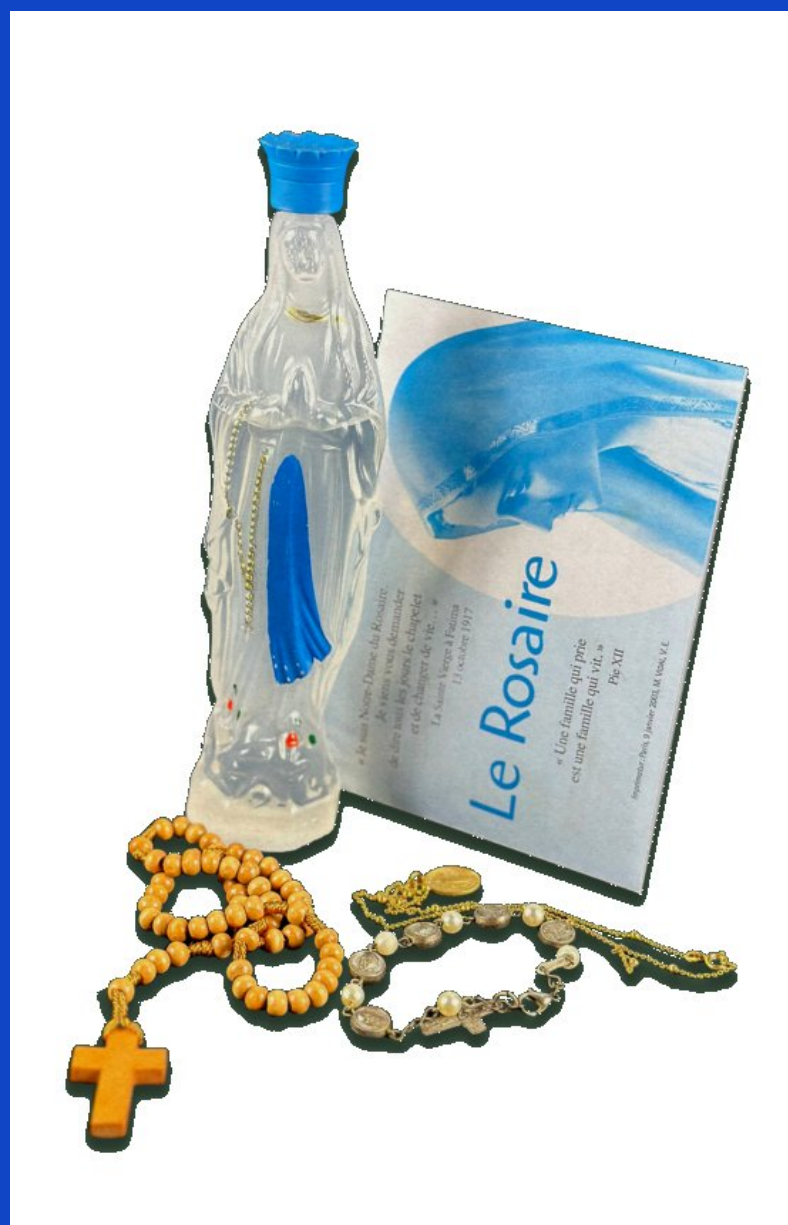
FAITH / RITUAL

HOLY
ROSARIES,
P A M P H L E T
(1995 - 2023)

CATEGORY OF TRASH: SPIRITUAL ERASURE

"The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won over our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together, and we have fallen apart." Things Fall Apart, Chapter 20, pg. 152 (Chinua Achebe)

WARNING:
THIS TRASH MAY WASH AWAY YOUR SPIRIT ALONG WITH YOUR "SINS."



ZINE PAGES 18-19

THE COLONIZER’S TRASH

BEAUTY / THE BODY

RELACORE:
ULTIMATE
FAT-BURNING
BULGE KIT

THE
SUPER
BELLY
(2017)

CATEGORY OF TRASH:
BAD BEAUTY

To be thin is not to be;
good,
kind,
beautiful,
patient,
intelligent,
funny,
creative.
To be thin is to be thin.
A body (that will eventually decompose) is thin.
May this mean something, again.

WARNING:
THIS TRASH MAY CAUSE PLASTIC SURGERY.



ZINE PAGES 26-27

02 / YAKO, GIRL!

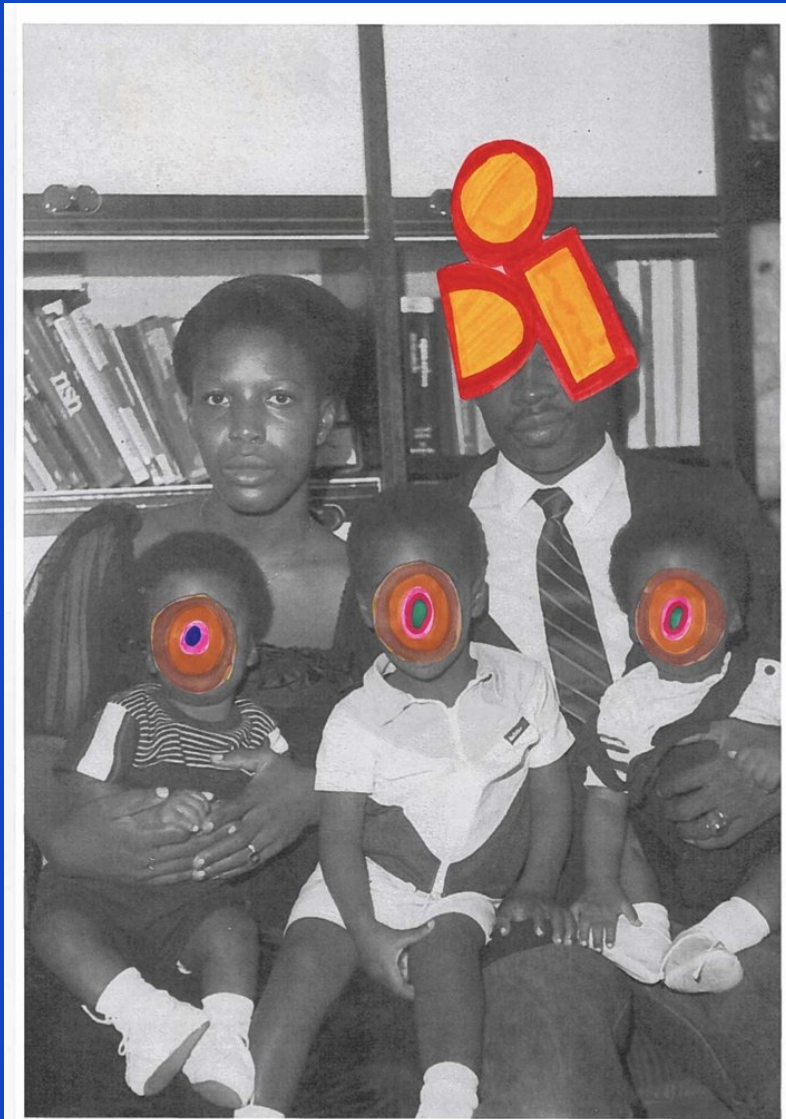
Yako, Girl! began as a way to understand the hurt between my mother and me and to build a bridge of compassion. I went into her family archive to learn about the first thirty years of her life, before I knew her as my mother, and to see more clearly what she has lived through.

I draw and collage around those photographs, surrounding a younger version of my mother with my own abstract worlds. In making the work, I am trying to say: I want to carry you, and I want to care for the person you were, so that I can better care for myself. “Yako” is an Ivorian expression of compassion, a way of saying I am sorry you are hurting. I hope this work opens a path for healing between my mother and me, and for my daughter, too.

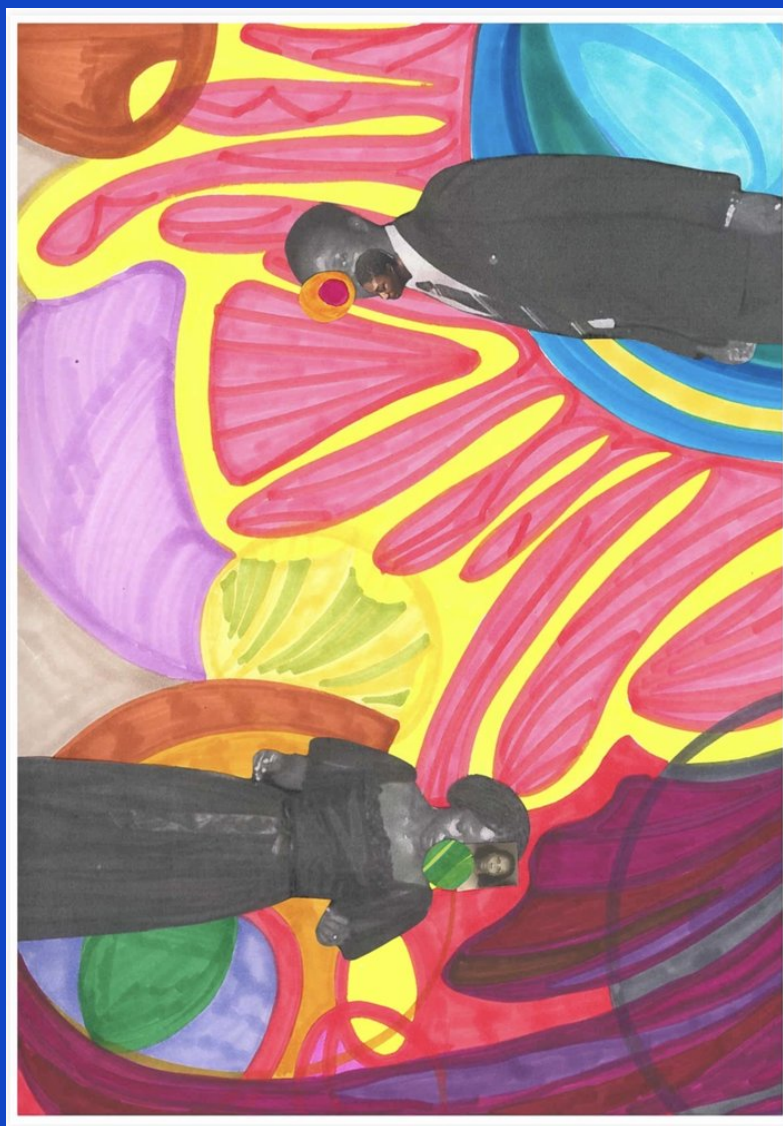
FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS, DRAWING AND COLLAGE

YAKO, GIRL!

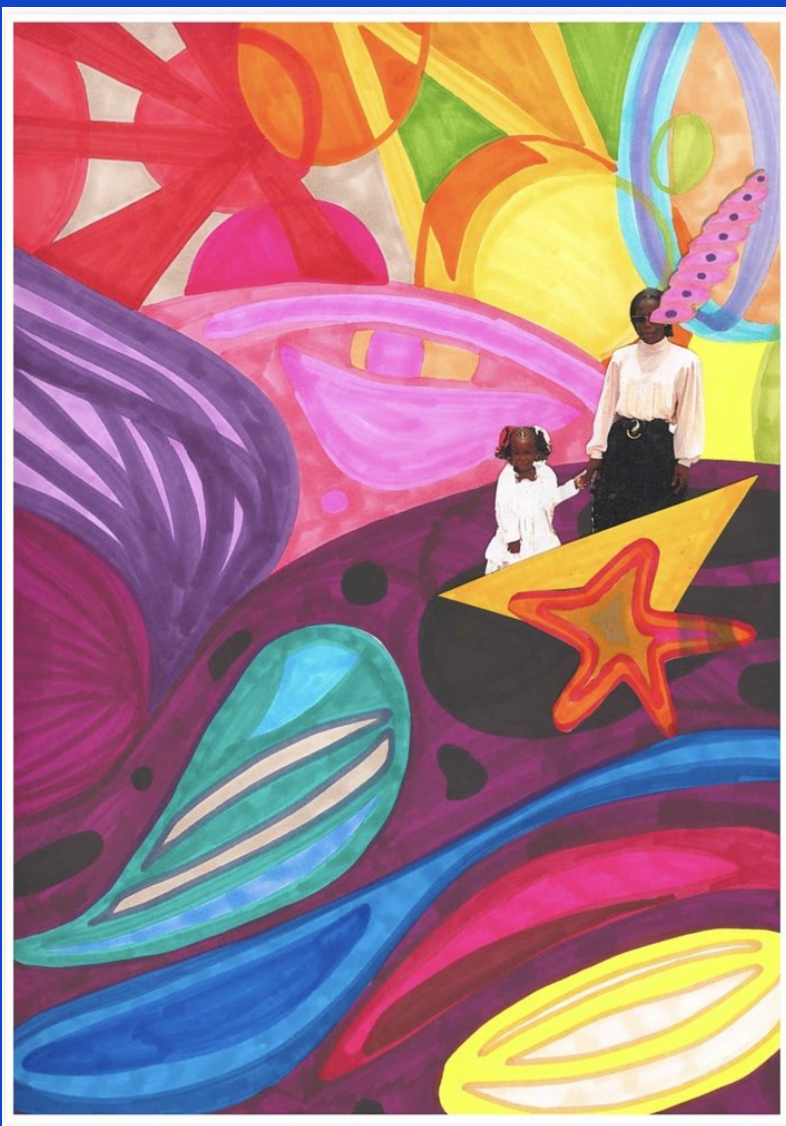




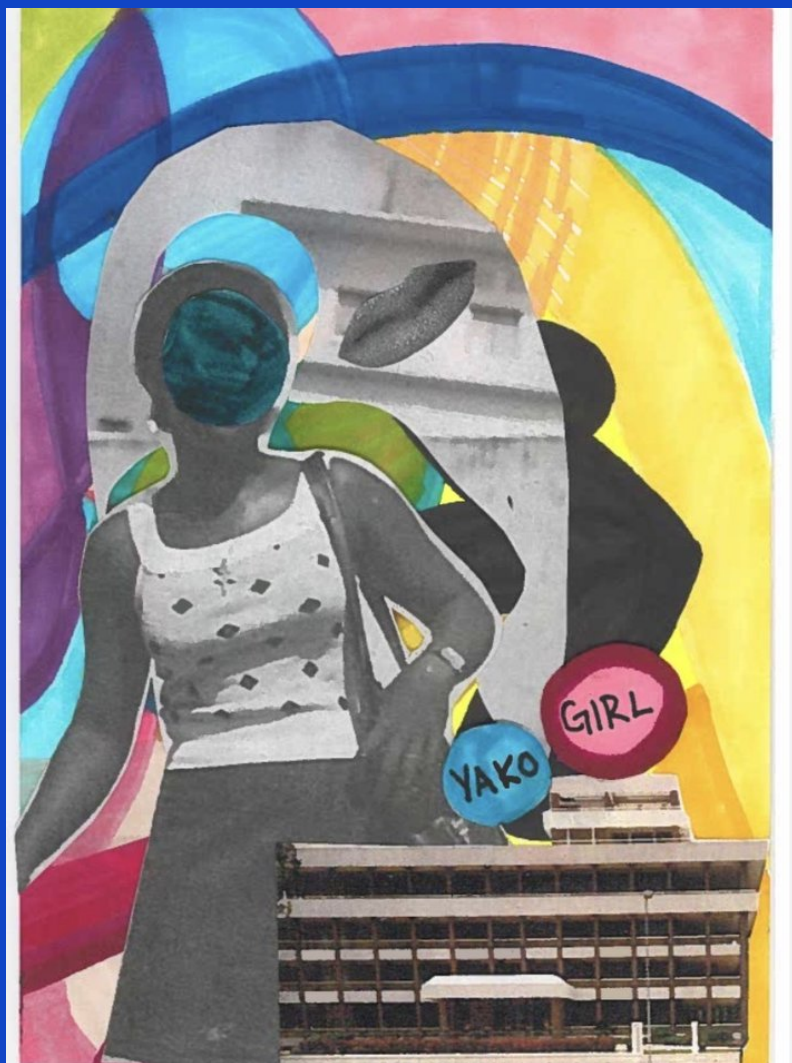
SELECTED WORKS / FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS, DRAWING AND COLLAGE



SELECTED WORKS / FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS, DRAWING AND COLLAGE



SELECTED WORKS / FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS, DRAWING AND COLLAGE



SELECTED WORKS / FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS, DRAWING AND COLLAGE

03 / TO TAME A WITCH: HEXES

To Tame a Witch: Hexes is about the many ways women's power is disciplined, diminished, and buried. Inspired by Ana Mendieta's *Silueta* series, I placed my body among flowers that cut my skin. They look beautiful, but their beauty conceals the hurt underneath.

Alongside the photograph is a litany of acts meant to tame a woman: from love that controls and constant exhaustion to erasure and violence. I think of these acts as hexes intended to kill her magic. The work asks what happens when a woman is made to disappear and then covered with something beautiful, so that the violence becomes easier to look at.

PHOTOGRAPH AND TEXT

TO TAME A WITCH: HEXES



PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKHAIL HARDY

HEXES

Bury her with beautiful flowers.

Lovebomb her.

Spit on her. Starve her. Distract her.

Rape her. Harass her. Follow her.

Exhaust her. Exhaust her. Exhaust her.

Deny her due process, policy, and praxis.

Beat her. Cut her open. Laugh at her.

Steal from her. Empty her. Shush her.

Erase her work. Her words. Her sound.

Drug her. Blame her.

Lie to her. Lie to her. Lie to her.

Tell her she's not woman enough.

Gaslight her. Leave her no choice.

Kill her.

Bury her with beautiful flowers.

STEPHANIE A. KIMOU

I am a conceptual artist, museum professional, and philanthropic strategist. I make work to heal and better know myself, drawing on family archives, found objects, photography, writing, and abstract art.

These materials help me return to the things I have carried and want to feel differently about. My practice is a personal process of looking closely, making meaning, and finding ways to move toward healing.

