

TURNING WORLD

M A G A Z I N E



FACING THE QUAKE:

Impromptu Portraits from
Haiti's Post-catastrophe Encampments

by Brad Workman

DEATH ON DISPLAY: This bloody body was on a busy road in Cité Soleil, Haiti, Jan. 16, 2011. When U.N. troops (not shown) left no emergency staff had come for the corpse.





TURNING WORLD

M A G A Z I N E

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Motionless.

HE was coldly motionless when I arrived. A few big rocks, some wood, and a small variety of other items were around him on the pavement and had apparently been placed to protect him from the morning's passing motorists. U.N. soldiers were standing guard, and no one was attempting to administer medical aid. I therefore never imagined that he might be alive. He had a grotesque wound on his forehead above one eye. And, as is plain in the frontispiece photograph, he was somewhat bound and shoeless. Not far from the corpse were two red boots — one on each side. The drying blood included a broken stream that extended from his head and was roughly the width and length of his body.

I made the last frame of the man in the red-stained, white tee shirt more than one hour and thirty-eight minutes after I made the first frame. When I left the scene, which was after U.N. troops had left, he was at rest precisely where he had been when I arrived.

Cité Soleil has its young flyers of handmade kites, its places of faith, and its smiles, but the roped man of January was not the first guarded, oddly still body I had seen lying within sight of passing traffic in the seaside community.

"Let us see Haiti as the beautiful country that it is. We must present a different image of Haiti and focus more on our beautiful beaches, rich culture, and above all, our welcoming people," Michel

Martelly said April 21, 2011, during a news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. By preliminary results at least Martelly was then Haiti's president elect. (Final results were reported the same day.)

We clearly cannot say that Martelly's words were explicitly directed at Haitian or foreign media. Yet his words are noteworthy to me as a journalist who has seen horror and misery in Haiti and

The frontispiece is also a discordant reaction to what I do not show by choosing to publish for the first time the following portraits.

who has knowledge of the vulnerability of free speech in the country and across this planet. The frontispiece is thus partly a bristling, professional reaction to Martelly's statement.

The frontispiece is also a discordant reaction to what I do not show by choosing to publish for the first time the following portraits.

First, the collected portraits do not literally depict or attempt to illustrate the harsh realities of encampment living in and around Port-au-Prince after the earthquake of Jan. 12, 2010.

On the following pages you will not see, as I did in a camp in Cité Soleil in May 2010, an infant lying in a tent where after less than 10 minutes the high temperature was practically unbearable for even a physically fit adult. You will not see residents' rain-soaked belongings or other conditions common in many of the at least 18 camps I visited starting in April 2010 and ending in January. Among the common conditions were crowding, unemployment, poor nutrition, unsanitary waste-disposal systems, and untreated medical problems. I have not attempted to highlight the crime of sexual assault in the camps by knowingly presenting a

portrait of any rape victim.

Second, though I did not pose the portrait subjects or even place them into surroundings of my choosing the portraits are obviously not "news action" images. Through them you will not see Haitian and U.N. police in camp Tapis Vert arriving at the spot where bones were found in a rocky debris pile, for example, or dwelling-unit fires that happened in at least three camps I visited. And the 63 portraits (all captured in 2010) do not document forced evictions of camp residents, which have occurred but which I have not witnessed.

So, my portraits do not directly detail or attempt to place a spotlight on the regrettable realities of camp life and are not "news action" images from the camps. Yet such images from Haiti and elsewhere are of special interest to *Turning World Magazine*, and I intend to publish such images in future issues. In addition to being one response to Martelly the frontispiece thus appears also because it is a sample of the magazine's interests and intentions beyond "impromptu" portraiture.

Indeed, I did not first travel to the camps intent upon capturing a series of portraits. In the end, though, such images had become my priority for a variety of reasons.

One reason is that I came to realize — while never forgetting that in the earthquake many camp residents lost loved ones, homes, or both — that the harsh realities of camp living were in many ways the same as the harsh realities of living in Port-au-Prince before the magnitude 7.0 event Haitians call "Goudou Goudou."

Another reason is because, over time, I became fond of the working methods I employed to capture the portraits and fond of the portraits. As the collection gradually grew I came to see the images as visual manifestations of some of my clear thoughts and strong feelings about Haiti and my experiences there since first

visiting in 2003. And, despite Martelly's use of the phrase "welcoming people," which has the ring of a hackneyed tourist-board generalization, when I look at many of the portraits I do sense that I was welcomed.

In addition to losing a home or having it damaged beyond safe occupation there are multiple possible reasons why people were still living in the camps during my last visit to Haiti (in April) and are still living in the camps today. For examples: (1) They do not want to return to their homes, because they fear another earthquake. (2) They have received free or reduced-cost food, water, medical aid, or other services that they hope or believe they will receive again. (3) They were homeless before the catastrophe, and they consider even a makeshift dwelling in one reliable place with knowable neighbors to be a lifestyle improvement. (4) They are too sick, weak, or traumatized to pursue alternatives. (5) They think that if they stay they may eventually be given a new, less fragile living structure at the camp site or elsewhere. During his news conference Martelly said one of his top priorities was "moving people out of the tents by providing permanent, not temporary housing."

Regardless, it seems obvious to me that the leading reason people would continue to live in an encampment is because they are convinced that they have no better option. That is the prime reason I first went to the camps to make photographs. And, far beyond any fondness for the portraits, it is the prime reason I continued to return.

As you continue now to move through the images in this issue — and if you view and reflect upon this and other issues in the future — I ask you to please keep several things in mind. First, though their shortcomings vary by quantity and in nature all journalists have professional shortcomings. And, all journalists make

(consciously or otherwise) subjective editorial decisions. Lastly, all mediated messages including live-feed audiovisuals have weaknesses inscribed in them by the tools that transmit them. Photojournalism can be provocative evidence of our quest. Yet the source of its power is the source of its potential for injury. To help prevent corruption of photojournalism's strength it is important to never forget that the suspended instants we see are all culled from instants among infinite instants.

A grand implication of the preceding paragraph is that if someone wanted to develop a worthy understanding of any critical period, place, person, event, or human condition then that person should not limit their inquiry to the work of one journalist or to works in any single medium.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BW', enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish.

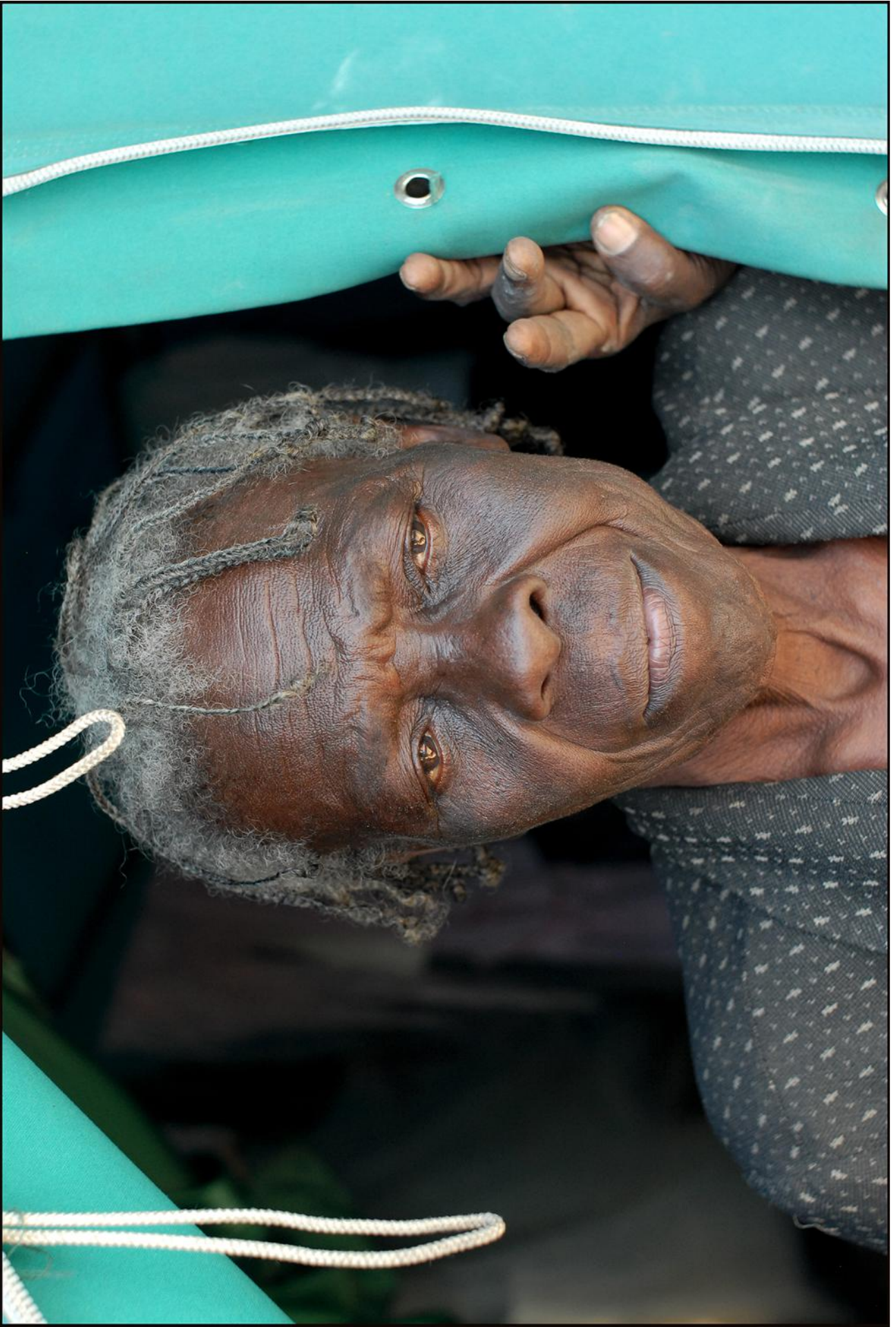
Brad Workman

June 28, 2011

P.S. Below is the address to the Web video from which I quoted the words of Haitian president Michel Martelly. (I claim no copyright to either.) <http://www.c-span.org/Events/Haitian-President-Elect-Martelly-Looks-to-Haitis-Future/10737421041-1/>













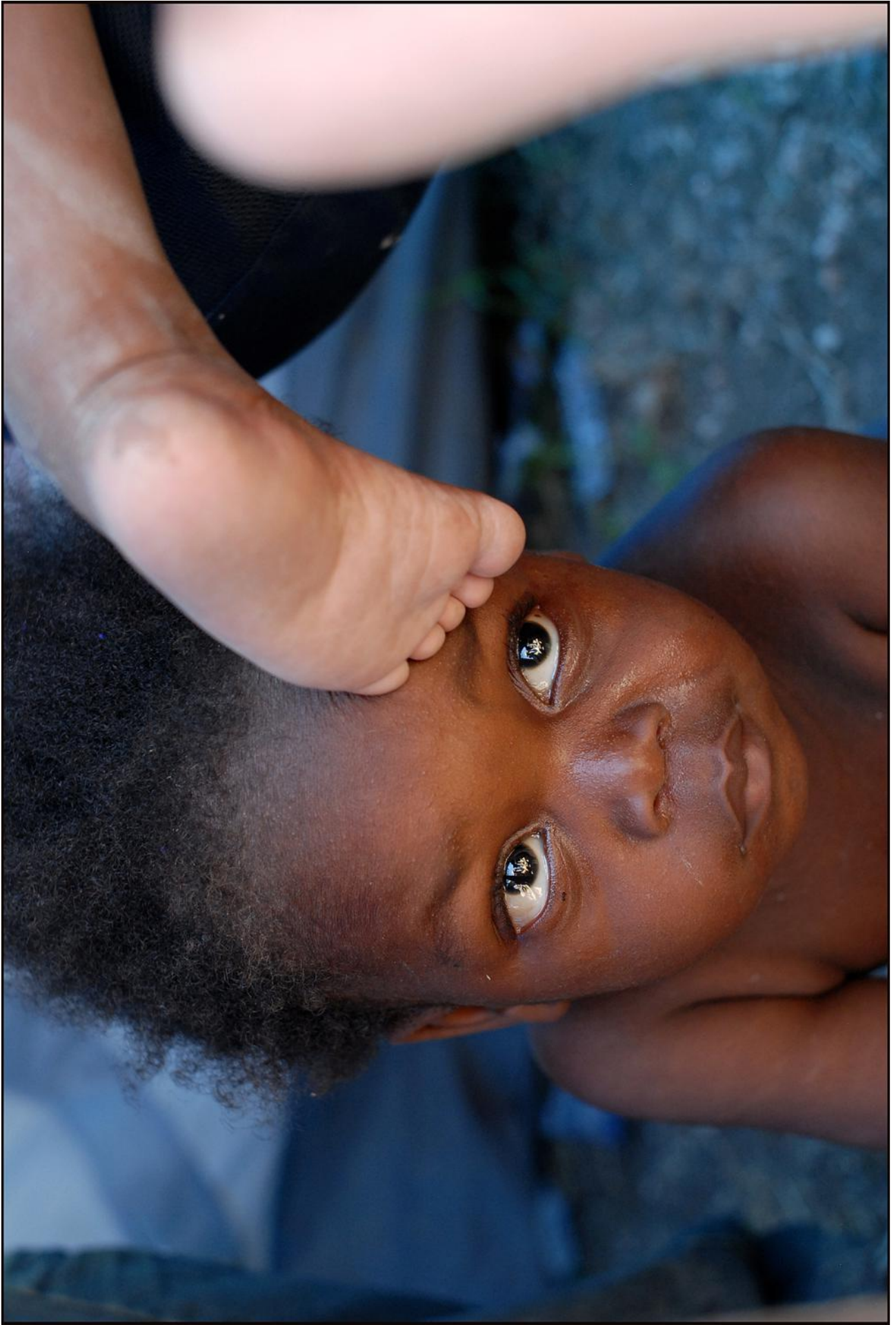


















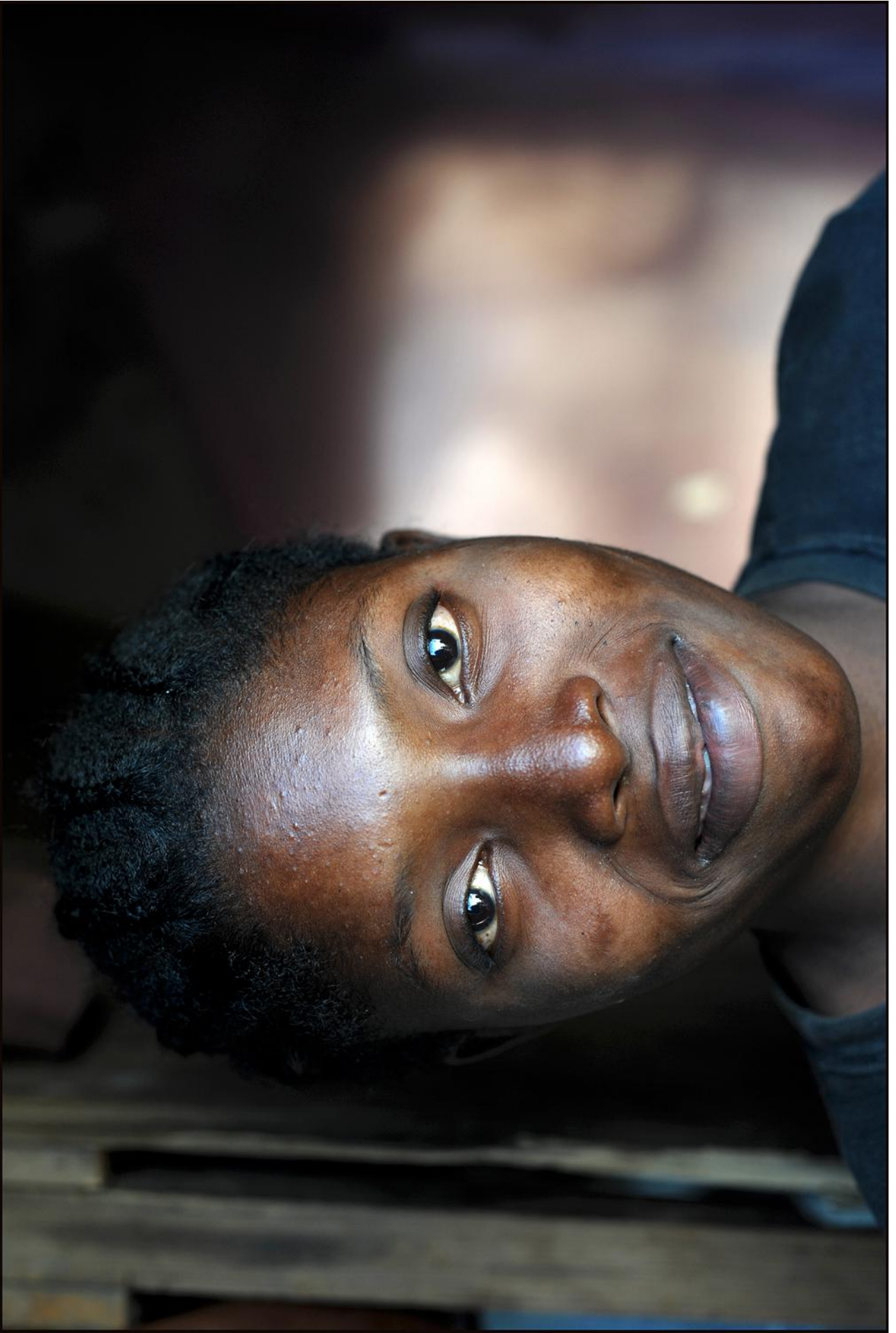


































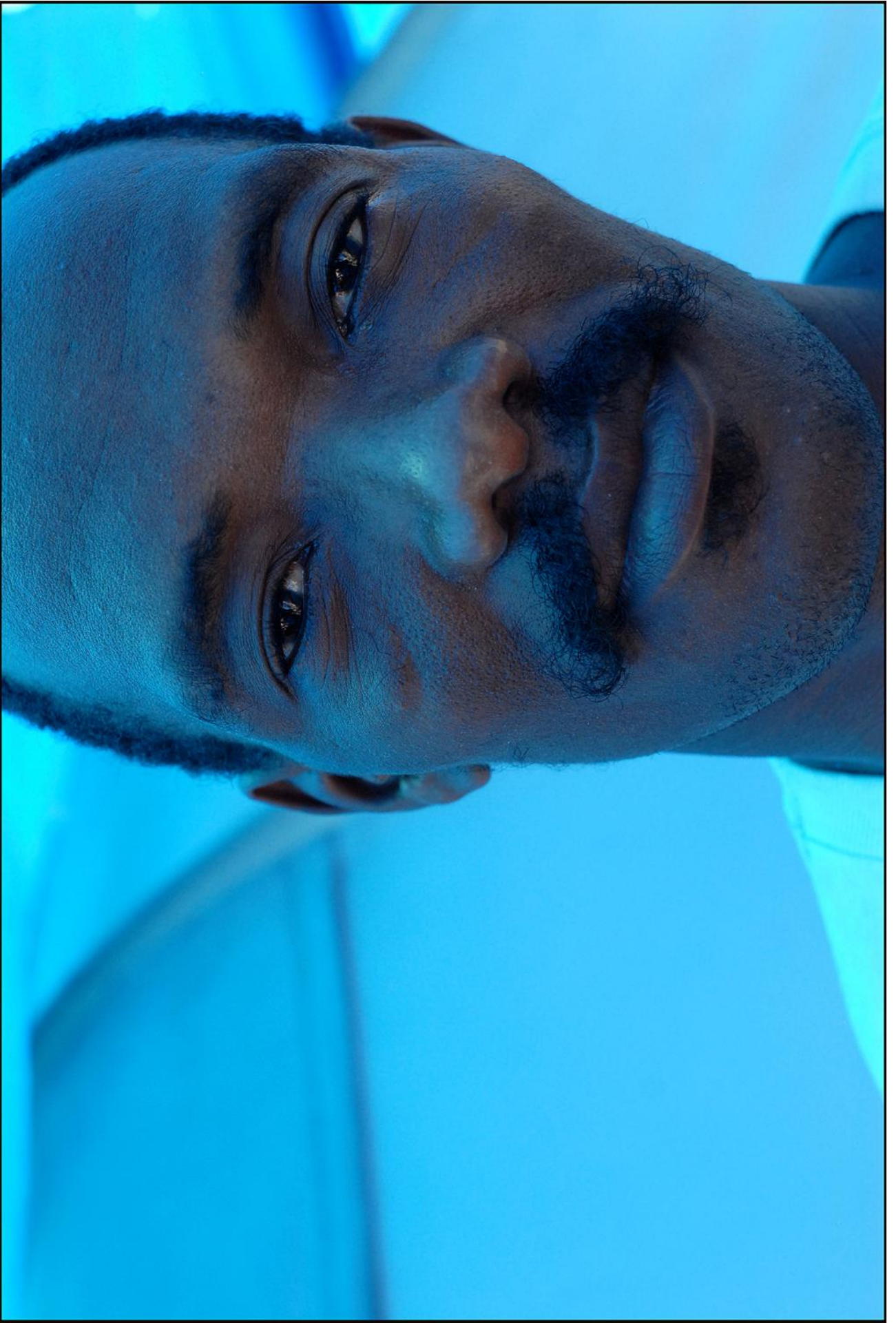


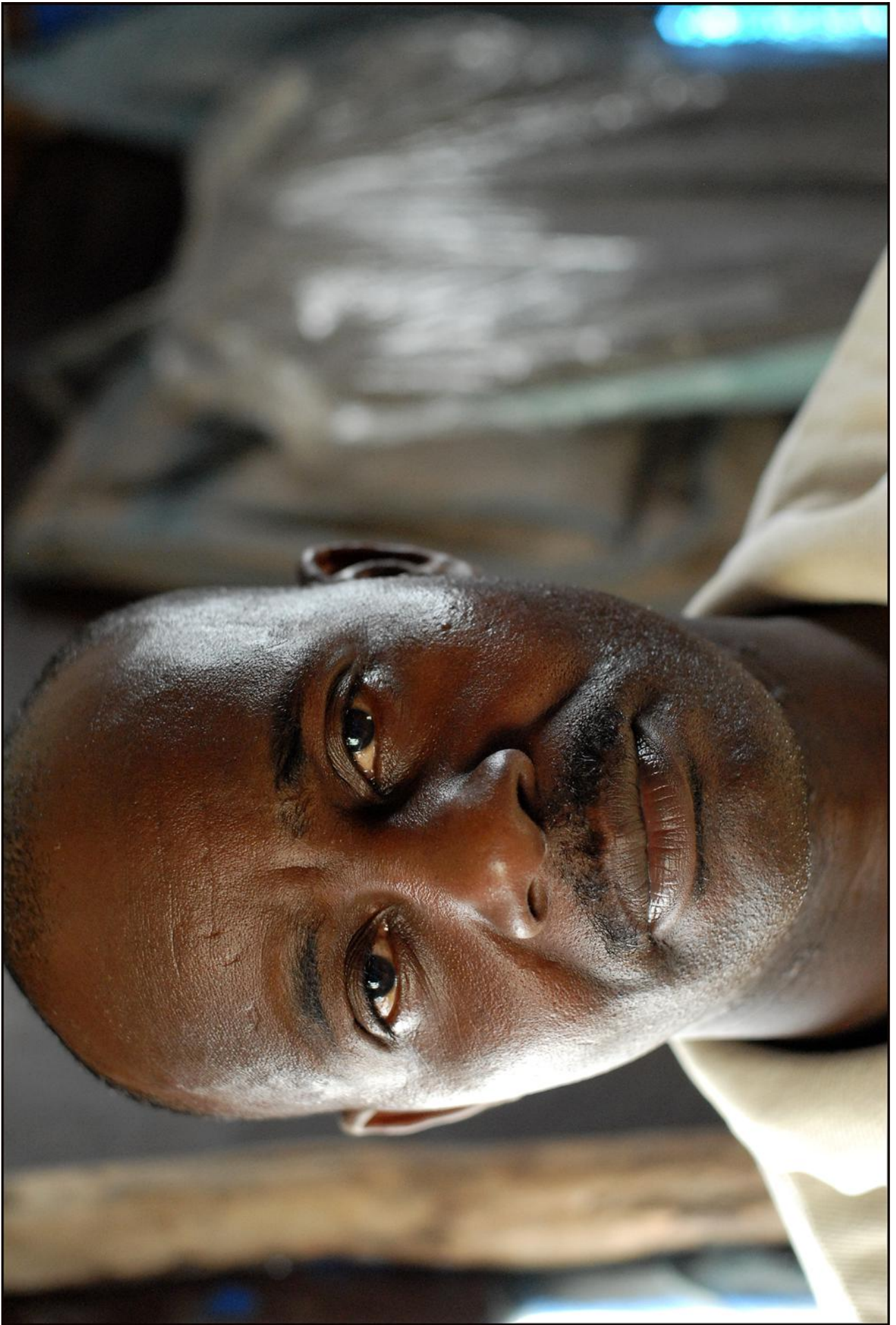




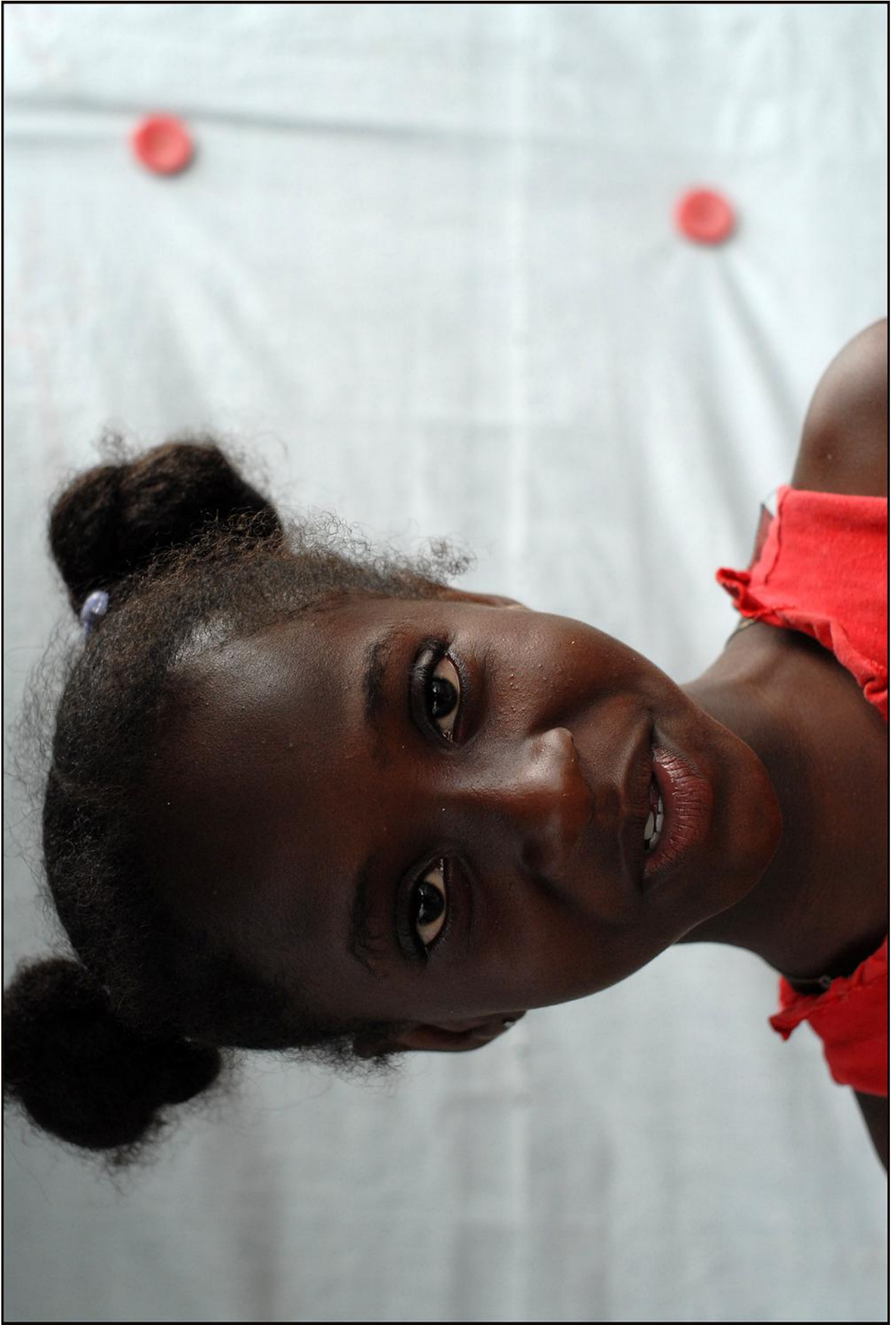


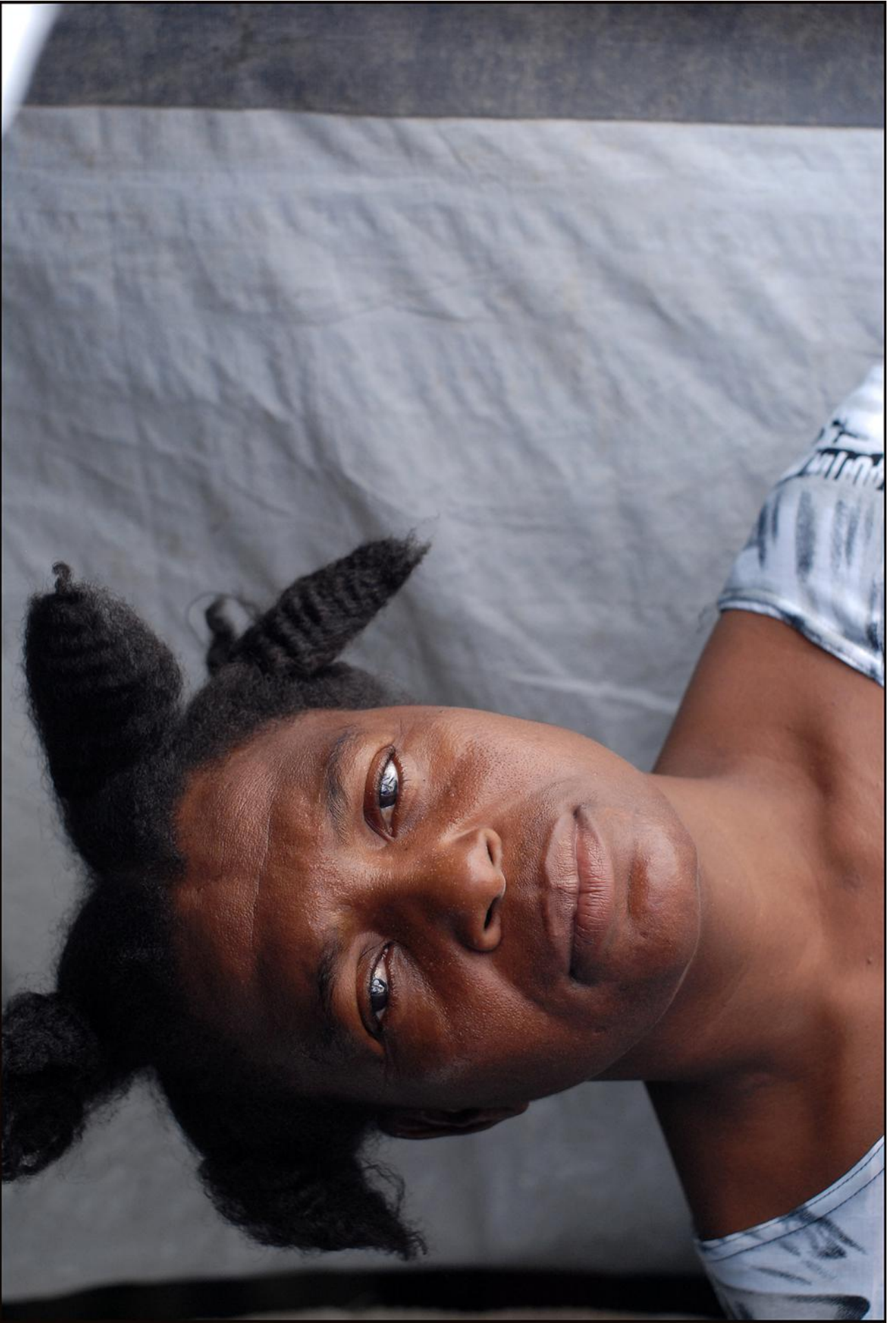






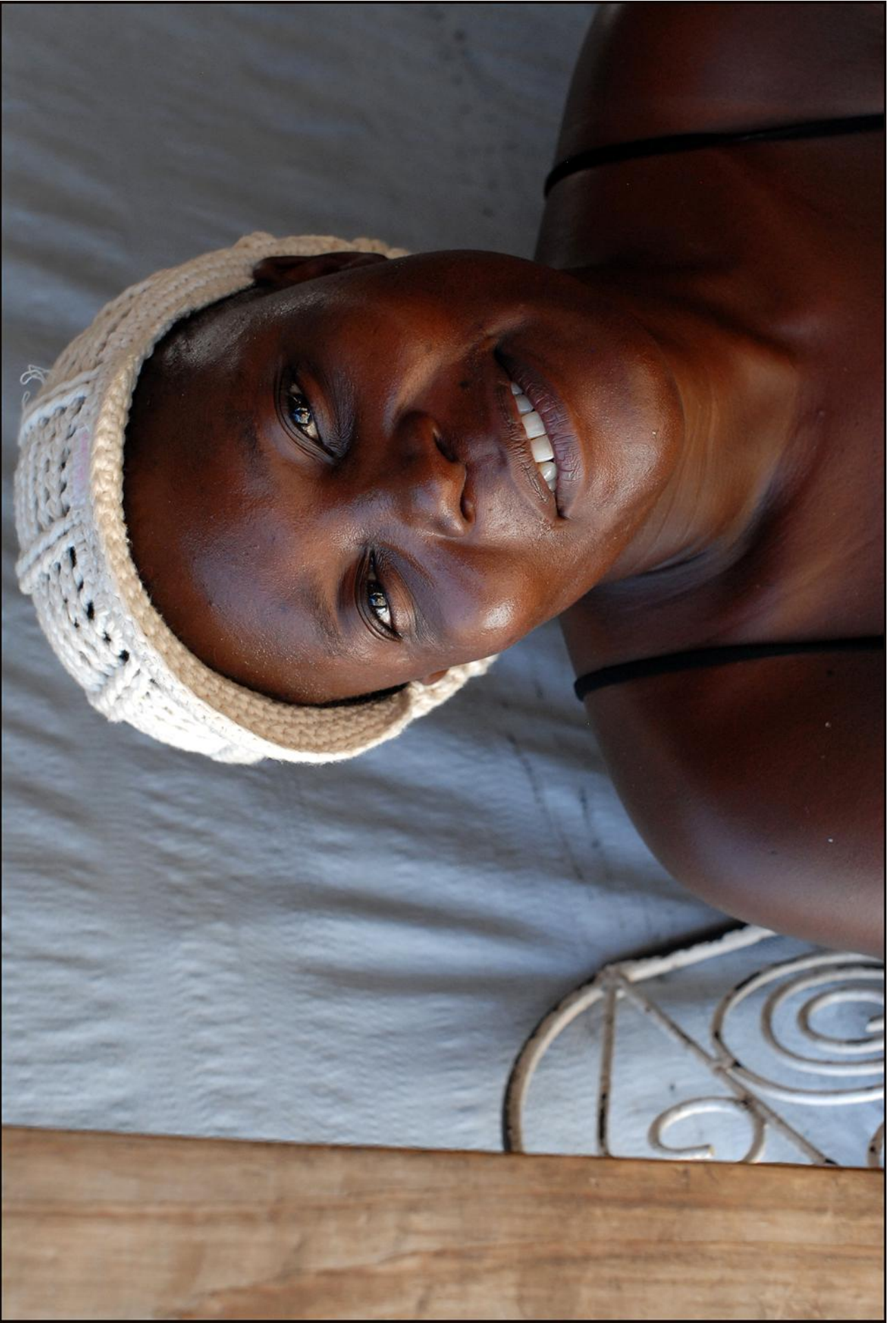






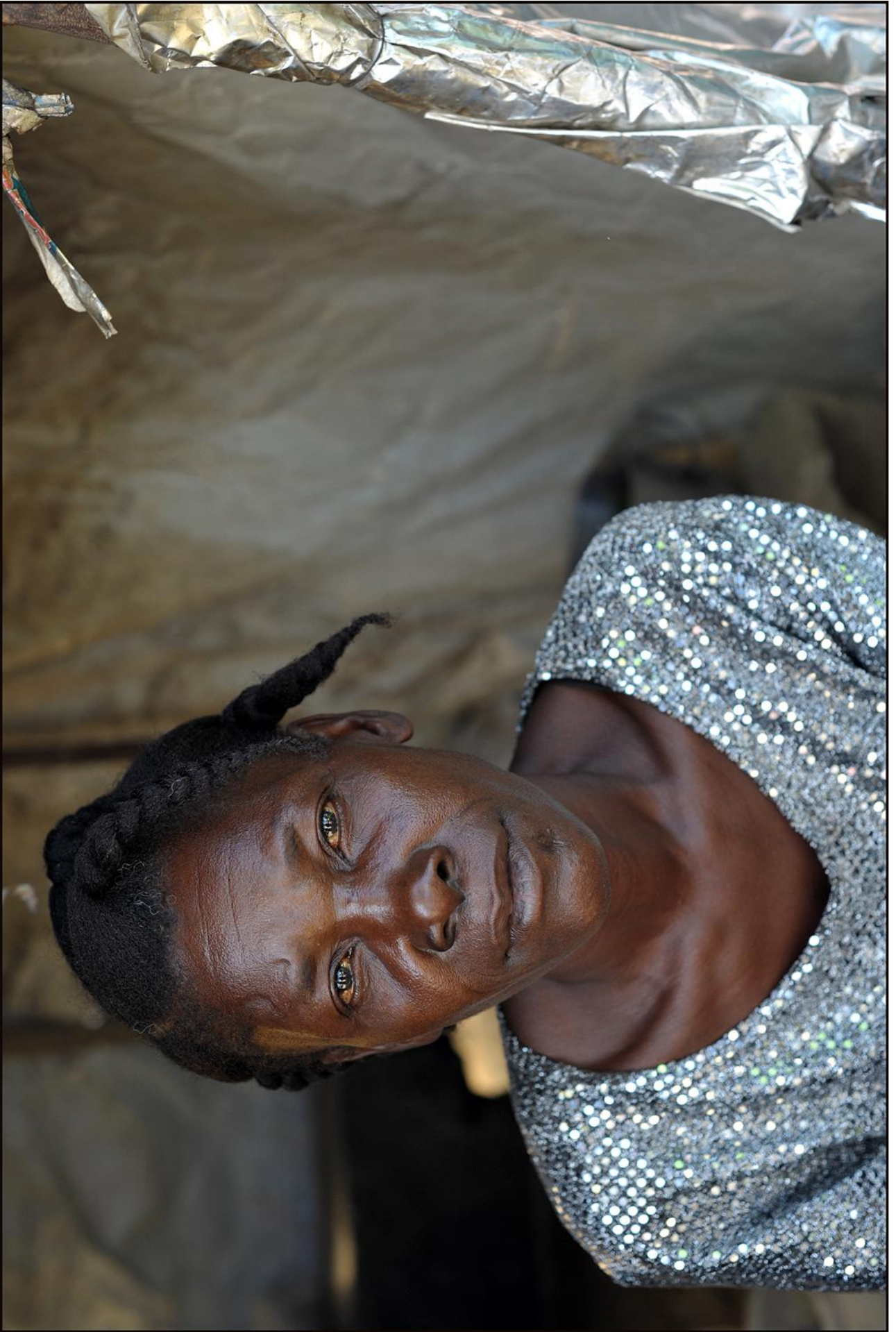
















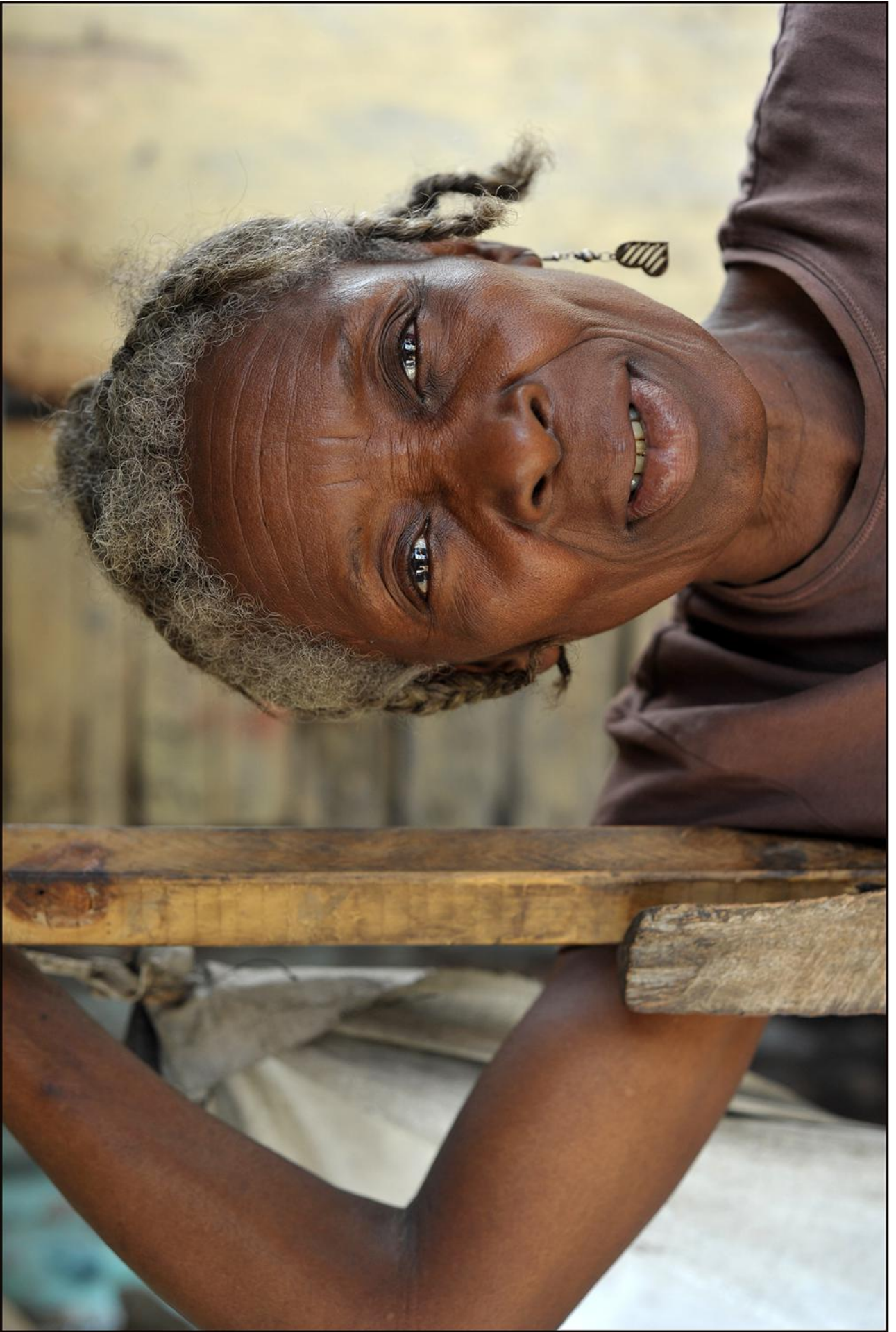




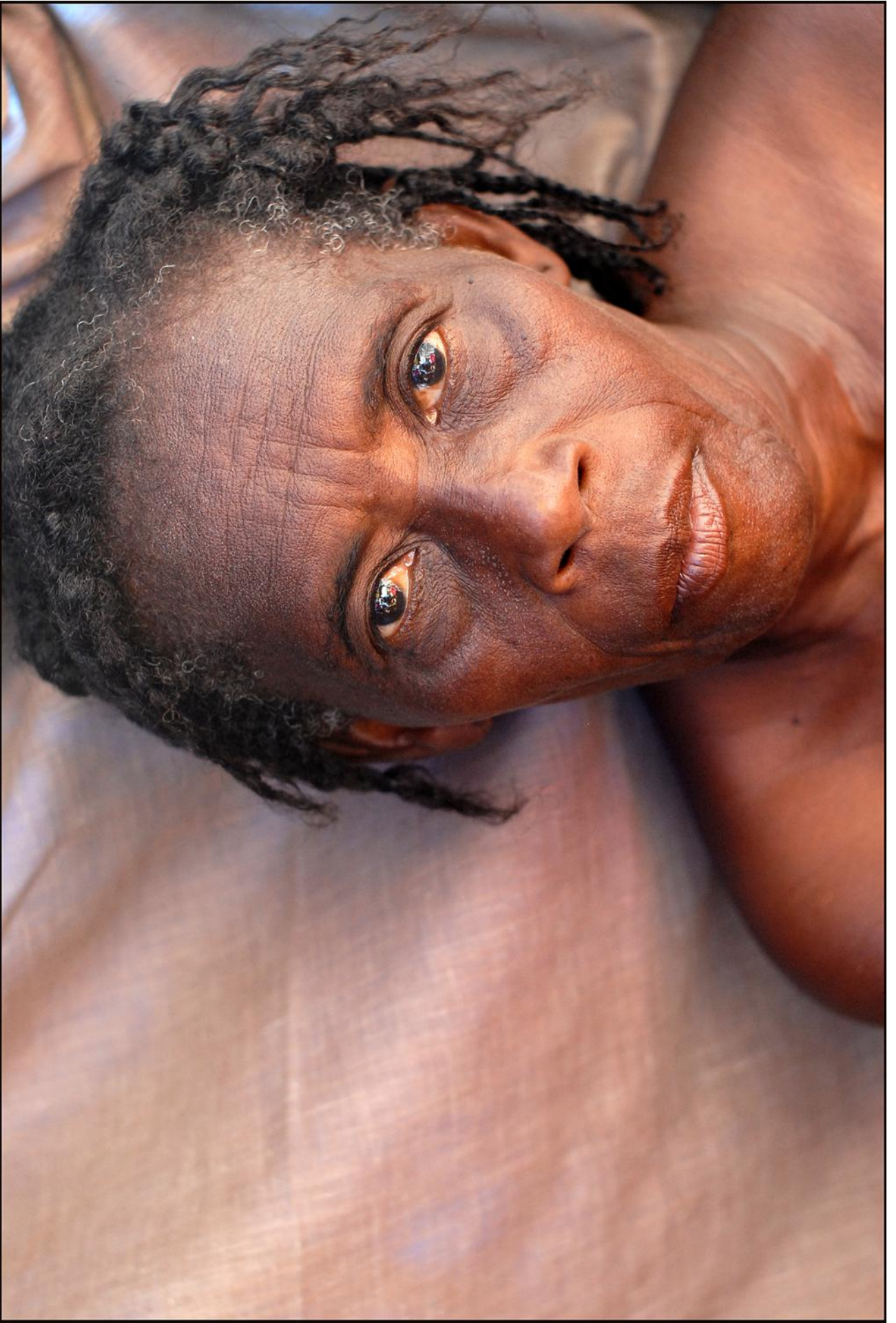
























This inaugural issue is dedicated to the portrait subjects, to people still living in the camps, and – supremely – to all for whom it can never be knowing enough about Haiti.

Haiti

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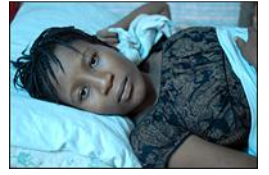
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In the Next Issue:

Below: Seeking his name at a polling center in Tabarre, Haiti, on Nov. 28, 2010 — election day.



WHILE Haitians in and around Port-au-Prince were fighting to recover from the January 2010 earthquake and the country was fighting a cholera epidemic candidate Michel Martelly was fighting to become the nation's president elect. Martelly succeeded by winning a run-off vote, but only after supporters angry over preliminary first-round results blocked capital streets with fire and competitor Jude Celestin was knocked from the contest by revised vote totals. Next quarter, *Turning World Magazine* will bring you visual reportage (including a few frames of Martelly) from this critical and intriguing time in Haitian history.

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