



# THE AMERICAN FEMINIST<sup>®</sup>

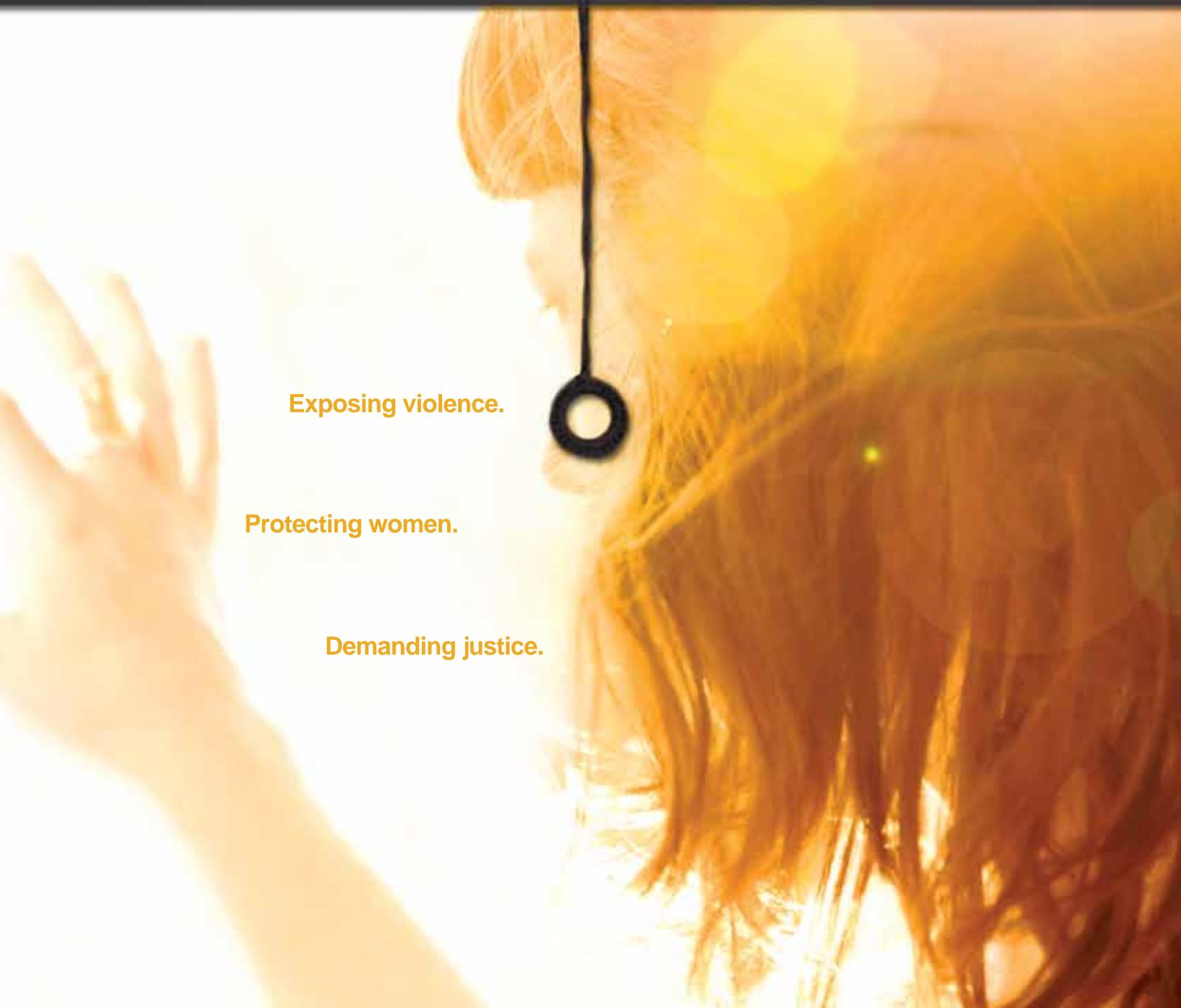
Feminists for Life of America

## Forward Into Light

Exposing violence.

Protecting women.

Demanding justice.



# Increase Your Impact

Guttmacher Institute reports that of the 1.21 million women who have abortions each year:

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Fall/Winter 2011

## THE AMERICAN FEMINIST®

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Established in 1972, Feminists for Life of America is a nonsectarian, nonpartisan, grassroots organization that seeks real solutions to the challenges women face. Our efforts are shaped by the core feminist values of justice, nondiscrimination, and nonviolence. Feminists for Life of America continues the tradition of early American feminists such as Susan B. Anthony, who opposed abortion.

Feminists for Life of America recognizes that abortion is a reflection that our society has failed to meet the needs of women. We are dedicated to systematically eliminating the root causes that drive women to abortion—primarily lack of practical resources and support—through holistic, woman-centered solutions. Women deserve better than abortion.

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“When a man steals to satisfy hunger, we may safely conclude that there is something wrong in society—so when a woman destroys the life of her unborn child, it is an evidence that either by education or circumstances she has been greatly wronged.”

—Mattie Brinkerhoff, *The Revolution*, 2 September 1869

## FEMINISTS FOR LIFE OF AMERICA



Photo by Karen Judge

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**Please be advised that some material in these articles may trigger disturbing memories for readers who have personally experienced violence, such as stalking, intimate partner abuse, rape, incest, or abortion.**

# Forward Into Light

Dear Feminists for Life,

In the pages that follow I don't just see abstractions. I see my family, friends, and, yes, myself.

As feminists we know that there is a dark spectrum of violence. Abortion is one of many forms of violence against women.

While we never invite pain, if we can work through tragedy with love and support, we can take the worst things that can happen to us and use them to become better, stronger people. We can better relate to each other and turn something terrible into motivation to help others.

If you have experienced one of the forms of violence we consider in this issue, please be gentle with yourself. When you are ready, you may find help within these pages.

If you see yourself as someone with a propensity to perpetrate violence, I urge you to find help now.

Today we stand in solidarity with women who have experienced terrible tragedies.

Today we work to illuminate difficult issues in the knowledge that we can unite as pro-life feminists to prevent violence and protect women. And together, we will work for justice.

Because women—and men and children—deserve better,



Serrin M. Foster  
President

# Humanity Through the Lens of Pornography

by Cayce D. Utley

In 1963, Gloria Steinem shocked America with her undercover exposé of the denigration women experienced working in Hugh Hefner's Playboy Club. Almost half a century later, Hefner parades his "bunnies" around on their own reality show while young girls across the country slap bunny stickers on the bumpers of their first cars. This fall, NBC advertised its new serial drama, "The Playboy Club," as a glamorous recreation the club's early days: "It's the early 1960s, and at the center of Chicago lies the legendary and seductive Playboy Club, a living, breathing fantasy world filled with \$1.50 cocktails, music, glitter and of course, beautiful Bunnies." Pornography has become a staple of the mainstream and, as a result, has affected how two generations understand sex, violence, and human worth.

Over a decade ago, Cornell University professor Joan Jacobs Brumberg had a revelation in her classroom. During a talk on Victorian culture's dictates about women's bodies, her students began to open up about the pressures they face in modern society. The professor says, "These young women were bright enough to gain admission to an Ivy League university and they enjoyed educational opportunities unknown to earlier generations. But they also felt a need to strictly police their bodies... Today, unlike in the Victorian era, commercial interests play directly into the body angst of young girls... Although elevated body angst is a great boost to corporate profits, it saps the creativity of girls and threatens their mental and physical health."<sup>1</sup>

These conversations sparked Brumberg's book, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*, in which she examines the historical shift in young women's attitudes about their bodies. She writes, "At the close of the twentieth century, the female body poses an enormous problem for American girls and it does so because of the culture in which we live... [T]he

current body problem is not just an external issue resulting from a lack of societal vigilance or adult support; it has also become an internal, psychological problem: girls today make the body into an all-consuming project in ways young women of the past did not."<sup>2</sup>

Brumberg identifies a serious problem for young women that feminists have been studying and discussing for decades. The increasing commercialization of beauty, sex, and—at its core—the female body are ever-present challenges for feminists. Naomi Wolf calls the marketing and glamorization of supposedly "flawless" standards of beauty in the media, etc., "beauty pornography." In her book, *The Beauty Myth*, she writes, "If women feel ugly, it is our fault, and we have no inalienable right to feel sexually beautiful. A woman must not admit it if she objects to beauty pornography because it strikes to the root of her sexuality by making her feel sexually unlovely. Male or female, we all need to feel beautiful... in the sense of welcome, desired, and treasured. Deprived of that, one objectifies oneself or the other for self-protection."<sup>3</sup>

Young women affected by these expectations realize something is wrong but are often unable to articulate it. Talking to students, Wolf found that the concept of "beauty pornography" remained elusive to young women being influenced by it. After explaining the politics, symbolism, and cultural exclusion of the problem to a group of students, one woman told her, "I'll support you, though I have no idea what you're talking about. All I know is [these images] make me feel incredibly bad about myself."<sup>4</sup>

Wolf and Joan Jacobs Brumberg are not alone in their experiences working with young women who feel pressured by cultural norms of beauty and sexuality. Other feminists point out the





connections between the commercialization of women for selling products (what Wolf calls “soft-core beauty pornography”) and the commercialization of women for selling sexual experiences (what is widely recognized as “pornography”). Because these norms are so widely accepted, many women—including those who consider themselves feminists—are reluctant to confront the pervasive influence of porn culture. Today, not only are women expected to maintain trim, shapely physiques, they are sold the opportunity to do so through pole-dancing aerobics classes and Carmen Electra’s “Fit to Strip” DVD.

British columnist Natasha Walter received a tremendous response to an article she wrote about pornographic magazines. One young woman who wrote to her prompted Walter to explore the subject further in her book, *Living Dolls*. The 17-year-old wrote that she was “starting to think it was time to give up and sit in silence while my friends put on a porno... What you said gave me back the will not to give in... it’s nice to see someone else saying it, makes me feel like less of a prude-type oddball.”<sup>5</sup>

Journalist Kim Cochrane writes of *Living Dolls*, “Walter takes on the notion that, for example, stripping and pole-dancing are empowering, liberating choices; instead she suggests, it has become increasingly difficult for young women to opt out of this culture.” Walter says about the research she conducted for her

book, “I was surprised by the attitudes of the girls I interviewed who seemed to feel that they would be mocked if they protested within their peer groups. You know, when I was at university [in the ’80s] it was OK to be annoyed about sexism... you could still say ‘I really don’t want *Page 3* in the common room’ or ‘I really hate the idea of porn.’”<sup>6</sup>

Anti-pornography activist and Wheelock College professor Gail Dines says, “A key sign that pornography is now deeply embedded in our culture is the way it has become synonymous with sex to such a point that to criticize pornography is to get slapped with the label ‘anti-sex’... Porn sex is a sex that is debased, dehumanized, formulaic and generic, a sex based not on individual fantasy, play or intimacy, but one that is the result of an industrial product created by men who get excited not by bodily contact but by profits.”<sup>7</sup> In her book, *Pornified*, Pamela Paul writes, “Habitual male consumers of mainstream pornography—that is, nonviolent but nonetheless objectifying images—appear to be at greater risk of becoming sexually callous toward female sexuality and concerns.”<sup>8</sup>

An early tenet of the feminist movement was an opposition to the objectification of women in the media in general and in pornography in particular. Pro-life feminists continue that legacy today, emphasizing the connections between violence against women and pornography. Some pro-choice feminists share that conviction, even while others in their movement embrace porn culture as an opportunity for women to explore their own sexuality. This division within the feminist movement became heated in the late 1970s during the “pornography wars” in which “two distinct and oppositional factions developed. On the one hand there were the anti-porn feminists and on the other, there were the women who felt that if feminism was about freedom, then women should be free to look at or appear in pornography.”<sup>9</sup>

Ariel Levy, author of *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* and writer for *The New Yorker* magazine, adds that the pro-choice feminist movement made an early uneasy alliance with *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner: “Roe and the legalization of the birth control pill—both of which were crucial to feminists were both helped by funding from Hefner... But a shared distaste for conventional family arrangements and repressive laws was the extent of Hefner’s ideological compatibility with the women’s liberation movement.”<sup>10</sup> Levy says of the mismatch, “[Hefner’s statements about his bunnies] made feminists want to throw up. They were specifically fighting to be seen as *real* people, not sudsy bunnies. They wanted to show the world that women were ‘difficult’ and ‘sophisticated,’ not to mention formidable.”<sup>11</sup>

In her essay “Pornography and the Sexual Revolution,” FFL activist Judy Shea writes, “It is no accident that the greatest apologist for pornography in our culture, Hugh Hefner, is also enthusiastic about abortion on demand... The reality of the possibility of pregnancy and childbirth interferes with the Hefner dream of multiple partners and everlasting orgies. The Hefner playboy is incapable of relating to a mature woman who ovulates, menstruates, conceives and lactates. In fact, he’s quite puritanical about the messy, dirty processes of human reproduction. He likes his bunnies ‘clean’ and sterile.”<sup>12</sup>

Unapologetic anti-porn feminists pulled away from the mainstream and formed a prominent “splinter group of activists, including [Susan] Brownmiller, Gloria Steinem, Shere Hite, Robin Morgan, the poet Adrienne Rich, and the writers Grace Paley and Audre Lorde.”<sup>13</sup> Brownmiller and others founded the New York chapter of Women Against Pornography and began tackling the problem right outside their office on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.

Levy writes, “The area was a swamp of peep shows, porn shops, and prostitution—ground zero for the objectification of women—and the feminists set up camp right in the middle of it.... Women Against Pornography’s trademark was offering guided tours of the neighborhood intended to elucidate the degradation of sex workers. They would bring visiting Benedictine nuns to a strip club to observe the patrons and dancers, or they’d take a curious band of housewives inside a porn shop so they could investigate what it was their husbands were looking at in the garage.”

Feminists like these working against pornography in the late 70s and early 80s sought to address the degradation and objectification of women at every level of society. They also saw their foe for what it was: an industry made wealthy by the consistent and pervasive dehumanization of women.

According to feminist activist, professor, and author Robert Jensen, pornography is a booming industry: “The fact that more



than ten billion dollars a year is spent on pornography makes it very clear that pornography does not express a deviant sexuality. It, in fact, expresses a very conventional sexuality, and that means the road takes us not just to the valley in California where this material is produced. It takes us into our own lives and into our own bedroom.”<sup>14</sup> A recent *Newsweek* study led by Melissa Farley, the director of Prostitution Research and Education, looked at the growing demand for prostitution. The team of researchers found that “buying sex is so pervasive that Farley’s team had a shockingly difficult time locating men who really don’t do it. The use of pornography, phone sex, lap dances, and other services has become so widespread that the researchers were forced to loosen their definition in order to assemble a 100-person control group.”<sup>15</sup>

Farley said, “We had big, big trouble finding nonusers. We finally had to settle on a definition of non-sex-buyers as men who have not been to a strip club more than two times in the past year,

## Pornography is the theory, rape is the practice.

have not purchased a lap dance, have not used pornography more than one time in the last month, and have not purchased phone sex or the services of a sex worker, escort, erotic masseuse, or prostitute.” Buying porn and patronizing businesses that profit from the sexual exploitation of women has become culturally expected of men. Robert Jensen frankly confronts men about the objectification of women in pornography in his essay, “A Cruel Edge: The Painful Truth About Today’s Pornography—and What Men Can Do About It.” He writes, “Men spend \$10 billion on pornography a year. 11,000 new pornographic films are made every year. And in those films, women are not people. In pornography, women are three holes and two hands.”<sup>16</sup>

Jensen adds, “All of these acts are, at their base, about male domination and female submission. Men’s ability to do whatever they want to do to women and women accepting it, and even further in pornography, not only women accepting it, but women seeing it as part of their nature.”<sup>17</sup> It is this dehumanization and emphasis on male power that makes pornography dangerous. One of the most pressing concerns for feminists today is the ever-increasing levels of violence in popular pornography. In the documentary *The Price of Pleasure*, Dr. Ana Bridges, psychology professor at the University of Arkansas says, “Defenders of pornography often state that critics hold up the worst-case examples, most degrading, most violent pornography and talk about why this is harmful. But in fact, pornography is very diverse.” In a study on violence and aggression in pornography, Dr. Bridges and her research team examined 304 scenes from the most popular porn videos released in 2005. The team found that 89.8% of the scenes contained verbal or physical aggression. Ninety-four percent of the aggressive acts in those scenes were targeted at women.<sup>18</sup>

Anti-porn activist Robin Morgan once said, “Pornography is the theory, rape is the practice.”<sup>19</sup> Neil Malamuth, a psychologist well-known for his studies of the aftereffects of pornography concluded in a literature review, “experimental research shows that exposure to non-violent or violent pornography results in increases in both attitudes supporting sexual aggression and in actual aggression.” He adds from his own study, “When we considered men who were previously determined to be at high risk for sexual aggression... [W]e found that those who are additionally very frequent users of pornography were much more likely to have engaged in sexual aggression than their counterparts who consume pornography less frequently.”<sup>20</sup> Naomi Wolf argues that pornography not only desensitizes men and women to violence, it normalizes violence: “Cultural representation of glamorized degradation has created a situation among the young in which boys rape and girls get raped *as a normal course of events*.”<sup>21</sup>

Besides pornography’s profitable homage to violence against women, the industry itself thrives upon the victimization of women. Porn buyers are led to believe that the women they see in the magazines want to be there. Buyers are conditioned to think that the transaction is consensual and the materials they are viewing are harmless. Yet this “legitimacy” of pornography often provides a legal front for trafficking operations. Linda Smith, founder and president of Shared Hope International and former member of Congress, says that traffickers use “spotters” to lure

young women into the commercial sex industry and from there into prostitution.<sup>22</sup> Shared Hope International, working with the American Center for Law and Justice, has released a model legislative framework for targeting pornographers as facilitators and perpetrators of sex trafficking.

Porn's first big "star" Linda Lovelace wrote in her book *Ordeal* about her start in porn, orchestrated by an abusive and controlling husband who acted as manager and manipulator.<sup>23</sup> Other women report having been coerced, abused, and manipulated into performing in pornographic films.<sup>24</sup> According to Laura Lederer, former Senior Advisor on Human Trafficking at the U.S. State Department, porn also increases the demand for sex trafficking because it sends the messages that it's "normal" for men to exploit women and girls for their own pleasure, and it's "glamorous" for women to be used and abused in this way. Lederer says, "Pornography is a brilliant social marketing campaign for sexual exploitation."<sup>25</sup>

Because pornography has been normalized in American culture—even celebrated as a liberating force by both women and men—combating it is a tremendous challenge for pro-life feminists and pro-choice anti-porn feminists. For many years, feminist groups have worked independently to put pressure on the porn industry, approaching the problem both as academics and activists. But these isolated efforts could be strengthened. Laura Lederer responds, "If our challenge at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was to recognize that sexual exploitation is a growing phenomenon... our challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to link up all of our various efforts. We must do it. We have to make the connections between the various forms of sexual exploitation, sex trafficking and sex slavery." Pro-life feminists make those connections and, in doing so, become the voice of those threatened and exploited by pornography. ●

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# What You Don't Know About STALKING

by Susanna B. Seibert

with stalking, but "neither reported feeling fear as a result of such conduct nor experienced actions that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear." The difference is mainly in the intensity of the offender's actions, and often extends into the legal sphere. Harassment is not grouped with stalking in many states' definitions and laws (see Legal Examples sidebar), although as with stalking, the definitions and penalties vary by state. Victim advocates stress that victims do not need to know the particular laws in their states to start recording potential harassing or stalking incidents or to seek help from law enforcement.

While the majority of stalking cases involve women as victims and men as their stalkers, women and men are equally likely to experience harassment. Men and women, as stalking victims, are also equally likely to report stalking behavior

include persistent phone calling; waiting outside the victim's home or workplace; making threats to the victim, her family, or friends; threatening to kill oneself unless the victim complies with a demand; sending written messages (letters or emails) or gifts; slandering the victim's character; and objectifying the victim. Cyberstalkers can go even further, using any technology, including phones, GPS,

In 1981, John Hinckley Jr. attempted to assassinate President Ronald Reagan in a last desperate effort to gain actor Jodie Foster's attention, wounding the president and several others. More than a decade ago, Margaret Ray repeatedly visited late-night television host David Letterman's home, and, after 10 months in prison and 14 months in a mental institution, committed suicide. Halle Berry got a restraining order against Greg Broussard in 2004, after he stalked her and sent her manager numerous gifts intended for the actor, even going so far as to believe he and Berry were engaged. This year, paparazzi outside Paris Hilton's home identified a man who had previously been charged with battery in a case involving Hilton and her boyfriend. Celebrity cases receive national attention, but stalking is not confined to the world of money and fame. In most instances of stalking, in fact, perpetrators know their victims personally, even intimately.

The National Institute of Justice describes stalking as a "crime of power and control."<sup>1</sup> Stalkers need to know they have an impact on their victim's life. The type of reaction a stalker gets is not necessarily as important as the fact that they *get* a reaction in the first place. Stalking can be carried out in person or through electronic mechanisms, known as cyberstalking. In order to be legally classified as stalking, a perpetrator's actions must be repeated and unwanted by the recipient. Physical stalking behaviors

## Stalking is an act of terrorism that a victim faces every hour of every day.

cameras, fax, computer spyware, and the Internet (especially social networking websites). Although these behaviors may or may not include a "credible threat of serious [physical] harm," Privacy Rights Clearinghouse emphasizes that stalking can cause psychological damage to victims, and can lead to assault or murder.<sup>2</sup>

There is a difference between stalking and harassment that is not widely known. According to the Supplemental Victimization Survey (SVS) conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2006, many instances of harassment could have escalated to the level of stalking, but "at the time of the interview, the offender's actions and victim's responses did not rise to the threshold of stalking victimization."<sup>3</sup> The SVS also notes that harassment victims experienced behaviors associated

to the police. Nearly 75% of victims know their stalker in some capacity. Most victims are under the age of 35. According to the SVS, nearly 3.4 million adults in the United States were stalked in a 12-month period. Survey respondents named the most common types of stalking behaviors: making unwanted phone calls (66%), spreading rumors (36%), and sending unsolicited letters or email (31%). More than one in four respondents said some form of cyberstalking, such as email or instant messaging, was used.

The group End Stalking in America (ESIA) calls stalking the "new epidemic of the new millennium," and describes being stalked as "an act of terrorism that a victim faces every hour of every day."<sup>4</sup> Their website lists common traits of stalkers, including the following: stalkers will

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In most instances of stalking perpetrators know their victims personally, even intimately. Nearly 75% of victims know their stalkers in some capacity.

not take no for an answer; stalkers don't feel the embarrassment or anxiety people should feel in certain circumstances; stalkers often have low self-esteem and believe they must have a relationship with the other person to feel any sense of self-worth; and few stalkers can see how their actions hurt others. Michael Conner, Psy.D., agrees with the above assessment, and adds that a true stalker "can't stand to be ignored. If they can't have your love they will settle for your anger and hatred."<sup>5</sup>

Conner describes two types of stalkers, obsessional and delusional, each with different causes. *Obsessional* stalking is a psychological problem with multiple causes, for instance, an "on-again off-again relationship," or a fear of separation and loss. *Delusional* stalking, according to Conner, is caused by a mental disorder and makes the stalker obsessed or fixated on a person. It should be noted that these are only some reasons one person stalks another. Stalkers might have different reasons or mental conditions that prompt them to stalk someone, but their actions (and the legal definition of stalking in each case) are the same.

#### Helpful Resources

**End Stalking in America**  
esia.net

**Stalkinghelp.org**

**Stalking Victims Sanctuary**  
stalkingvictims.com

**National Stalking Awareness Month**  
stalkingawarenessmonth.org

**Working to Halt Online Abuse**  
www.haltabuse.org

**Safety for Stalking Victims: How to Save Your Privacy, Your Sanity, and Your Life**  
by Lyn Bates

**Surviving a Stalker**  
by Linden Gross

One aspect of stalking that the public may overlook is the devastating effect it has on a victim's life. The emotional, physical, and even financial toll can be overwhelming for the victim and her family. ESIA highlights the difficulties they face in even convincing a police officer there is a problem: "Stalking victims don't have the physical bruises to show. Day after day they are mentally raped." The Department of Justice's SVS found that about 130,000 victims were fired or asked to leave their jobs as a result of the stalking. About one in eight employed stalking victims lost time from work due to activities such as getting a restraining order or testifying in court, or simply because they were afraid to go outside. In commenting on recent changes to Illinois' stalking laws, Lisa Madigan, the state attorney general, said, "Stalking is a crime that can paralyze an otherwise productive person with fear."<sup>6</sup> The stalker's intrusion into a victim's life wreaks havoc on the stability of her home and work lives and often those of her immediate family members.

As if the emotional and material toll was not high enough, stalking victims have the added burden of having to change their behavior to end the situation. Stalkers will not change, as ESIA points out: "It's not fair, and most people don't like hearing it. But if you want to protect yourself and your loved ones, it is reality." Numerous websites, listed in the "Helpful Resources" section at the end of this article, detail what victims can and should do to discourage a stalker. Every site, every book, and every list starts with one command: *document everything*. Victims should write down every single incident involving the stalker and make notes of every feeling they experience in relation to the stalker. The notes do not have to be organized or immediately turned over to law enforcement or a therapist, but it is important to have them from the first day someone realizes she is being stalked. Stalkinghelp.org boils their advice down to three main points: 1) protect yourself; 2) diffuse the stalker's motivations: make it clear you never have and never will want the relationship, and then do not get involved in future discussions; and 3) be

careful not to inadvertently encourage the stalker.

Stalking Victims Sanctuary advises, "Letting the air out of a threat by not reacting to it can mean the difference between escalation and de-escalation of your stalking situation."<sup>7</sup> The Sanctuary's practical recommendations include the following: Don't list your name on a list of tenants at the front of your building; register your driver's license to an address other than your home; don't change your number if a stalker gains access—instead, get a second number and keep the old one hooked up to an answering machine; teach children not to give out information to strangers; and stop all contact the minute the situation escalates—do not react to threats or continued communication from the stalker. Although obtaining a restraining order and changing one's identity seem like the ultimate solutions, experts advise caution when approaching



these cure-alls. Finding out that their victim has involved the police could propel some stalkers to more drastic action, and a restraining order cannot keep a stalker from attacking or murdering his or her victim. As ESIA points out, "truly obsessed stalkers are committed to the hunt" and will track and follow their victims despite legal protection or even an identity change. Changing one's identity is very difficult, and it cannot make a person completely disappear. ESIA also lists a number of mistakes stalking victims make, taken from Linden Gross's book, *Surviving a Stalker*. These mistakes include not listening to your intuition, trying to reason or bargain with a stalker, ignoring emotional needs during and after a stalking, and ignoring the early warning signs. Above all, stalking victims should act to protect themselves and their relatives and friends.

Advocates are working at the federal level to protect women and men from stalking. In January 2011, Senator Amy Klobuchar introduced the Stalkers Act of 2011 (S. 224), which would "improve federal anti-stalking laws to protect victims and provide prosecutors with the tools to combat the growing threat of cyberstalking."<sup>8</sup> The bill (co-sponsored by Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison, Herb Kohl and Saxby Chambliss) is designed to update current federal anti-stalking laws. Klobuchar says that anti-stalking laws "need to be as sophisticated as the predators who violate them," emphasizing the need for these laws to encompass new technologies used by stalkers. The writers of the bill also aim to increase punishment for perpetrators who target more vulnerable citizens. Under this bill, a stalker violating a protection order or stalking a minor or an elderly person could receive an additional five years in prison. The Stalkers Act was referred to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary after its reading in January.

The Violence Against Women Act defines stalking as "engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to a) fear for his or her safety or the safety of others; or b) suffer substantial emotional distress."<sup>9</sup> The law lists stalking as one of four violent crimes against women; the other three are domestic violence, dating violence, and sexual assault. When we take stalking as seriously as the law suggests, we can help more victims

recover from their experience and rebuild their lives. Attorney General Madigan noted that Illinois' new law "focuses on the experience of the victim."

While protection and healing for victims should be a top priority for everyone, further research into the mental, emotional, and psychological causes of stalking can help us stop this menace before it starts. Perhaps by rethinking the way stalking is perceived by society, stalkers, and the injured parties, we can start to put power and control back in the right hands. ●

1. <http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/stalking/welcome.htm>
2. <http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs14-stk.htm>
3. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report: Stalking Victimization in the United States, 2009. 1.
4. [www.esia.net](http://www.esia.net)
5. <http://www.crisiscounseling.com/articles/stalking.htm>
6. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lisa-madigan/stalking-know-it-name-it-\\_b\\_816890.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lisa-madigan/stalking-know-it-name-it-_b_816890.html)
7. [www.stalkingvictims.com](http://www.stalkingvictims.com)
8. [http://klobuchar.senate.gov/newsreleases\\_detail.cfm?id=330848&](http://klobuchar.senate.gov/newsreleases_detail.cfm?id=330848&)
9. Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005. 9.

#### Legal Examples and Recommendations

In **Missouri**, stalking is a class A misdemeanor (imprisonment up to one year) and aggravated stalking is a class D felony (fine of up to \$100,000 or imprisonment up to 25 years or both). A stalker purposely "harasses or follows with the intent of harassing another person."

**California** law charges "any person who willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly follows or willfully and maliciously harasses another person and who makes a credible threat with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear for his or her safety, or the safety of his or her immediate family" with the crime of stalking. Stalking is punishable by up to one year in county jail or a fine of up to \$1,000 or both, or a term in state prison.

In **Vermont**, stalking is "following, lying in wait for, or harassing" another person, and consists of actions that have "no legitimate purpose." In Vermont, the penalty for stalking is imprisonment for up to two years and/or a fine of up to \$5,000.

**National Center for Victims of Crime: Criminal Stalking Laws by State**  
[ncvc.org/src/main.aspx?dbID=DB\\_StatebyState\\_Statutes117](http://ncvc.org/src/main.aspx?dbID=DB_StatebyState_Statutes117)

**Center for Problem-Oriented Policing: Responses to the Problem of Stalking**  
[popcenter.org/problems/stalking/3](http://popcenter.org/problems/stalking/3)

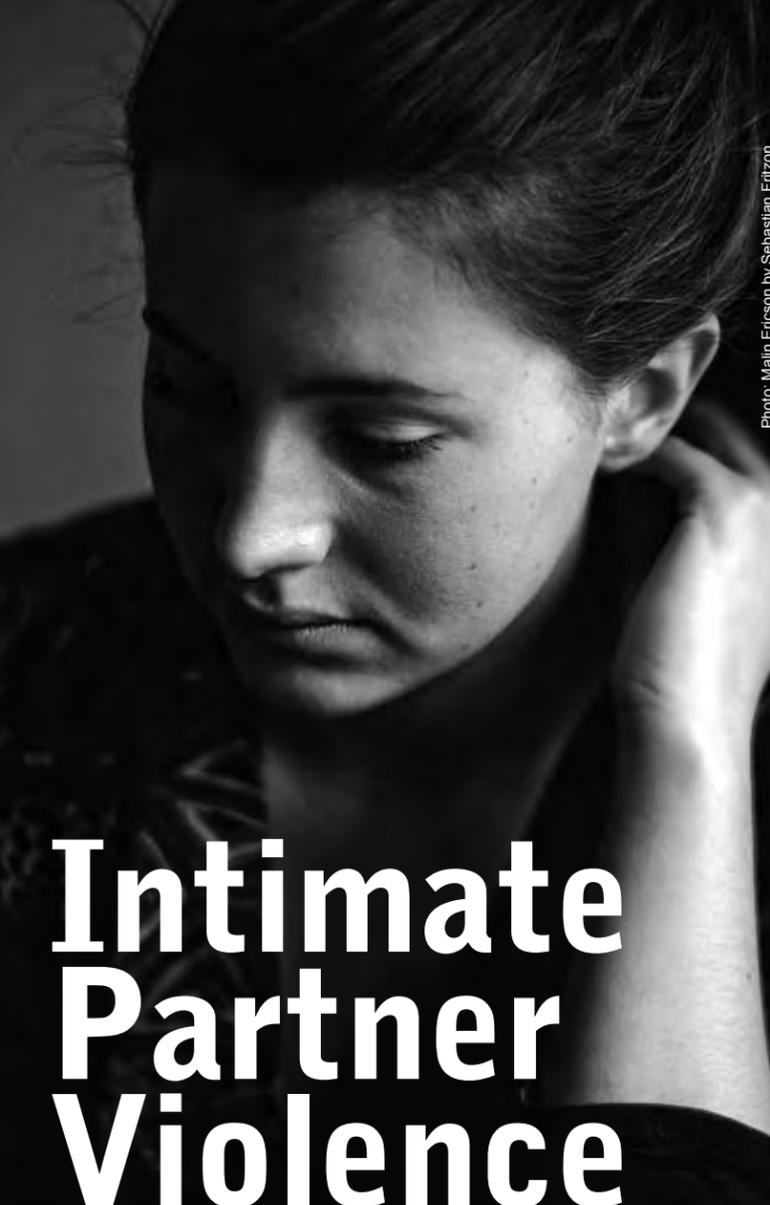


Photo: Malin Ericson by Sebastian Fitzton

# Intimate Partner Violence

by Cat Clark

grabbing, shaking, scratching, hair-pulling, slapping or punching, biting, choking, restraining, burning, blocking exits, and using weapons to threaten or cause harm. Sometimes it takes the form of forcing alcohol or drugs on a partner or of withholding needed medications and treatments. An abuser may destroy property, punch walls, or make gestures expressing intent to harm, and to make a person fear for her own safety.

Abuse in an intimate relationship may also involve sexual violence. A sexual abuser uses physical force, psychological intimidation, or coercion to compel a person to engage in sexual acts against that person's will. It may also include attempted or completed sexual acts with a person unable to decline participation due to age or the influence of alcohol or drugs, illness, or disability. Forcing or coercing a spouse or partner who does not or cannot consent to participate in sexual acts is rape.

Verbal and psychological abuse may include the use of words and other coercive tactics to control what the victim can and cannot do or control where the victim can and cannot go. To maintain control, the abuser will often interrogate the victim or other family members or withhold needed information from the victim. In many instances, abusers will attempt to damage a victim's relationships with family and friends, thus isolating them. Any of these tactics can denigrate and humiliate the victim, undermining her self-esteem and creating a sense of powerlessness. Invading a victim's private space or vandalizing her property may be used to create a climate of fear. Verbal threats of harm to the victim, her children, other family members, or to her pets are potent weapons used to blackmail and control the victim.

Economic manipulation usually involves an abuser controlling his victim by means of making her financially dependent. He may acquire and maintain control over her income and finances, withhold access to money or transportation, and prevent her going to work or school. This method of abuse is one of the victim's biggest obstacles to escaping.

A less investigated form of intimate partner violence, one that often involves elements of physical violence and intimidation, sexual violence, verbal and psychological abuse, and economic manipulation, has been termed "reproductive control."<sup>3</sup> Reproductive control primarily refers to actions which threaten, coerce, or attempt to get a woman pregnant and/or seek to control the outcome of her pregnancy either without regard to or against the woman's will. At times, this behavior seeks to extend control over the woman beyond the pregnancy itself, as when a jealous or insecure man believes pregnancy or having children will make his wife or girlfriend undesirable to other men or more dependent on him. A man may accuse a woman of infidelity if she says she wants to abstain from sex or use contraception in an effort to manipulate her into having sex that could lead to pregnancy. He may sabotage contraception by flushing birth control pills, putting a hole in a condom, or refusing to withdraw during sex. He may use threats or violence to prevent abortion.\* He may prevent her access to prenatal care, coerce her to get an abortion, or use violence to cause miscarriage. In a broader sense, reproductive control may also apply to forced sterilization of an intimate

\* While Feminists for Life opposes the violence of abortion in favor of nonviolent outcomes, FFL advocates only nonviolent and non-coercive means of achieving these goals.

partner. In all these examples, the abuser seeks to impose his own reproductive decisions on a current or former partner through violence, intimidation, or manipulation.

## Who is affected by intimate partner violence?

Some groups of people have unique vulnerabilities with regard to intimate partner violence.<sup>4</sup> Small-scale studies show that a higher percentage of women with disabilities report being victims of intimate partner violence, despite the fact that disabilities may also hinder reporting, such as when the victim is unable to communicate verbally, fears losing a caregiver, or fears that no one will accept her word. Victims who belong to racial and ethnic minorities, are lesbian or gay, or are over the age of 50 are less likely to report abuse, fearing that authorities will not take them seriously or be willing to help them. Immigrant victims may face especially difficult challenges; unfamiliarity with the local legal system or language may be a barrier to finding help and reporting violence, and an abuser may threaten to revoke residency sponsorship, refuse to file necessary immigration paperwork, or expose a victim's undocumented status. People living in rural or impoverished areas may lack adequate healthcare and service providers, insurance, and public transportation systems. It is difficult even to acquire reliable information about abuse among some populations, including the homeless and those living in battered women's shelters.

Teens are also vulnerable and more likely to be victimized through social media. Young people may lack models of healthy relationships or education about relationship violence and may be unaware of services and resources designed to help victims of dating violence. Teen dating violence is severely underreported, but surveys reveal that it is serious and widespread.<sup>5</sup> One in four teens reports being verbally, physically, emotionally, or sexually abused by a dating partner each year. Twenty percent of teens who have been in a serious relationship report being hit, slapped, or pushed by a partner; about 10% of students report being physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past year. One in four teenage girls who have been in relationships report that they have been pressured to engage in sexual acts. A third of teens report knowing a friend or peer who has been physically harmed by a partner. More than a quarter of teenage girls in a relationship report being subjected to repeated verbal abuse, and a similar percentage of teens in serious relationships have experienced some attempts to isolate them from family and friends. A majority of teens say that boyfriends or girlfriends sharing private pictures or videos of them, or spreading rumors about them on cell phones and computers, is a serious problem. Young people who are victimized by an intimate partner in high school are at greater risk for later victimization.

Women are disproportionately abused by intimate partners.<sup>6</sup> Women whose partners were verbally abusive or controlling are significantly more likely to report being raped, physically assaulted, and stalked by their partners. Violence Against Women Online Resources reveals that women are 2 to 3 times more likely to report minor physical attacks (for example, pushing and shoving) than men, and 7 to 14 times as likely to report serious attacks (for example, beating, strangulation, and use of a gun or knife). A Crime Data Brief by the Bureau of Justice Statistics suggests that 85% of "nonfatal violent victimizations by current or former spouses, boyfriends, or girlfriends" are committed

against women. The National Violence Against Women Survey, furthermore, found that women assaulted by an intimate partner were more than twice as likely to be physically injured than assaulted men.

Though some people have unique vulnerabilities or suffer disproportionately, *intimate partner violence can affect anyone* regardless of sex, race or ethnicity, age, marital status, ability, educational achievement, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.<sup>7</sup> It is estimated that in the United States, approximately 4.8 million incidents of physical assaults against women and 2.9 million incidents against men are committed by an intimate partner each year.<sup>8</sup>

Many victims of intimate partner violence, whether teens or adults, suffer physical injuries, both minor and serious, ranging from scratches to broken bones and internal bleeding to permanent disabilities. In 2007, IPV resulted in 2,340 deaths; 70% of the victims were women. Even more victims suffer psychological harm, including lowered self-esteem, anger, stress, depression, difficulty trusting others and fear of intimacy, and even symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome such as flashbacks and panic attacks. Victims may also attempt to cope with their trauma in harmful ways, such as smoking, eating disorders, excessive drinking, drug abuse, engaging in risky sex, and suicidal behavior.

There are factors known to increase the risk that a person may commit violence against an intimate partner.<sup>9</sup> Exposure to harsh parenting, inconsistent discipline, lack of parental supervision or affection, or physical or psychological abuse as a child can all hinder the development of positive relationship skills. They can also lead a person to believe that violence is normal or acceptable, as can having friends or associates who commit abuse. Social attitudes encouraging strict gender stereotypes, including male dominance and female submission, or discouraging intervention by witnesses, can create environments



Photo by Brent Gambrell

## Hotlines & Resources

### National Domestic Violence/Child Abuse/Sexual Abuse Hotline

800-799-SAFE (7233), 800-787-3224 TTY  
www.ndvh.org

### National Dating Abuse Helpline

866-331-9474, 866-331-8453 TTY  
www.loveisrespect.org

### National Sexual Assault Hotline

800-656-HOPE (4673)  
www.rainn.org

### National Drug & Alcohol Information, Treatment, & Referral Hotline

800-662-HELP (4357)

### National Suicide Prevention Hotlines

800-SUICIDE (784-2433), 800-273-TALK (8255),  
800-799-4889 TTY  
www.hopeline.com, www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

### Futures Without Violence

415-678-5500  
www.futureswithoutviolence.org

### Break the Cycle

310-286-3383  
www.breakthecycle.org

### Men Can Stop Rape

202-265-6530  
www.mencanstoprape.org

### Choose Respect

<http://www.cdc.gov/chooserespect/>

conducive to abuse. Symptoms of trauma, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and past violent or aggressive behavior may also be indicators of increased risk. Stressful experiences and circumstances, like economic hardship, unemployment, and overcrowding can increase the chances that a person may lash out. Of course none of these factors necessarily leads a person to become an abuser, nor do they in any way excuse it, but they can be indicators that a person needs help. Prevention programs designed to change teens' or preteens' social attitudes and improve problem-solving skills can be especially helpful. Because intimate partner violence against both genders is committed primarily by men, the National Institute of Justice recommends that prevention strategies should focus mainly on risks posed by men.<sup>10</sup>

Intimate partner violence affects many more people than just its immediate victims and perpetrators. Children and other family members, friends, employers and coworkers, witnesses, and members of the larger community are also affected. The economic cost alone is enormous.<sup>11</sup> A conservative estimate of the cost of IPV in 2003 dollars exceeded \$8.3 billion, 71% on costs of medical and mental health care and the remainder in lost productivity. (This estimate includes only reported incidents and does not include costs associated with the criminal justice system.) Each year, victims of severe violence by a spouse

or partner lose an estimated 8 million days of paid work (an estimated 8.1 days per incident of rape, 7.2 days per incident of other physical assault) and almost 5.6 million days in lost productivity at home. A survey by the United States Conference of Mayors reveals that 50% of U.S. cities regard domestic violence as a primary cause of homelessness. Other social costs are incalculable. Children frequently exposed to violence among parents or caregivers, for example, bear an increased risk of becoming victims or perpetrators themselves. All of us suffer some consequences of intimate partner violence, so we must not look the other way.

### What role do cultural messages play?

We cannot ignore the important role that cultural messages play in how our society addresses intimate partner violence. News media, books, television shows, movies, and music often convey troublesome implicit messages about or closely related to relationship violence.<sup>12</sup>

A popular example of romanticized intimate partner violence may be found in the bestselling series of *Twilight* novels by Stephenie Meyer. The books (and subsequent movie adaptations) tell the story of a 17-year-old girl, Bella Swan, who falls in love with a 104-year-old vampire, Edward Cullen. Using the National Domestic Violence Hotline's lists of signs that a relationship may be abusive, a number of the series' readers and viewers have identified several signs of abuse in Bella and Edward's relationship.<sup>13</sup> Kyrie McCauley Bannar, a sociology student at American University, tracked six categories of unhealthy relationship behaviors through the novels and found 181 instances.<sup>14</sup> Despite the fact that the plot contains clear examples of possessiveness, isolating, and stalking by an intimate partner (actions in which a real girl's human boyfriend might engage), Bella dismisses a close friend's suggestion that she is in a "controlling, abusive teenage relationship." Unhealthy relationship behaviors are not limited to the main characters. In a sense, the novels depict a miniature culture of relationship violence, yet the relationships are portrayed not as a horror, but as passionate romances desirable to girls and women.

Implicit messages such as those found in the *Twilight* series appear elsewhere, too. A newspaper story might describe a crime in a titillating manner or encourage readers to blame the victim. A novel might suggest it is noble for a woman to allow an abusive partner back into her life. A popular song might devalue or objectify women, or a movie might portray domestic violence as a "lover's quarrel" leading into a romantic interlude. Messages downplaying, excusing, normalizing, and romanticizing intimate partner violence may not be an author's intent, but they are dangerous nonetheless. Audiences are affected by these messages. How they are affected depends on the extent to which audience members are educated about violence and have developed and engaged critical skills. Conscious, critical engagement is necessary in order to notice problematic messages, especially the more subtle ones, and avoid negative influence.

### "Why doesn't she just leave?"

Though it may seem simple and straightforward to someone who's not experienced the abuse, in reality it is no easy matter to speak up about abuse or to leave an abusive partner.<sup>15</sup>



Photo by Robert Scoble

*Perpetrators actively seek to control their spouses or partners through threats, intimidation, violence, or psychological or economic manipulation. They may apologize for abuse, promise to change, woo their partners, and extend lulling periods of respite (known within the cycle of violence as a "honeymoon phase").* Abusers may make the victim feel responsible for and ashamed of the abuse, as if it is something deserved, or they may make the victim feel economically, legally, or socially helpless. When a victim wishes to leave a violent relationship, serious barriers may include a lack of affordable and safe alternative housing. Other barriers may be a lack of education, job skills, or personal financial resources; fear of losing custody of children or of raising children alone; fear of retaliation, of being discovered and subjected to worse violence; or fear of failure, loneliness, or the unknown. Victims may have conflicted feelings, including a sense of loyalty to the relationship, a feeling that the abuser needs her help, or an optimism that the situation may change. Religious or cultural convictions that the abuse is normal, or that families must stay together at all costs, or that one must have a partner to be accepted in society can also play a part in her decision to stay.

It is crucial to make an effort to understand the victim of intimate partner violence and the difficult obstacles she faces. This understanding can lead to clarity in developing solutions that are much more practicable than "just leave."

Whether a person is ready to leave a violent relationship or not, professional IPV counselors recommend devising a clear but

flexible *safety plan* as something that can be done immediately. Experts say that such plans save lives and can begin well before a victim actually attempts to leave. If they are willing, trusted family members or friends can help, as can allies at places like the National Domestic Violence Hotline (800-799-SAFE).<sup>16</sup>

To make a safety plan, consider which places in the home, workplace, or other space are safest. Avoid rooms with easy access to weapons, like the kitchen, and rooms without exits, like bathrooms and closets. Seek rooms that do have escape routes or where, if one becomes unable to exit, shouting may attract attention, such as near an open window or shared wall. Practice escape routes. Teach children to find safe places with escape routes, too, who and how to call for help, and never to get in the middle of a fight. Devise a code word or other distress signal to use with children, family members, friends, neighbors, doctors, or other allies who can contact the police or other help right away. If possible, keep a suitcase of necessary items in a safe and accessible location where the abuser will not find it—with a trusted friend, for example. Ideally, this should include any necessary documents and items such as birth certificates, Social Security cards or numbers, any forms of photo identification or passports, health insurance cards, welfare benefits cards, immigration papers, marriage certificate, divorce papers, custody orders, restraining orders, records of police reports filed or other evidence of abuse, money and credit cards, keys, an address book, an unshared cell phone or calling cards, medications and prescriptions, and personal items that may help with coping, like

photos or children's toys.<sup>17</sup> Although it may not seem necessary now, choose and plan where to go if it ever becomes necessary to leave home. Review the safety plan regularly. A person does *not* need to be ready to leave a relationship in order to contact a violence hotline or local shelter for support, safety planning, and services.

### What can be done to prevent intimate partner violence?

The best time to stop violence is before it starts. Ideally, steps should be taken long before intimate partner abuse begins. Parents, schools, and youth organizations can take active steps to help instill mutual respect, healthy relationship behaviors, nonviolent conflict resolution, information about intimate partner violence and how to identify abusive behaviors. A focus could be on an ability to recognize and think critically about cultural messages that downplay, excuse, normalize, or romanticize violence and abuse in intimate relationships and beyond. Special attention should be given to ensuring that young people at greater risk of becoming perpetrators or victims get the help that they need.

When violence occurs, the primary goal of any intervention must be *ensuring victim safety and putting an end to violence*, both immediately and in the long-term. An abuser may still pose a risk to his partner (or to someone else) after his partner has left the relationship, after a divorce or child custody ruling, or after release from jail. Batterer treatment programs are one way to serve the safety of abused partners and other potential victims in the long term.<sup>18</sup> The goals of a batterer treatment group should include ensuring the safety of current or former partners of perpetrators, collaborating with the justice system and other service providers, cultivating positive relationship attitudes and skills consistent with human equality and mutual

respect, and teaching offenders alternatives to violent and controlling behavior. The program should recognize that violence is intentional and that individuals can change if they are willing. Past perpetrators should be challenged to take full responsibility for their actions, to understand the effects their behavior has had on their partners and relationships, and to examine any beliefs and attitudes that minimize or deny abuse, or shift blame to others. They should learn to recognize when they are acting abusively, when they should withdraw from a situation or conflict, and to whom they can turn for help. Group treatment can reduce partner dependence among past abusers, encourage honesty, and allow members to support one other in their resolve to change.

If someone you know is being abused, the National Women's Health Information Center and National Domestic Violence Hotline have webpages dedicated to ways to help a friend or family member.<sup>19</sup> Whether or not you know someone who is being abused, learn more about intimate partner violence. Be prepared to educate children and other family members, friends, and others in your community via personal conversations, letters to editors of local papers, linking pertinent articles through social media, or encouraging educational events and forums on the topic. More people are needed to break the silence, dispel misinformation, and spread the word. Inquire at a local shelter or safehouse about items they most need or whether you can help to collect and coordinate donations of food and clothing. If you have practical skills, such as plumbing or taking care of children, a shelter might be able to put them to good use. Check into volunteer opportunities like posting flyers or brochures, or you can commit on an ongoing basis. Each of us can play some part in changing the culture of violence. ●



Photo by Brent Gambrell

1. Office on Violence Against Women, "Awareness and Attitudes About Domestic Violence," [http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/docs/polling\\_summary.pdf](http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/docs/polling_summary.pdf).

2. Definitions and examples of intimate partner violence may be found in Violence Against Women Online Resources' *The Facts About Domestic Violence* (<http://www.vaw.umn.edu/documents/inbriefs/domesticviolence/domesticviolence.html>), the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control's general information on IPV (<http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/index.html>), and the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women's *What Is Domestic Violence?* (<http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/domviolence.htm>), among others.

3. Moore, Frohwirth, and Miller, "Male reproductive control of women who have experienced intimate partner violence in the United States," Guttmacher Institute, <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/socscimed201002009.pdf>.

4. Violence Against Women Online Resources, *The Facts About Domestic Violence*, <http://www.vaw.umn.edu/documents/inbriefs/domesticviolence/domesticviolence.html>.

5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Understanding Teen Dating Violence*, [http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/TeenDatingViolence\\_2010-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/TeenDatingViolence_2010-a.pdf); Violence Against Women Online Resources, *10 Teen Dating Abuse Facts*, <http://www.vaw.umn.edu/documents/teendatingabusefacts/teendatingabusefacts.html>.

6. Violence Against Women Online Resources, *The Facts About Domestic Violence*, <http://www.vaw.umn.edu/documents/inbriefs/domesticviolence/domesticviolence.html>; National Institute of Justice, *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*, <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/181867.pdf>.

7. U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women, *What Is Domestic Violence?*, <http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/domviolence.htm>.

8. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Understanding Intimate Partner Violence*, [http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/IPV\\_factsheet-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/IPV_factsheet-a.pdf).

9. Violence Against Women Online Resources, *The Facts About Domestic Violence*, <http://www.vaw.umn.edu/documents/inbriefs/domesticviolence/domesticviolence.html>; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Intimate Partner Violence: Risk and Protective Factors*, <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>.

10. National Institute of Justice, *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*, <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/181867.pdf>.

11. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Intimate Partner Violence: Consequences*, <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/consequences.html>; Violence Against Women Online Resources, *The Facts About Domestic Violence*, <http://www.vaw.umn.edu/documents/inbriefs/domesticviolence/domesticviolence.html>.

12. Cf. Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs' *Connections* issue "Media Savvy Youth: Challenging Pop Culture Messages that Contribute to Sexual Violence" (vol. XII, Spring

2010), <http://www.wcsap.org/sites/www.wcsap.org/files/uploads/documents/MediaSavvyYouthSpring2010.pdf>.

13. *What Is Domestic Violence?*, <http://www.thehotline.org/get-educated/what-is-domestic-violence/>; *Am I Being Abused?*, <http://www.thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/am-i-being-abused-2/>; Tina Jordan, "Are Edward and Bella in an abusive relationship?" *Entertainment Weekly*, <http://shelf-life.ew.com/2009/12/01/edward-bella-abusive-relationship/>.

14. "The Romanticism of Teen Dating Violence: The Twilight Series as a Case Study," <http://dSPACE.wrlc.org/bitstream/1961/9164/1/Bannar,%20Kyrie%20-%20Spring%20%2710.pdf>.

15. The Julian Center, *Why Do Women Stay?*, <http://www.juliancenter.org/Learn/Why-Do-Women-Stay-.aspx>.

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17. For a suggested packing list, please visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://womenshealth.gov/violence/get-help/safety-planning.cfm>.

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# SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT ON CAMPUS

Photo by Jacky Hackett

by Carrie Johansen

Students attending undergraduate institutions face unfamiliar campuses, new roommates, friends, instructors, and life-changing events. Each year, for 35 of every 1,000 college women, those life-changing events will include a sexual assault.<sup>1</sup>

According to the 2008 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) published by the U.S. Department of Justice, nearly 60% of all rapes are not reported to the police, which means there is no chance for the perpetrator to be held accountable.<sup>2</sup> Women often do not want to go through the process of reliving the story through necessary work with the police. In college, social groups intertwine, friend groups change, and students reinvent their lives. And because of that, the capture and prosecution of the rapist could change the emotional and social structure of the victim's life.

The NCVS states that 80% of rapes and sexual assaults did not involve a weapon of any sort, and 65% of victims knew the perpetrators.<sup>3</sup> On college campuses, however, 90% of victims knew the assailant prior to the assault.<sup>4</sup> College women are the group most commonly assaulted without weapons by people they know.

Many factors discourage college victims from coming forward. Having to relive the event through the process of prosecution, splitting social groups into those who believe and those who don't, and a culture that blames the victims all encourage them

to stay silent. A 2010 London-based study for The Havens sexual assault referral centers found that 62% of victims would not even tell their partner if they were assaulted.<sup>5</sup> The study also found that the majority of victims did not report the assault to police because of embarrassment and shame.<sup>6</sup> Another 31% were afraid of repercussions from the assailant, and 25% feared that family members would find out about the assault.<sup>7</sup> Instead of family members being the first confidants, these women fear that their families will find out. Some victims further explained why they would not report an assault to the police:

"I would be afraid of being demoralized by the police and society during court proceedings, why bother when they are just going to get off the charges anyway?"

"I am not sure whether I would be taken seriously and the follow through procedure would be thorough."

"Rape victims rarely get justice."<sup>8</sup>

Because most women are not reporting assaults to the police, telling family, or even confiding in their partners, perpetrators not only go unpunished, but victims do not receive the support they need.

Women are often told the best way to avoid sexual assault is to guard themselves from strangers. Taking self-defense classes, carrying pepper spray, checking

cars before entering them, and not walking alone at night are helpful short-term tips. It is always good to be aware of the most common ways strangers assault people. However, the use of these tips alone as "assault prevention" is a part of a much larger rape culture that emphasizes and blames the actions of the victim.

A vivid example of rape culture on college campuses is the chanting of the Yale fraternity Delta Kappa Epsilon in 2010. Pledges were blindfolded, led through mostly freshmen women's housing, and told to chant phrases such as "No means yes! Yes means anal!"<sup>9</sup> Leaders of the fraternity later apologized for the "lapse in judgment" while the Women's Center called the act "hate speech" and "an active call for sexual violence."<sup>10</sup> DKE was eventually banned from recruiting new members for five years. Federal law prohibits punishment of individual students from being disclosed.<sup>11</sup> While the University reprimanded the students, the ease with which the DKE leaders dismissed the act as nothing more than a "lapse in judgment" highlights the perpetuation of a rape culture on college campuses. A study completed by the National Institute of Justice in 2000 suggested that "the percentage of completed or attempted rape victimization among women in higher educational institutions might climb to between one-fifth and one-quarter" over the course of a college career.<sup>12</sup>

When women are criticized for letting their guard down, for dressing up, or

for drinking alcohol, it creates a double-standard that favors not only men, but perpetrators as well. Women, unlike men, are forced to live in a state of fear where they are made to feel at least partially responsible for the acts other people do to them. The Havens study also found that women are more likely than men to think victims should take responsibility for their assault, and women ages 18-24 are, of all female age groups, the most likely to believe the victim is responsible.<sup>13</sup> This means that women, more than men, blame women for being victims. A 2007 article reported that there is "a pervasive tendency among persons who have encountered negative, unexpected events as diverse as [sexual assault], spinal cord injury, and traumatic loss of a spouse or child to blame themselves."<sup>14</sup> Victims often believe it's their fault, and society at large is reinforcing that unfounded guilt in sexual assault cases.

Furthermore, the article states, "Victimized college women are up to 2

general population.<sup>18</sup> Instead of blaming women, society should denounce the perpetrator and support the victims.

Points with Purpose, a project of celebrity artist David Ilan, is an example of a way sexual assault survivors can share their stories in a safe context. Points with Purpose employs the artistic technique of pointillism, in which dots are used to create larger images. Ilan adds one dot to his image for each survivor or supporter of survivors who signs up at [pointswithpurpose.com](http://pointswithpurpose.com). These dots will combine to depict a woman who is "confident, proud, and beautiful."<sup>19</sup> While the site does not provide counseling, it does provide survivors the opportunity to anonymously share their stories and journey with others who are struggling, or have struggled, with sexual violence, or who simply wish to support victims of sexual violence.

Students can also act to change the local culture so women can come forward and



Photo by Matthew Evans

times more likely than non-victims to be re-victimized during a single academic quarter.<sup>15</sup> Not only are victimized women more likely to be assaulted again, but repeat predators account for 9 out of 10 assaults on college campuses.<sup>16</sup>

While knowingly putting oneself in a risky situation might increase the chances of an assault, the perpetrator is still responsible for the act. Laws attempt to punish assailants, but they cannot reverse cultural beliefs.

Every 2.5 minutes, a perpetrator sexually assaults a woman,<sup>17</sup> and females ages 16-19 are four times more likely to be the victims of sexual assault or rape than the

get help with their assaults. *Take Back the Night* encourages survivors to "Shatter the Silence"<sup>20</sup> by posting their stories on [takebackthenight.org](http://takebackthenight.org). They also encourage students to organize rallies, walks, and candlelight vigils on college campuses to "take back the night"<sup>21</sup> from fear.

Students wishing to change campus policy regarding sexual assault can utilize resources from *SAFER*, Students Active for Ending Rape, at [safercampus.org](http://safercampus.org) to inform college administrators and encourage official sexual assault policy reform. *SAFER* can guide students in how to make changes to university policies so that women are protected and the campus is responsive to the needs of victims. ●

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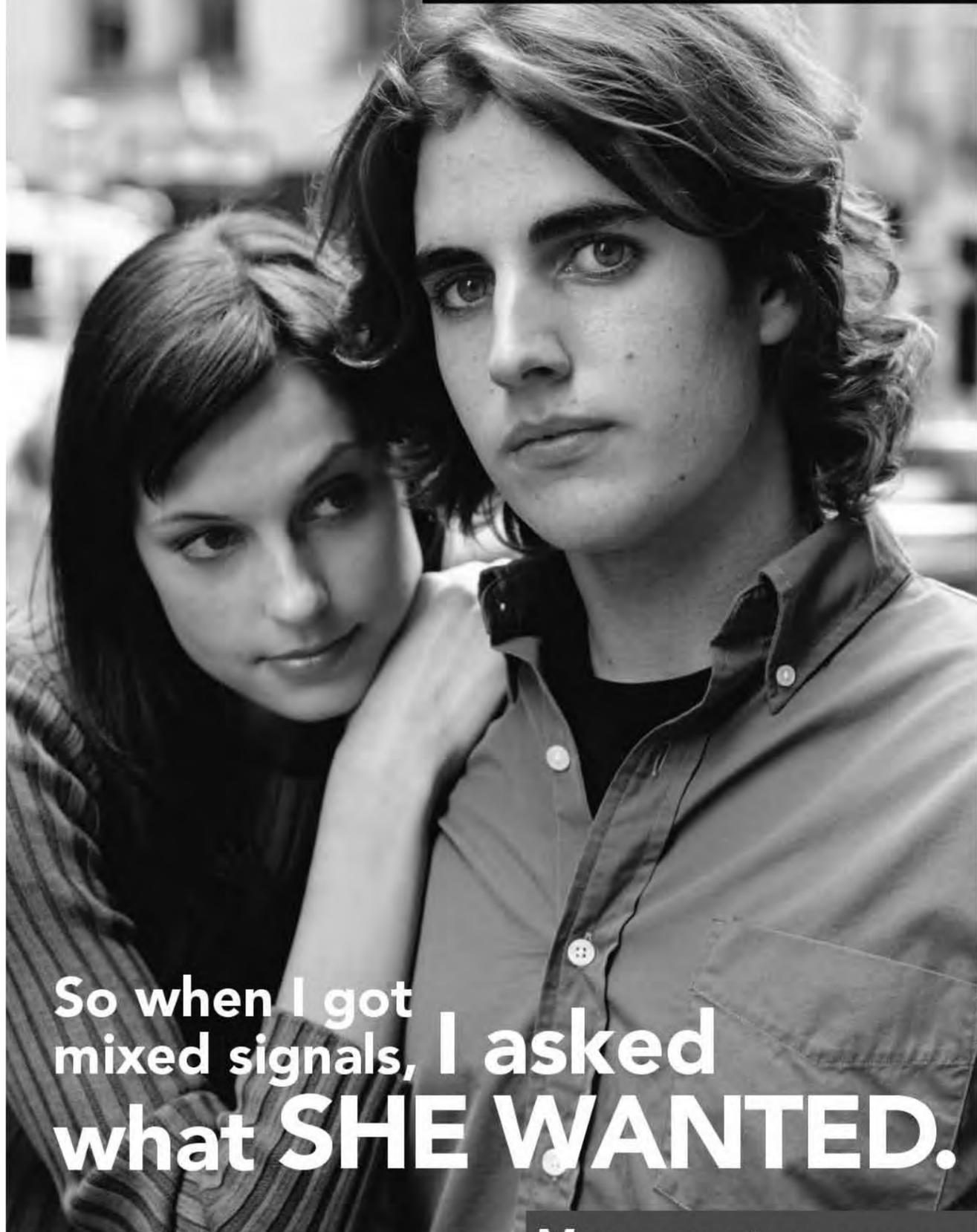
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MY STRENGTH IS NOT FOR HURTING.



So when I got mixed signals, I asked what SHE WANTED.

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# Men Strong *Against* Violence

by Joyce McCauley-Benner

When you have endured violence at the hands of a man, it is easy to turn your fear and anger toward men in general—especially if you have been hurt multiple times. Suddenly you start seeing every man as a perpetrator, an abuser, or at the very least someone not to be trusted. You see your experiences with men in your own personal life becoming a microcosm of the violence against women that happens on a societal level. In short, you lose hope in mankind.

This was my experience for many years. When I began to share my story as an FFL speaker, I thought I was doing it for me, as part of my healing journey—and I was. What I never thought would happen, though, was that my hope in mankind would be restored.

I was awestruck as men began not only attending my talks, but asking questions—a lot of them. In every state I visited, at every university that hosted my lecture, men lined up to ask more: about the issue of violence against women, about how to help their loved ones, about what they could do to stop it, and about how it related to violence against the unborn.

College-aged men were planning my events, organizing their pro-life student groups to bring a talk like mine to their campus. It was a bold move. I realized then that these issues must be men's issues, too.

\* \* \*

Feminists have long acknowledged *male privilege*—the invisible rights, viewpoints, and protections men enjoy in our society simply because of their gender. For example, economic markets cater to the stereotypical desires of men, as when women's bodies are used to promote everything from alcohol to cars to office equipment. Ask yourself next time you look at an advertisement: Who does this ad target? If it is for women, it is most often a product that increases her "sex appeal" or promotes stereotypical roles for women (housecleaning is a prime example).

In the job market, men are paid more and offered more opportunities for advancement, sometimes without conscious thought—all instances of male privilege. Men disproportionately lead in many industries, sectors, and workplaces, such as schools, government, law enforcement, and entertainment, leaving women out of critical decision-making. Conversely, women in our society face objectification, higher rates of assault and victimization, and a ruthless climb up the corporate ladder.

All of these conditions form a breeding ground for violence against women. Objectification leads to sexualization. Leaving women out of positions of power diminishes accountability. Lack of accountability leads to a shift in attitudes in the public opinion. Places where men traditionally congregate (dorm rooms, locker rooms, offices, barber shops, etc.) can help spread those attitudes.

Case in point: pornography. The sex trade is the world's second largest industry (second only to the arms industry) and firearms and pornography are important parts of the sex trade. In the U.S., as the porn market has flourished, the line between "soft porn" and what is viewed as a "provocative" ad has blurred. The age at which girl's bodies are sexualized continues to lower. This has occurred as a combination of oversexualization and profit-driven decisions about the sale of women's bodies has thrived. Society simply accepts it because "sex sells."

Additionally, sexual violence and male dominance define porn. When women's bodies are promoted as objects of sexual violence within a culture with little accountability and are then marketed, violence against women rises and a "blame the victim" attitude flourishes. Questioning the (most often female) victim's clothes,



MY STRENGTH IS NOT FOR HURTING.

So when I was drunk, I BACKED OFF.

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actions, and reputation is reflective of a society that has devalued women.

All forms of violence against women reflect this devaluing of women and girls. Women have been fighting for generations and, although we have made great strides, violence against women remains one of society's biggest challenges. So long as women are seen as objects to be used for advertising, sex, or dominance, the status quo will remain. Ending this violence is not just about empowering ourselves; it is about empowering men to join the cause.

Regardless of whether they want or ask for it, men in our society possess enormous male privilege, and with privilege comes power. This power can be used to perpetuate injustices against women, but *it can also be turned against injustice*. Men can shape attitudes and standards regarding violence against women. Those who hold leadership positions can increase women's representation in their workplaces and challenge the portrayal of women in their industries and media. Consumers can choose not to support the offenders. Men can speak out in those traditionally "male spaces": offices, locker rooms, dorm rooms, barber shops, etc. Jokes that insult or demean women don't have to be tolerated. Stories of coerced sexual escapades can be condemned. Pornography can be avoided. Men can endeavor to raise awareness among other men.

This is all possible, if men want to be a part of the solution. As I tell the women in the audience when I speak, you are more powerful and creative than you have ever been told. This is true for men as well as women. As with every injustice, the solution begins at the individual level and spreads outward.

\* \* \*

Those young men organizing and promoting my "Victory Over Violence" talks were taking a giant step toward changing hearts and minds on their campuses and reversing the trend of male privilege.

Seeing their positive responses to my talk and their openness to hearing about my challenges brought me farther along my healing process. My anger was no longer directed at "mankind" in general, but channeled towards the actual offenders. I saw the possibility for men and women to work together to fight the common enemy of violence against women. Indeed, I saw that men could start to own this issue, too.

Violence against women doesn't just mean rape—we see it in abortion, pornography, intimate partner violence, trafficking, incest, stalking, and assault. If you are a man reading this, you can be sure that at least one woman in your life has been affected by violence in some way. If you are a woman, you should know that one out of every three of us has experienced some form of violence. It is the story of our mothers, our grandmothers, our daughters, our sisters, our friends. Violence against women is a public health issue. It is not merely a "women's issue"; it is not the "exception"; it is the norm. It must be stopped. It is *our* problem, as men and women, and therefore we can and must work to end it together. ●

**MY STRENGTH IS NOT FOR HURTING.**

So when she changed her mind, **I STOPPED.**

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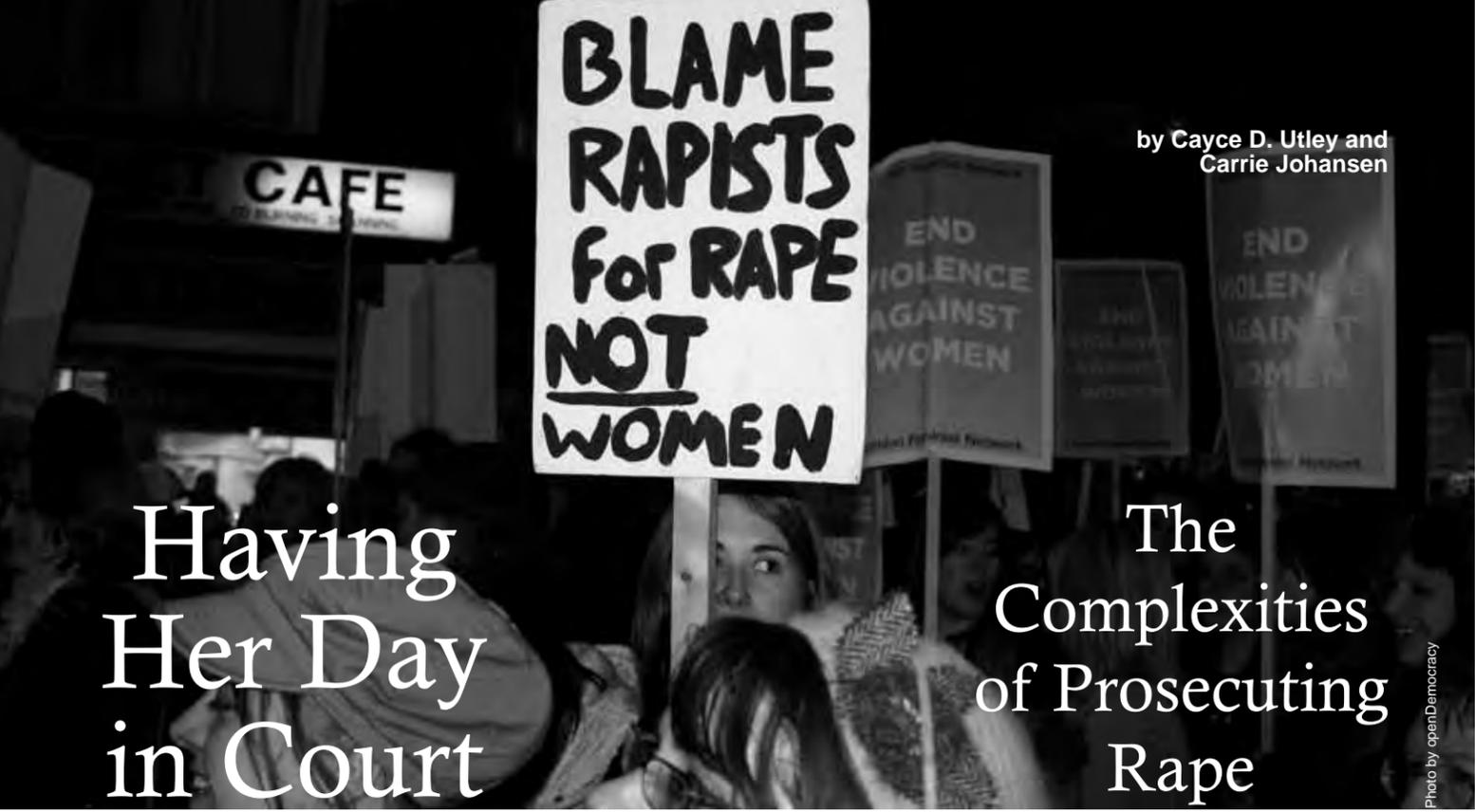
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Electronic fund transfers will begin immediately upon receipt.

Thank you!



by Cayce D. Utley and Carrie Johansen

# Having Her Day in Court

# The Complexities of Prosecuting Rape

Photo by openDemocracy

Imagine that a man is walking to his car from work after dark one evening. He reaches his car and begins fishing in his pocket for his keys when all of a sudden, he is hit from behind. He falls to the ground and is kicked repeatedly. Through the fury of pain he feels in his stomach, back, and head, he sees a robber bend over to grab the laptop bag he dropped when he was initially attacked. The robber reaches down, grabs the man's wallet, and then takes off, leaving his victim writhing on the ground.

Now imagine the victim, months later, has his day in court. A suspect has been captured and charged and the victim takes the stand to recount the crime. He describes the attack and tells the jury what was taken. The attacker's lawyer approaches to take his turn asking questions. "What were you doing out alone at that time of night? Why were you carrying your expensive laptop? Why not just leave it at the office? What was your wallet doing in your back pocket where it could be easily seen or stolen? Everyone knows you're supposed to keep that kind of thing covered up. Don't you think you were asking for it?"

If all crimes were investigated and prosecuted as rape is, it's likely that our society would rise up in protest. Yet every two minutes in the United States a person

is sexually assaulted, and 15 out of 16 perpetrators walk free.<sup>1</sup> Former New York Assistant District Attorney Linda Fairstein wrote in her book, *Sexual Violence: Our War Against Rape*: "Rape remains the only crime in which the victims—most often women, but frequently men and children—are stigmatized by others for their victimization and blamed for their participation in an act committed by forcible compulsion."<sup>2</sup>

### Undefined

Historically, the crime of rape has been inconsistently prosecuted. Linda Fairstein wrote, "In no other category of crime does the victim approach the criminal justice system with lower expectations of a successful resolution than in the area of sex offenses. Centuries of inequities in the rape laws were responsible for the miniscule number of prosecutions nationwide, until the major legislative changes that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s."<sup>3</sup> In fact, it wasn't even until 1993 that the last U.S. state, North Carolina, added marital rape (rape committed by a spouse) to its criminal code.<sup>4</sup> The first state to do so was South Dakota in 1975.

Definitions of rape vary, often by degrees, but definitions are important and govern the state's ability to successfully prosecute rape. The FBI is currently reconsidering

its definition of rape, originally adopted in 1930, which now reads rape is "the carnal knowledge of a female, forcibly and against her will."<sup>5</sup> This definition omits the rape of a man or male child. "Forcibly" is problematic because some interpretations would exclude rapes that occur while the victim is intoxicated or otherwise impaired, and may even exclude some cases of date rape. Some interpretations of this definition, furthermore, omit cases that do not involve penile-vaginal penetration.

### Underreported

Oftentimes, victims of rape fear reporting the crime. According to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN), about 60 percent of rapes go unreported.<sup>6</sup> Reporting rape can be an intense and invasive process and, understandably, victims can be reluctant to undergo such an examination immediately following the attack. Survivor Debbie Smith said, "The only thing I wanted to do was to take a shower. I wanted to try to wash everything away. I wasn't interested in reporting evidence."<sup>7</sup>

Another element that contributes to underreporting is that two-thirds of all rapes are committed by someone known to the victim.<sup>8</sup> Fairstein wrote, "In my experience the most misunderstood area of

criminality is what we call acquaintance or date rape. Except its victims, most people tend to distinguish it from sexual assault by strangers—thus the label 'date rape'—with the implication that it is different from, and therefore less serious than, 'real rape.' It is real rape." Because the crime is committed by someone the victim knows, she may fear retribution by the perpetrator or be concerned about the reaction of her family, friends, or colleagues, many of whom may also know the perpetrator. A victim may be hesitant in this situation because she may be protective of the existing relationships and social networks that would be affected by the crime. Fairstein added that this kind of assault "is every bit as traumatic as an attack by a stranger. Yet rarely is the support offered to survivors, even by family and friends, the equivalent of that in other rapes."<sup>9</sup>

Rape victims are made vulnerable by the attack and often are worried that authorities won't believe their account of the incident. Fairstein described this feeling: "While some of that reluctance is attributable to the victims' fear of reprisal by the assailant or embarrassment because of society's attitudes, victims most often cite their lack of confidence in the system—police and prosecutorial agencies—as the reason for their decision not to report."<sup>10</sup> During the initial investigation and even during the trial, rape cases are framed as he said/she said arguments, rather than as crimes. Because so many incidents of rape are approached this way, women may be reluctant to report for fear that they will not be believed, or that their character and lifestyle will come under public scrutiny. In the 1970s rape shield laws were enacted to prevent the sexual history of the victim from entering into evidence in criminal cases.<sup>11</sup> Some shield laws prevent questioning or evidence about how the victim was dressed, but others allow judges to admit evidence that would otherwise be barred by law if the judge feels it is pertinent to the trial.

While the shield laws prevent a victim's sexual history from being aired during the trial, and could thus possibly encourage victims to report rape, they do nothing to prevent pretrial publicity. According to the National Center for Victims of Crime, the lack of regulation on pretrial publicity means "many victims are still likely to be deterred from reporting the offense."<sup>12</sup>

Bringing a victim's past sexual history into the discussion, whether in previous consensual acts with the perpetrator, in previous relationships, or sex work, does not shed light on the events that happened during the assault. While shield laws help to protect victims in the courts, they cannot help in a culture that blames the victims of sexual assault.

Additionally, both true and false rape accusations are often portrayed and seen as crimes in themselves. Emily Brandt, founder of Take Back the News, an 8-year project examining media portrayal of sexual assaults, writes "Many news articles that report a rape focus on the actions of the victim or include irrelevant details that lead the reader to infer that a rape did not actually occur."<sup>13</sup> Brandt points to headlines like "Fla. Teens Accused of Gang Rape Attack" from *Newsday* July 7, 2007: "This makes it seem that the crime is the accusation of gang rape, rather than the gang rape itself." In other instances, Brandt cites other media misrepresentations: "[describing] the details of the crime in a pseudo-pornographic or titillating manner... An insinuation that the victim is lying, often made by the defense attorney or the perpetrator, that is not countered by the victim or an advocate for the victim... [providing] greater coverage to cases in which the accuser's credibility is questionable, which both discourages other victims from coming forward and hurts the accused if they are in fact innocent... [highlighting] instances

in which someone has been wrongly convicted and imprisoned for rape. In those cases they neglect to address whether the accuser was lying about being raped or if the wrong person was captured by police. As a result, these articles imply innocent men are very likely to be accused of rape and women often lie about rape."<sup>14</sup> Negative portrayals of rape victims in the media discourage women from reporting.

Another situation that may prevent a victim from reporting a rape is a fear of law enforcement. In cases where a woman is involved in illegal activity (drug use, prostitution, etc.) she may not report a rape for fear that she will be detained. The same fear can affect women new to the American legal system. Recently, Massachusetts state representative Ryan Fattman stirred up controversy with his remarks about crimes against immigrant women. The *Worcester Telegram-Gazette* wrote, "Mr. Fattman dismissed concerns of some law enforcement officials—cited by the governor—who said using local police to enforce immigration laws could discourage reporting of crime by victims who are illegal immigrants. Asked if he would be concerned that a woman without legal immigration status was raped and beaten as she walked down the street might be afraid to report the crime to police, Mr. Fattman said he was not worried about those implications. 'My thought is that if someone is here illegally, they should be afraid to come forward,' Mr. Fattman said. 'If you do it the right way, you don't have to be concerned



Photo by Bill Burris

## “This is not a backlog. This is worse than a backlog because a backlog presumes you’re working on it.”

about these things,’ he said, referring to obtaining legal immigration status.”<sup>15</sup> Such statements create a climate of fear for victims who feel unprotected or even endangered by law enforcement. Two weeks later, the *Telegram-Gazette* reported that Fattman rescinded his comment: “Mr. Fattman, who advocates deportation of all illegal immigrants, revised his comments in a press statement issued today. ‘Victims of any crime should always feel safe to come forward to both law enforcement officials and other support networks for help, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, immigration status, or any other factor,’ Mr. Fattman said.”<sup>16</sup>

### Unexamined

Despite the overwhelming pressures women face to keep silent following an attack, some women do report being raped. Those who do may undergo a physically painful and intensely emotional examination called a “rape kit” in order to provide evidence against their attackers. The process for collecting a rape kit involves several steps.<sup>17</sup> The examination will likely be performed by a medical provider such as a nurse or doctor. A victim has the right to request a female doctor. Though the same doctor or nurse may also be examining the victim as a patient in order to treat injuries incurred during the attack, the rape kit portion of the exam is **not** a medical examination. It is a forensic exam to collect evidence, in the same way police would inspect a crime scene for DNA, fingerprints, etc.

During the exam, the medical provider will take swabs from the entire body. She or he will also scrape underneath the victim’s fingernails, inspect clothing for loose hairs or fluids, and conduct a blue light search for bodily fluids on the victim’s body. The medical provider or a law enforcement officer may also photograph visible injuries. The victim’s clothing, including underwear, may also be examined and tested for DNA evidence. While it may seem counterintuitive for a victim to undergo such an ordeal following a rape, the evidence collection

is important to identifying and prosecuting the attacker.

A Florida woman was raped by a stranger in her home and then compelled by her attacker to jump into the pool in her backyard in order to eliminate all possible evidence. In a moment of quick thinking, she managed to gather some of her attacker’s semen in her hand and slipped into the pool with her hands above



the water, as if to show deference to the attacker. The rapist ran off and the victim was able to retain enough DNA evidence in her hand to share with the police once they arrived on the scene.

While this story and others like it offer victims hope that they can implicate their attackers by reporting their rapes, victims’ wit and courage are not enough to address systemic hindrances to prosecution. RAINN says that of the 40% of rapes that are reported, there’s only a 50.8% chance that the suspect will be arrested.<sup>18</sup> If an arrest is made, there is an 80% chance of

prosecution. If prosecuted, there’s only a 58% chance of conviction. If there is a felony conviction, there is a 69% chance the convict will serve jail time. All of this amounts to a 16% chance that a rapist will be imprisoned in the 40% of rapes that are reported.

One of the reasons rapes are rarely prosecuted to conviction is that evidence collected during rape investigations goes unused. Human Rights Watch reports that hundreds of thousands of rape kits have been stored and remain untested across the U.S. This backlog plagues many localities around the country—most notably, Los Angeles County had 12,669 untested kits on the shelves. In an interview with ABC News, a Wayne County prosecutor said,

“This is not a backlog. This is worse than a backlog because a backlog presumes you’re working on it.”<sup>19</sup>

The FBI has a national databank called CODIS (Combined DNA Indexing System) that records DNA collected during felony investigations of violent crime. CODIS was developed to support federal, state, and local law enforcement in their work identifying and prosecuting offenders. Gail Abarbanel, founder and director of the Rape Treatment Center of Santa Monica Hospital Medical Center said, “We feel a tremendous sense of

frustration because we finally have a tool to solve rape cases and to protect the public from more sexual assaults and it’s not being used.”<sup>20</sup> Charlie Beck, police chief in Los Angeles, added, “Criminalists are very expensive. There’s not very many of them. They are what is required to test rape kits... Sometime back in the distant past, there was a fingerprint backlog... As things change, we have to adapt. If we haven’t been quick enough to adapt, then, you know, shame on us.”<sup>21</sup>

A major concern of groups working to end the backlog is that without testing the evidence in these rape cases, rapists could be walking around free, able to attack again—even multiple times—without fear of conviction. Linda Fairstein said, “While it is rare to see the same victim twice throughout the twenty-year period of time, it is a well-documented fact that sex offenders are the most recidivist of criminals and more frequently repeat their violent acts than any other category of criminal.”<sup>22</sup> Psychologist David Lisak, a researcher at the University of Massachusetts Boston, has studied serial rapists in prisons and on college campuses and his findings echoed Fairstein’s experience. An NPR story highlighted his work: “What Lisak found was that students who commit rape on a college campus are pretty much like those rapists in prison. In both groups, many are serial rapists. On college campuses, repeat predators account for 9 out of every 10 rapes.”<sup>23</sup>

While rape kit evidence is crucial to identifying these serial attackers, it is an expensive undertaking for local law enforcement. “Our property room is very full—very, very full,” said Lt. Eno U. Fite of the special investigations unit at the Dallas Police Department. Lieutenant Fite estimated that 17,000 to 21,000 rape kits filled the room. At least half were collected before 1996, from what are now considered cold cases, she said. Of those, only about 25 percent would fit the department’s criteria for DNA testing. . . Of the estimated 7,000 to 9,000 rape kits collected from 1996 to 2010, about 40 percent have been or will be submitted for DNA testing. It takes about a year to get the results of a full DNA test, which costs \$750 to \$1,000 a test.”<sup>24</sup>

In a compound act of injustice, rape kit costs may be passed on to the victim in some cases. Sarah Tofte, a lead researcher



in the Human Rights Watch study of the national rape kit backlog, wrote, “I heard in January from a disabled woman in North Dakota who was brutally raped by an acquaintance. While this woman was recovering from surgery required to repair her internal organs after the rape, she received a bill from her hospital for the cost of her rape kit, a forensic exam to collect DNA and other evidence from the body of the victim. She was eventually able to get her state’s victim compensation board to pay the hospital, but in the meantime she kept receiving notices from the hospital’s bill collector. ‘I could not believe this was happening to me, after all this,’ she told me. ‘It got resolved, thank God, but not before I started to worry that my inability to come up with the money to pay the hospital would jeopardize my case. They tell me it wouldn’t have, but it was so much worry that I didn’t need.”<sup>25</sup>

Tofte said the problem wasn’t limited to one state’s bureaucratic mix-up: “A local TV station reported that some rape victims in Texas had been billed for the cost of their rape kit—which, depending on the state and the hospital, can reach \$2,000. Last year, a newspaper reported that rape victims in North Carolina were asked to bill their insurance for the rape kit cost and, if they refused or did not have insurance, they were sent the bill.”<sup>26</sup> An informal call by FFL staff to several health insurance companies revealed that many health plans cover the cost of rape evidence collection kits as part of the benefits for their insured. This payment system essentially passes the bill on to those victimized by rape. This is not the case for other crimes (robbery, murder,

etc.) where DNA evidence is considered part of the criminal investigation. In those crimes, the state—not the victim—pays for the evidence collection.

In 2009, a federal regulation mandated that states receiving funds from the Violence Against Women Act pay for “Jane Doe” kits. These kits allowed women who were unsure if they wanted to file a police report against their attacker to still provide evidence during a rape kit examination without providing their names or issuing a formal report. “Sometimes the issue of actually having to make a report to police can be a barrier to victims, and this will allow that barrier to cease, to allow the victim to think about it before deciding whether to talk to police,” said Carey Goryl, executive director of the International Association of Forensic Nurses.<sup>27</sup> Policies like these empower rape victims who are still in shock.

### Unacceptable

Feminists have worked for decades at the local, state, and federal level to ensure more protections for women. Together, we have brought about tougher rape laws and more consistent prosecution of sexual assault. Yet despite these gains, there is more work left to be done. Prosecutor Linda Fairstein summed up the way forward: “As we struggle to put in place the essential services—medical, counseling, and legal—the other critical need to which attention must be devoted is the education of the public. Every archaic stereotype and myth about rape must be exploded, from the moronic platitudes that blame the victims for their plight, to the

misconceptions that rape is an impulsive expression of lust rather than deliberate violence, to the equally pernicious falsehood that we cannot win these cases in the courtroom.”<sup>28</sup> For every person uninformed about rape, Fairstein saw a potential juror: someone with the potential to be educated and rightly judge the facts, but also someone who, in their ignorance, may instead judge the victim. Feminists must press for changes at every level to make sure that when a rape victim gets her day in court, she has a truly just system to protect her. ●

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by Ashleigh Hill

Several months after I started working with trafficked women through Breakthrough Urban Ministries on Chicago’s West Side, I found myself thinking about what it must be like to think of one’s body as a commodity. I also began to wonder what circumstances could bring a person to such a place, and how I, as a social services employee, could work to chip away at the trafficking industry. What desperate situations create these opportunities for traffickers? For a female already living in survival mode, what might the idea that sex is her most practical skill do to her?

Recently, the public has become more familiar with the issue of human trafficking and has also taken an active interest in combating it. Yet there is still an overwhelming belief that the problem is easily solved and that physically removing victims puts an end to the abuse. But human trafficking is a far-reaching injustice that is not defined by age, ethnicity, education level, or socio-economic class.<sup>1</sup> Although men and boys are prostituted, females incur a far greater risk. Women in homeless, runaway, and abusive situations are at a higher risk for being forced and coerced into trafficking situations. Research by Shared Hope International suggests that the average age of entry into prostitution or the commercial sex industry in the United States is 13 years old.<sup>2</sup>

Fifty-seven percent of the participants in a 2008 DePaul University study of sex trafficking in Chicago responded that they were made promises about their involvement in the sex trade that turned out to be false. Their trafficker promised them fame, love, attention, a stable income, or support.<sup>2</sup> One-fourth of the female participants in the survey referred to their engagement in the sex trade as “for survival sex.” Survival sex was defined as trading sex for survival needs such as food, clothing, shelter, or safety.<sup>3</sup>

The DePaul study concluded that as women progressed through the sex trade industry, they had sex with more customers, traveled to more locations, and were subject to more violence and coercion. Nearly 65% of participants said that at one point or another they wanted to leave the sex trade, but cited drug addiction and the threat or fear of violence from their traffickers as reasons for staying. Others explained that they had no other options—no home, no money, and no one to care for them. They could not envision making an exit from the industry.<sup>4</sup> Other victims report an unshakable stigma attached to their actions that keeps them from seeking help.<sup>5</sup> Each trafficking situation is as individual as the female and must be dealt with on personal, individual bases.

Working at Breakthrough, I spoke with women who entered the industry anywhere from before age ten, up through their 20s, many of them being born into the situations that create opportunity for traffickers. Lisa\*, age 47, had been an alcoholic since age 8. She began using crack and heroin at age 18 and had worked on the streets, to survive, as a prostitute since age 19. During a short period of time, Lisa’s daughter and grandkids went missing and her son committed suicide. In addition, her boyfriend, an abuser, was on trial and in and out of jail. That the people she loved were in troublesome situations was a major stressor for Lisa, and triggered her recurring addictions. Lisa came in and out of Breakthrough, seeking sanctuary from

\* Names have been changed.



her domestic violence situation while trying to get clean. Lisa regularly attended AA/NA meetings and a case manager's support group, and saw a behavioral health counselor, but she still struggled with staying out of the sex and drug industries.

Sarah\* was another Breakthrough client who battled several addictions and depression that stemmed from early childhood sexual abuse and domestic violence continuing into her adult life. She was first forced into prostitution by a family member, and eventually took refuge in heroin. In 2004, she was referred to various treatment centers and stayed at Breakthrough's facility several times, gradually getting the counseling and holistic support she needed. She was connected with outpatient mental health services in Chicago, and through those services received an opportunity to move into her own apartment. Though she was glad to have her own place, her biggest struggle was being alone. She regularly called the shelter, crying and afraid, seeking emotional support.

While working at Breakthrough, I witnessed an underlying fear of freedom in many of the women we served. When not connected to a safe and stable community in which to seek mental and physical healing, many women like Sarah encounter prolonged feelings of isolation. Due to the co-dependency carefully cultivated in captivity, victims experience difficulty in making their own choices once free. Physically removing a person from a familiar environment, when they may have nowhere new to turn that has been made familiar, might be harsher than a well-intentioned person realizes. Trafficking situations begin with a foundation of mental coercion and abuse.

Well-meaning people who want to rescue others from a trafficking situation encounter complications in which a victim has chased promises that turned out to be lies. This gives the victim no reason to trust a service that sounds good (much like the things promised by a trafficker), but lacks personal repute in her life. No one person can pull the blanket out from under a complicated system of exploitation and oppression, and expect that this system, well-oiled by greed and power, will just give up and release its primary source of capital. Coercion and a steady erosion of the human spirit play a much bigger role in trafficking than has been popularly discussed. Traffickers provide or deny certain benefits, make threats, and use verbal abuse in order to compel a person to provide sexual services. They may also institute debt bondage or threaten the lives of a victim's family.<sup>6</sup> Traffickers use mental abuse to establish an environment for sexual abuse, engendering mental instability and a loss of trust and hope in their victims that makes continued manipulation easier and potential rescue harder.

Unfortunately, many social service organizations are understaffed, under-funded, and overwhelmed by the sensitive needs of the victims. Some social service organizations are located in communities where cross-training across various disciplines is lacking, making a multi-faceted response to trafficking impossible. In addition, many states with anti-trafficking laws do not provide for shelter (housing) services.<sup>7</sup> Even when housing services are available to them, victims lack advocates and access to individualized services.<sup>8</sup> To the victim, this may make a service appear a poor substitute for a controlling, funded, organized trafficker with a financial investment in an emotionally co-dependent person. However, many of these shelter services use



solidarity and relationship-building models to demonstrate their willingness to join victims in their fight for independence.

As with any relationship between persons, trust must be built over time, or the victim will go back to a familiar stronghold, no matter how harmful. Agencies and advocates are working to build authentic relationships with the victims/survivors, which over time look very different than the hurtful ones they have come to know. The hard part is, authenticity takes time and victims are often battling addictions (to drugs, alcohol, or the industry itself) in the meantime.

The primary questions we're left with are: how do we empower women who come from or are in trafficking situations? What work needs to be done create policies that protect women from exploitation by opportunistic traffickers? The good news is that there are sustainable efforts already occurring at both state and national levels. The very first thing an advocate can do is research anti-trafficking efforts in their own state. The Polaris Project has a state-by-state map of trafficking activity (<http://www.polarisproject.org/state-map>). You can also read Shared Hope International's National Report of recommendations for state and local policymakers at [www.sharedhope.org/Resources/TheNationalReport.aspx](http://www.sharedhope.org/Resources/TheNationalReport.aspx) or the Justice Department's Trafficking in Persons Report at [www.state.gov/g/tip](http://www.state.gov/g/tip).

Second, know that addressing a complex, sensitive issue such as human trafficking is intimidating. Do not become discouraged. Day by day the public is becoming increasingly aware of trafficking, and there are other advocates and service providers who are also educating themselves and their communities. The Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation has a comprehensive resource guide for specific individual, community, and legislative action. Their resources can be accessed at [www.caase.org/resources.aspx](http://www.caase.org/resources.aspx). Also, if you see suspicious activity, immediately notify local law enforcement and then call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center: 1-888-373-7888. Tips to both agencies are confidential and your anonymity will be protected.

Finally, seek out the social services in your area and find out what they are doing to address the problem of trafficking, and see how you can help them in those efforts. In working at Breakthrough, I formed relationships with women in or healing from prostitution, and I learned from them that asking questions, listening to their answers, and providing consistent feedback and follow-through are the most important things. The slow and continued work toward freedom is the only sustainable kind. ●

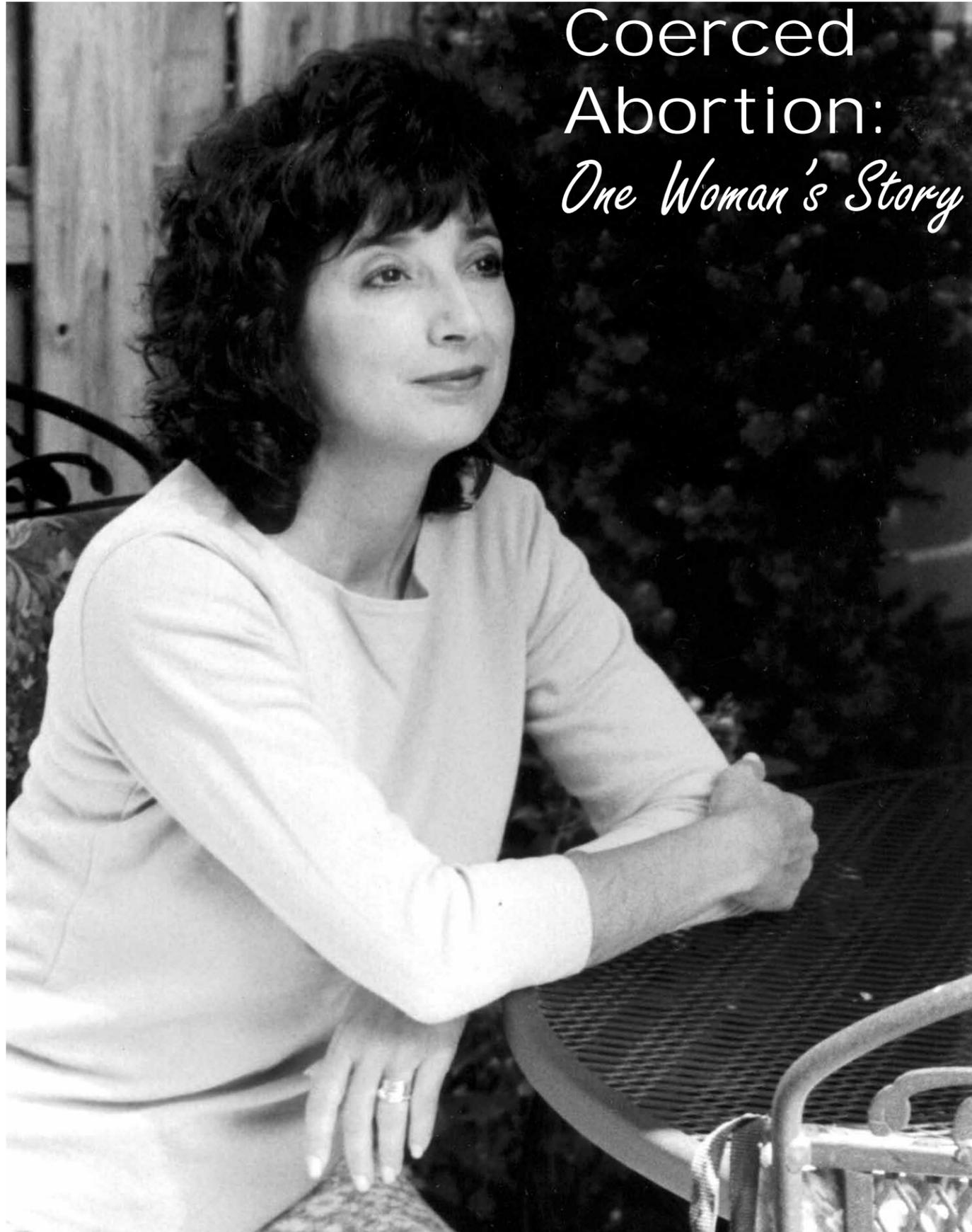
**Three out of four women who have abortions cite lack of resources and support as the determining factor.**

Feminists for Life's newly updated "You Have Better Choices" brochure illuminates a variety of nonviolent options pregnant women may choose from—and helps them find essential support. Available in packets of 50.

FFL's "Raising Kids on a Shoestring" is a holistic national guide filled with free and frugal resources, smart and creative solutions, and practical support that pregnant women, expectant fathers, and struggling parents deserve. Available in packs of 5 and 25.

To order these resources for use in your community, go to [feministsforlife.org](http://feministsforlife.org) and click on Covetable Stuff.™

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# Coerced Abortion: *One Woman's Story*

When Marion Syversen was 15 years old, desperate for affection and hoping to escape her unstable home and drug-addicted mother, she decided the best way to achieve both was to get pregnant—on purpose. “I wanted the baby to be adopted, and I thought the baby’s new family could adopt me, too,” she recalls. “I had no idea how these things work, obviously. I just knew I wanted to get away from my life at home.”

She hoped someone would help her figure out what to do, how to help herself and her baby. First she spoke with a counselor at Planned Parenthood, who told her to have an abortion. “But I thought, ‘I don’t want to do this, I want to have the baby.’ So I went to a minister at a local church,” says Marion. “I expected he would lecture me, but I figured he would have to help when I told him I wanted to give my baby up for adoption.”

Instead, the minister reached into his desk and gave her a hundred and fifty dollars in cash. “And that’s when I realized, in shock, ‘He wants me to have an abortion. That means God must want me to have an abortion,’” says Marion.

She remembers talking to her baby, apologizing for what was about to happen. “I said, ‘I don’t want to kill you, but God wants me to.’ After the procedure, I told my mother what happened, and she called me a slut.”

Marion’s mother continuously brought strange, dangerous men into the home—men who were told that Marion was promiscuous and up for anything. She was raped again and again.

Marion sought help from a school counselor who told her there was nothing that could be done about the assaults because she had a bad reputation. “In my high school there were two thousand people. I was the whore, I was the girl they called when the football team wanted to have a party.”

When Marion got pregnant a second time, at the age of 17—again, hoping to escape her dysfunctional family—her mother actually drove her to the abortion clinic to make sure she would end the pregnancy. “I told the nurse, ‘I don’t want to do this.

My mother is forcing me to do this. Can you help me?’” recalls Marion. “And she said, ‘There are other people waiting. Do you want to have this procedure done or not?’ I couldn’t think of what else to do. Where could I go? Who would help me pay for everything the baby would need? So I had an abortion. Again.”

Marion describes her life after the abortions as “so dark and cold. The shock and despair I felt was so intense. People always say that women need to have abortions because they are desperate. But I was desperate, and I didn’t want to have an abortion, and was forced to anyway. Everyone I talked to told me it was the only way, even though it wasn’t what I wanted.”

According to Marion, far from solving her problems, her abortions “just made everything worse—layering trauma over trauma.” Because she was a victim herself, she couldn’t help but identify with her unborn children as victims.

“There are a lot of women like me who aren’t given the help they truly need,” states Marion. “I’ve talked to many women who said, ‘This is my decision to have an abortion. My boyfriend left me and my parents said they won’t help or support me through college unless I get an abortion – but it’s totally my decision.’ What? How is that your decision? You’re pregnant, your school won’t let pregnant women stay in the dorms, but it’s your decision to have an abortion?”

Marion says she did not realize, at the age of 15, that the adults she went to for help had their own agendas: “I assumed they would do something to help me. I didn’t know they would all say the same thing, that I had to have an abortion. I felt so alone –how many different people should I have asked for help? I don’t know. Everyone I talked to told me the same thing.”

Marion thinks that “the conversation is somewhat different now—it’s possible for women to hear more about other choices.” But, she says, there is still a long way to go, especially in terms of how the information is presented to women who are in shock, feeling confused and isolated and overwhelmed. And many people, she

asserts, simply do not know how to talk to women who are pregnant.

“Shouting at women facing crisis pregnancies is not a solution,” she says. “Neither is pressuring them or telling them there is only one decision they can make. That doesn’t truthfully present them with their options. It doesn’t keep them from being exploited or doing something desperate.”

Many years later, Marion says, she was able to heal, and eventually forgive all the people who told her to have those abortions—even the mother who drove her to the clinic and waited outside to make sure she went through with it. But she laments the fact that many women today are still given false or misleading information, and told they have no options other than abortion.

“One-sided information like that leads to bad decisions,” she says. “So many women are pressured or coerced into abortion, either told outright to have one—like I was—or given no support to do anything else. People who talk to women facing unplanned pregnancies must realize that they are standing on thin ice. They need to be careful, weigh their words with respect, and give information while recognizing that they could be changing the course of a woman’s whole life. What will she do if she’s only given one choice? How long will it take for her to recover?”

# Herstory Eleanor Kirk

1831-1908

by Cat Clark

One of the strongest suffragist voices for the rights of the unborn in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Eleanor Kirk, a novelist whose husband deserted her after a decade of physical abuse and infidelity. In both her novel and her essays, Kirk castigated abortion practitioners and argued passionately for the rights of women workers.

Eleanor Kirk was the pen name of suffragist Eleanor “Nellie” Ames (1831-1908).

Like many of the early suffragists, Kirk wrote for *The Revolution*, the newspaper published by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In “A Word to Abused Wives,” she argued that women should not wait for the vote before leaving an abuser:

Ten miserable years of married life, in which every article of the wifely contract was performed to the letter, and, as far as possible, in the required spirit—ten years of abuse, drunkenness, infidelity and poverty—ten years of childbearing and child-nursing—deprived of home comforts—cursed, kicked, and finally deserted—has led me to a place where I may not say “wait.” No one can be more fully alive to the signs of the times; no one can see, with a clearer vision, the immense benefit accruing to all from female suffrage, than the writer....

Knowing from bitter experience that not all women could rely on husbands and fathers to support them, Kirk skewers a common anti-suffrage refrain in a *The Revolution* article titled “What Will Become of the Babies”: “What will become of your babies, madam, should you be suddenly deprived of the means of their support? Have you the courage, stamina, ay, ability, to fight the world single-handed?” A woman, she argues, needs voting and working rights.

It is in the context of “What Will Become of the Babies” that Kirk suggests feminism is the key to eradicating abortion:

What will become of the babies? Why doesn't somebody ask—what has become of the babies? Ask [abortionist Madame] Restelle [sic] and thousands of physicians, male and female,

who have been engaged in their work of destruction for years. Physicians who have graduated from our first medical colleges, physicians with high sounding diplomas, whose elegant equipages stand in front of Fifth Avenue mansions, who pocket a big fee and a little bundle of flesh at the same time, and nobody's the wiser! Not even the husband in hosts of instances. What will become of the babies—did you ask—and you? Can you not see that the idea is to educate women that they may be self-reliant, self-sustaining, self-respected? The wheel is a big one, and needs a strong push, and a push all together, giving to it an impulse that will keep it constantly revolving, and the first revolution must be Female Suffrage.

After this, the ponderous affair will move regularly, and perhaps slowly; but education, more physical, and intellectually practical, will as surely follow as dawn follows the darkness of night.... God speed the time, for the sake of the babies. Little ones will then be welcome, and mothers will know enough to instruct them sensibly, with a view to the practical side of life.

Some of these ideas are echoed in Eleanor Kirk's novel, *Up Broadway*, which sympathetically portrays the plight of women subjected to double standards and allowed few decent work opportunities. The novel features Mary, a character driven to prostitution to support herself and her daughter. *Up Broadway* was serialized in *The Revolution* before being published as a book in 1870.

Serrin Foster, president of Feminists for Life, is particularly inspired by Eleanor Kirk, who “connects women's rights to the rights of the unborn.... [H]er vision of strong, educated women who have political clout to protect the unborn is filled with hope for the future.” ●

Photo: Broadway & City Hall Park South, New York City, 1908.



## Raise Your Voice for Women

The Violence Against Women Act was first passed in 1994 and reauthorized in 2000 and 2005. As we await the introduction of VAWA this year, it is important to remind ourselves of the gains women have made through this historic legislation and to identify those areas that still require our full support.

Every iteration of VAWA has been a bipartisan effort. When VAWA was first introduced, legislators relied upon input from health and criminal justice professionals, educators, counselors, and women's advocacy organizations. As a member of the VAWA Taskforce, Feminists for Life actively participated in discussions that framed the bill language and acted as a key partner in lobbying members of Congress in support of VAWA. FFL helped legislators connect the dots between violence against women and the violence of abortion. The original VAWA bill was a landmark piece of legislation, comprehensive in addressing all types of violence against women: stalking, domestic or intimate partner violence, rape, and incest.

The first VAWA bill aimed to create a coordinated community response to acts of violence. The bill funded law enforcement as well as social and educational programs meant to prevent crime and serve crime survivors. The largest program funded by VAWA was Services-Training-Officers-Prosecutors (STOP) grants. This program helps state governments and other local government entities strengthen law enforcement, support prosecutors, and aid victims' services. The grants were used to provide personnel and cover the costs associated with training, data collection, or equipment used to apprehend, prosecute, and adjudicate those who committed crimes against women.

Apart from funding important programs, VAWA created a federal “shield law” for victims of rape. This law prevents the victim's sexual history from being included in the proceedings during a federal rape trial. VAWA also established the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE) which received its first call on February 21, 1996, and its two millionth a little over a decade later on September 30, 2007. The first VAWA law also established “full faith and credit” provisions that would require states to enforce protection orders issued by other states, tribes, and territories so that offenders could not elude the law by crossing state lines.

In 2000, VAWA was reauthorized with several new and important components. VAWA II expanded the acceptable use of STOP

grants to include training for sexual assault forensic medical examiners. The bill funded established programs while adding initiatives to assist victims of dating violence, grants for transitional housing for victims of violence, and a pilot program aimed at protecting children who were visiting with a parent accused of domestic violence. VAWA II also made special rules for immigrant women who were victims of violence—allowing them to remain in the U.S. with their children and ensuring full prosecution of and protection from their abusers. In addition, VAWA II made grants available for services related to elderly and disabled victims of violence and expanded interstate stalking laws to include the emerging threat of cyberstalking.

VAWA was reauthorized again in 2005 with an emphasis on local collaboration between law enforcement, health and housing professionals, and women's alliances. VAWA III created new programs to focus on young victims of violence and to educate the public and employers about the threat of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. VAWA III also made gains in protecting victims' privacy and providing housing assistance for victims. VAWA III included funding for research on intervention strategies that would prevent acts of violence and curtail the devastating effects of violence on women and children.

As Feminists for Life continues its work in the VAWA Taskforce, eagerly anticipating the next incarnation of the Violence Against Women Act, it's more important than ever that lawmakers and the White House hear pro-life feminist voices. Historically, VAWA has shared FFL's holistic approach to addressing the root causes of violence. FFL members and supporters are encouraged to take this opportunity to share their opinions with their legislators and encourage their leaders to remember the women. ●

You may contact your members of Congress by calling the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121. Or you may consult [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov), the congressional websites, for office phone and fax numbers as well as e-mail addresses.

# States Confront Violence Through Pregnancy Assistance Fund

In 2010, through legislation aimed at health care reform, Congress created the Pregnancy Assistance Fund to provide support and services for pregnant and parenting teens, pregnant and parenting college students, and pregnant victims of violence. The Pregnancy Assistance Fund was inspired in part by Feminists for Life's Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Act and distributed \$25 million in grants to states and tribes in its first year.

FFL highlighted this historic accomplishment in its 2010 issue of *The American Feminist*, "FFL Activists Change Campuses, Change the World." Feminists for Life President Serrin Foster celebrated the legislative victory saying, "As the only pro-life group active in the coalition to pass the Violence Against Women Act in 1994, and the only feminist organization to support the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, Feminists for Life is eager to see grantees working on behalf of this vulnerable population. We refuse to choose between these different efforts. Oftentimes these issues overlap, especially when it comes to victims of coercion who are in high school or college, or living in poverty."

Pregnancy Assistance Fund grants for improving services for pregnant victims of violence were awarded to five states: New



Photo by Mahalia Stackpole

Mexico, for programs focused on serving teens and addressing teen violence; North Carolina, for training service providers on best practices related to domestic violence; Oregon, for improving screening for Intimate Partner Violence and for linking victims to services; Virginia, for identifying and referring pregnant victims of violence to services; and Washington state, for coordinating services across state agencies and training law enforcement, legal, health, and social service providers in working with pregnant victims of violence. This first round of awards demonstrates that states and tribal territories recognize the desperate and dangerous circumstances that pregnant victims of violence face.

Feminists for Life has long advocated support for pregnant victims of violence. In 2003, Serrin Foster testified before the U.S. House Judiciary Committee in support of the Unborn Victims of Violence Act (otherwise known as Laci and Connor's Law). Foster explained to the committee the urgent need for protecting pregnant women and their unborn children from violence:

What is the appropriate response to a woman who has lost her unborn child due to an assault that she survived? What is the appropriate response to survivors when an assault takes the lives of both a pregnant woman and the child she carries? [Early American feminist] Sarah Norton asked this question more than a century ago. Speaking of the then-common situation in which an unwilling father attempted to kill an unborn child, she asked, 'Had the scheme been successful in destroying only the life aimed at, what could have been the man's crime and what should be his punishment if, as accessory to one murder he commits two?' Today's victims are speaking loudly and clearly on this issue. We need to listen.

FFL has listened to women who have survived unspeakable violence and demonstrated its commitment to these women through its work in the creation and implementation of the Pregnancy Assistance Fund. •

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Serrin Foster and I am the President of Feminists for Life of America. Feminists for Life is an education and advocacy organization that continues the work of the early American feminists who championed both the rights of women and legal protection for the unborn.

Feminists for Life is a member of the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women. As a proud advocate of the Violence Against Women Act, we applaud the universal support by members of Congress for VAWA. I thank the Members of Congress here who have supported VAWA. We can all be proud that statistics show violence against women has decreased since VAWA was enacted. But there is much more work to be done.

Feminists for Life has a track record of getting beyond deadlock on polarizing issues by addressing the root causes of the problems women face. One of the ways we do this is by listening to women and then prioritizing what women really want. Today I am pleased to speak from that perspective about an urgent question: What is the appropriate response to a woman who has lost her unborn child due to an assault that she survived? What is the appropriate response to survivors when an assault takes the lives of both a pregnant woman and the child she carries?

Sarah Norton, an early American feminist who was the first woman to seek admission to Cornell University, asked this question more than a century ago. Speaking of the then-common situation in which an unwilling father attempted to kill an unborn child, she asked, "Had the scheme been successful in destroying only the life aimed at, what could have been the man's crime—and what should be his punishment if, as accessory to one murder he commits two?" (*Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, November 19, 1870)

Today's victims are speaking loudly and clearly on this issue. We need to listen.

According to a recent two-year study by the Center for the Advancement of Women, run by Faye Wattleton, former president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, reducing violence against women is the number one priority of women. Women who are pregnant are at particular risk of being targeted for violence. In fact, recent studies by two different state health departments have shown that a leading cause of maternal mortality is not complications during pregnancy or childbirth—rather, it's homicide. For example, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, a Maryland study concluded that, "A pregnant or recently pregnant woman is more likely to be a victim of homicide than to die of any other cause."

# We Remember Laci & Conner

Testimony of Serrin M. Foster, President of Feminists for Life, to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary Hearing on H.R. 1997: The Unborn Victims of Violence Act July 8, 2003

We are hearing more and more horrible stories via mainstream media of pregnant women who are assaulted by those who do not want them to carry a child to term.

- A doctor was videotaped as he tried to poison his pregnant fiancée.
- Another doctor attacked his girlfriend's abdomen with a needle.
- A number of women have tried to kill the unborn child of another woman who is involved with the same man.
- Unwilling fathers have hired thugs to intentionally kill the unborn child.

For every story we hear, there are countless more that go untold, such as the story of Marion Syversen, a board member of Feminists for Life, who lost her unborn child when her abusive father threw her down a flight of stairs when she was pregnant.

Women who have survived such unthinkable violence are unequivocal: justice demands recognition of and remedy for both their assault and the killing of their unborn baby. The Unborn Victims of Violence Act would support justice for women who lose children as the result of a federal crime of violence.

Many women do not survive such crimes, and their grieving survivors are equally unequivocal: justice demands recognition of and remedy for the killing of both victims, the woman and her unborn child or children.

The gruesome and well-publicized case of Laci Peterson and her unborn baby, Conner, prompted Americans to examine their own convictions on this issue. The American people, too, were unequivocal. They recognize and mourn the loss of both mother and child. According to a Newsweek/Princeton Survey Research Associates poll released June 1, 2003, 84% of Americans believe that prosecutors should be able to bring a homicide charge on behalf of a fetus killed in the womb. This figure includes 56% who believe such a charge should apply at any point during pregnancy, and another 28% who would apply it after the baby is "viable," i.e., of sufficient lung development to survive outside the mother. Only 9% believe that a homicide charge should never be allowed for a fetus.

Feminists for Life and our partners in the Women Deserve Better® campaign support the Unborn Victims of Violence Act because it would provide justice for the victims of federal crimes of violence. As victims, survivors, and the American people clearly demand, the Unborn Victims of Violence Act would recognize an unborn child as a legal victim when he or she is injured or killed during the commission of a federal crime of violence.

Congresswoman Lofgren has introduced an alternative to the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, called the Motherhood Protection

Act of 2003. Instead of recognizing a woman's unborn child as an additional victim, it would "provide additional punishment for certain crimes against women when the crimes cause an interruption in the normal course of their pregnancies."

An "interruption?" That implies something temporary, as if it were possible for the victim's pregnancy to start back up again. Dare we ask: mother of whom? Motherhood is neither protected nor honored through the proposed Motherhood Protection Act. Instead, it tells grieving mothers that their lost children don't count. It ignores these mothers' cries for recognition of their loss and for justice. It is a step backward in efforts to reduce violence against women.

Ten days ago in the Bronx, a 54-year-old man allegedly kicked and punched his 24-year-old girlfriend in the abdomen. Julie Harris was nine months pregnant at the time. She went through labor only to deliver stillborn twins. The Motherhood Protection Act, which some call the single victim substitute, would only recognize one of these three victims.

The family of California murder victims Laci and Conner Peterson is explicitly urging Congress to pass the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, also known as Laci and Conner's Law—not the single-victim substitute. Sharon Rocha, Laci's mother and Conner's grandmother, concluded a letter to Senators DeWine, Hatch, and Graham and Congresswoman Hart:

I hope that every legislator will clearly understand that adoption of such a single-victim amendment would be a painful blow to those, like me, who are left alive after a two-victim crime, because Congress would be saying that Conner and other innocent unborn victims like him are not really victims—indeed, that they never really existed at all. But our grandson did live. He had a name, he was loved, and his life was violently taken from him before he ever saw the sun.

The application of a single-victim law, such as the [Lofgren] amendment, would be even more offensive in the many cases that involved mothers who themselves survive criminal attacks, but who lose their babies in those crimes. I don't understand how any legislator can vote to force prosecutors to tell such a grieving mother that she didn't really lose a baby-when she knows to the depths of her soul that she did. A legislator who votes for the single-victim amendment, however well motivated, votes to add insult to injury.

The advocates of the single-victim amendment seem to think that the only thing that matters is how severe a sentence can be meted out—but they are wrong. It matters even more that the true nature of the crime be recognized, so that the punishment—which should indeed be severe—will fit the true nature of the crime. This is a question not only of severity, but also of justice. The single-victim proposal would be a step away from justice, not toward it. For example, if Congresswoman Lofgren's legal philosophy was currently the law in California, there would be no second homicide charge for the murder of Conner.

The Unborn Victims of Violence Act would also avoid multiplying the pain of survivors of horrendous federal crimes of violence such as the bombing in Oklahoma City or the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

After years of trying to have a child, Carrie and Michael Lenz Jr. were overjoyed to learn that she was carrying their son, whom they named Michael Lenz III. Carrying a copy of the sonogram, Carrie went to work early the next morning to show coworkers the first photo of baby Michael. She and Michael were killed, along with three other pregnant women and their unborn children, when the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building exploded on April 19, 1995. This father's agony was multiplied later when he saw that the memorial named only his wife, not his son, as a victim. In the eyes of the federal government, there was no second victim. Timothy McVeigh was never held accountable for killing Michael Lenz's namesake.

If the legal system does not recognize the loss of the unborn child, it becomes an unwitting agent of the perpetrator who robbed the survivors of the child and the life they would have had together.

Women have a right to have children. When a woman has this right taken away from her due to violence that kills the fetus in her womb, she needs and deserves the support of all those who champion women's rights, including those who support legalized abortion. Columbia Law School Professor Michael Dorf, who is pro-choice, agrees: "Certainly pro-choice activists would oppose government-mandated sterilization. For similar reasons, they should support punishing feticide."

It is also worthwhile to note that outside the context of abortion, unborn children are often recognized as persons who warrant the law's protection. Most states, for example, allow recovery in one form or another for prenatal injuries. Roughly half the states criminalize fetal homicide. Unborn children have long been recognized as persons for purposes of inheritance, and a child unborn at the time of his or her father's wrongful death has been held to be among the children for whose benefit a wrongful death action may be brought. Federal law similarly recognizes the unborn child as a human subject deserving protection from harmful research.

Some have questioned whether it is reasonable to apply this law if the perpetrator is unaware that a woman is pregnant, especially if she is in the earliest stages of pregnancy.

Neither the Unborn Victims of Violence Act nor the Motherhood Protection Act makes a distinction about the age of the fetus. But would anyone seriously suggest—especially those who advocate a right to privacy—that it is a woman's responsibility to disclose her pregnancy to a potential attacker or murderer?

In 1990, the Supreme Court of Minnesota answered that question. In *State v. Merrill*, a man who killed a woman was responsible for two deaths, even though the woman was just 28 days pregnant. The court said: "The possibility that a female homicide victim of child-bearing age may be pregnant is a possibility that an assaulter may not safely exclude."

Knowing this may serve as a deterrent to future attacks on women of childbearing age.

We cannot tell grieving mothers like Tracy Marciniak, who testified here today, that her son Zachariah didn't count. We cannot tell Julie Harris, mother of twins, that there was only one victim when there were three. We cannot tell the families of Laci and Conner, or Carrie and Michael III, that they have only one loss to mourn. The Motherhood Protection Act would deny these victims the recognition and justice they deserve.

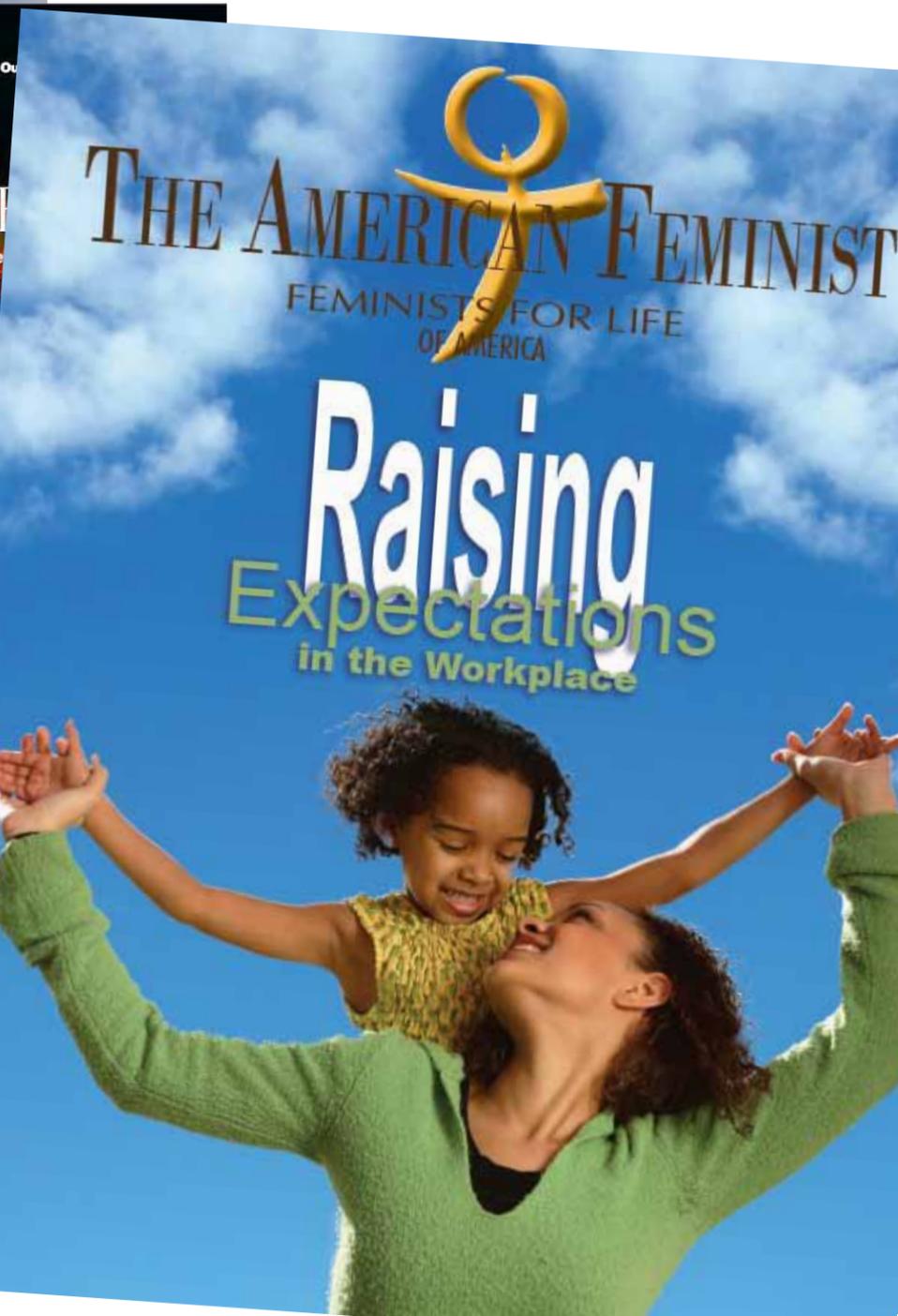
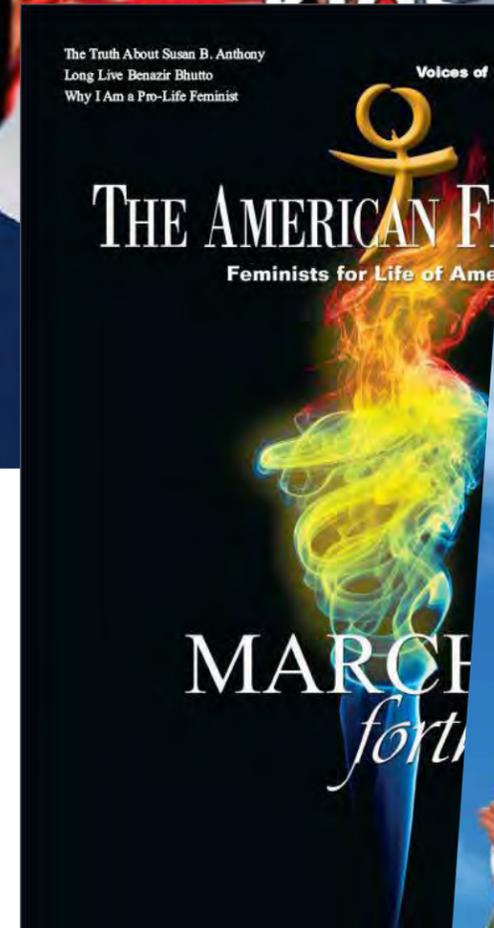
Women have spoken. Women want the justice promised by the Unborn Victims of Violence Act.

We are asking our elected representatives to honestly answer the question in the case of Laci Peterson and baby Conner, was there one victim or two?

Those who support the single-victim substitute would deny women justice.

On behalf of women and families who have lost a child through violence, a father who has lost both his wife and child through terrorism, and Laci and Conner's family, I urge unanimous support for this bill, not the single-victim substitute. ●

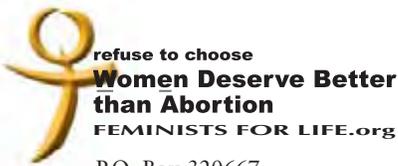
*FFL was the only feminist group to support Laci and Conner's Law, also known as the Unborn Victims of Violence Act. The Act became law in 2004.*



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# SLAVES AMONG US

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While working her way through college, Joyce was raped and soon learned she was pregnant. Over the course of her healing she has worked on a racial justice task force and with victims of sex trafficking.

In addition to telling her personal story through the speech "Pregnant by Rape?," Joyce now addresses domestic and international human trafficking through a new speech, "Slaves Among Us."

To book Joyce for either speech, or to book one of FFL's other dynamic speakers, please contact [coordinator@ffloncampus.org](mailto:coordinator@ffloncampus.org).



**JOYCE McCAULEY-BENNER**



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