

## Domestic Violence: How to Recognize the Signs and Avail Oneself of Resources

What is domestic violence (DV)? There are two schools of thought that define what domestic violence is and what it isn't. As defined by most state laws in the US, DV is recognized as the following:

- Any physical abuse, threat of abuse between intimately involved partners, roommates or family members
- Some, not all states broaden the definition to include two people who live separately from one another and are jointly raising a child
- Although more commonly committed against women, men are also victims
- Some, not all states, recognize parent/child abuse as DV
- Very few states include Gays and Lesbians who are victims of DV as legal victims
- Some states include kidnapping, stalking, burglary

The Coalition Against Domestic Violence ([CADV](#)), on the other hand has a broader context, or perhaps more narrow one, depending on one's perspective. As defined by the CADV, domestic violence is:

*As a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence, when one person believes they are entitled to control another.*

Why is there such a disconnect between how the legal system and the CADV and other advocacy groups view DV? The answer is simple. The legal system, which is comprised of police officers, lawyers and judges, is concerned with crimes that have been committed. Emotional abuse, systematic verbal abuse, stalking, harassing and intimidation are viewed very differently from physical abuse and those involving action. Despite their potential to wreak havoc on families and eat away at a victim's self esteem, they are seen as a pattern and can only be taken into account and offered into evidence (in some, not all states) once physical harm has taken place. It is important to note that sometimes police officers are somewhat inured to calls involving domestic violence and often they go nowhere, even with physical evidence. Reluctance on the part of the victim, for myriad reasons (which will be discussed later on in the article), puts police officers in a difficult position.

The news, however, is not all grim. Advocacy groups, such as the CADV and myriad others, offer victims numerous things that the legal system is not always in a position to. Among them are support, someone to help them see the cycle of abuse that a person might be living in that might otherwise be unrecognizable and if need be, a place to lay one's head when things are too dangerous at home.

Now having defined what domestic violence is, why don't we look at some statistics,

which might be very startling to most readers. Some of them may be a little outdated.

In studies involving 16,000 participants, which was conducted by the US Department of Justice between 1996 and 2002, as well as retrospective data available (also from the DOJ), from all 50 states and Washington, DC, they learned the following:

- Nearly 25% of women and 7.6% of men were raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabitating partner or boyfriend/girlfriend<sup>1</sup>
- Approximately 1.3 million women and 835,000 men are physically assaulted by an intimate partner<sup>2</sup>
- In 2000, 1247 women and 440 men were killed by an intimate partner<sup>3</sup>
- Of females killed with a firearm, nearly 2/3 of them were done so by intimate partners<sup>4</sup>
- Of the almost 3.5 million violent crimes committed against family members, 49% of these were crimes against spouses<sup>5</sup>
- 84% of spouse abuse victims were females, and 86% of victims of dating partner abuse at were female<sup>6</sup>

There are equally if not more alarming statistics that highlight domestic abuse within specific ethnicities. Some highlights that might raise an eyebrow or two are:

- 81.1% of the [Asian women surveyed] reported experiencing at least one form of intimate partner violence<sup>7</sup>
- 77% of all Hispanic Texans indicate that either they, a family member and/or a friend have experienced some form of domestic violence<sup>8</sup>
- African American females experienced intimate partner violence at a rate 35% higher than that of white females, and about 22 times the rate of women of

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Tjaden & Nancy Thoennes, U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 181867, *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence*, at iii (2000), available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/181867.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Patricia Tjaden & Nancy Thoennes, U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 183781, *Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*, at iv (2000), available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/183781.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Callie Marie Rennison, U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 197838, *Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief: Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001*, at 1 (2003), available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/ipv01.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The Violence Pol'y Ctr., *When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2002 Homicide Data: Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender Incidents*, at 7 (2004), available at <http://www.vpc.org/studies/wmmw2004.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Matthew R. Durose et al., U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 207846, *Bureau of Justice Statistics, Family Violence Statistics: Including Statistics on Strangers and Acquaintances*, at 31-32 (2005), available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/fvs.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> This according to Project AWARE (Asian Women Advocating Respect and Empowerment) in Washington, DC who conducted an anonymous survey in 2001

<sup>8</sup> Texas Council on Family Violence, Statistics, 2002 [http://makethecall.org/texas\\_stats.htm](http://makethecall.org/texas_stats.htm)

other races<sup>9</sup>

- African American males experienced intimate partner violence at a rate about 62% higher than that of white males and about 22 times the rate of men of other races<sup>10</sup>
- 61% [of Japanese women surveyed] reported some form of physical, emotional, or sexual partner violence that they considered abusive - including culturally demeaning practices such as overturning a dining table, or throwing liquid at a woman<sup>11</sup>
- 52% [of Japanese women surveyed] reported having experienced physical violence during their lifetime<sup>12</sup>
- 57% [of Japanese women surveyed] are estimated to experience a partner's physical violence by age 49<sup>13</sup>

Domestic violence is of course not unique to adults. The following highlights that the prevalence of DV among teenagers and those in their early 20s tells us that, at minimum, education of our younger generation is as important as it is for the older one.

- Approximately one in five female high school students reports being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner<sup>14</sup>
- In a study of eighth and ninth graders, 25 percent indicated that they had been victims of dating violence, including eight percent who disclosed being sexually abused<sup>15</sup>
- 13% of college women were stalked during one six to nine month period<sup>16</sup>
- 3 in 10 college women reported being injured emotionally or psychologically from being stalked<sup>17</sup>

Equally disturbing is the prevalence of domestic violence in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community (LGBT).

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<sup>9</sup> Callie Marie Rennison. and Sarah Welchans, U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 178247, *Intimate Partner Violence* (2000), available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/ascii/ipv.txt>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Mieko Yoshihama, Domestic Violence Against Women of Japanese Descent in Los Angeles: Two Methods of Estimating Prevalence, 5 *Violence Against Women* 869 (1999); Mieko Yoshihama & Brenda W. Gillespie, Age Adjustment and Recall Bias in the Analysis of Domestic Violence Data: Methodological Improvements Through the Application of Survival Analysis Methods, 17 *J. Fam. Violence* 199 (2002).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Jay G. Silverman et al., *Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality*, 286 *J. Am. Med. Ass'n* 572-579 (2001).

<sup>15</sup> Vangie A. Foshee et al., *The Safe Date Project: Theoretical Basis, Evaluation Design, and Selected Baseline Findings*, 12 *Am. J. of Preventive Med.* 39 (1996).

<sup>16</sup> Bonnie Fisher et al., U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 182369, *The Sexual Victimization of College Women* (2000), available at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/182369.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

- 11% of lesbians reported violence by their female partner<sup>18</sup>
- 15% of gay men who had lived with a male partner reported being victimized by a male partner<sup>19</sup>
- 6,523 incidence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender violence were recorded in eleven distinct cities and regions across the USA and Toronto, Ontario<sup>20</sup>

Given these data, it is difficult to suggest that domestic violence happens to a small fraction of the population or only to a certain subset of people. For instance, without benefit of seeing these statistics, many might assume that DV only happens to the impoverished or only to African Americans or only to Caucasians of a specific socio-economic background.

Indeed, cases of domestic violence perpetrated by or against celebrities are all the proof anyone needs that DV doesn't just happen to those who are poor or of a specific race/ethnicity. A recidivist, Riddick Bowe, former heavyweight boxing champion was charged in 2001 with 3<sup>rd</sup> degree assault his wife. An extremely charming fellow is Bowe, in 2003, only a week before he was scheduled to serve 18 months in prison for abducting his wife, who attempted to flee his abuse, he was arrested and charged with 2<sup>nd</sup> assault for beating his wife.

Multi-Grammy winner and much-revered singer Tina Turner's Autobiography, from which the movie, "What's Love Got To Do With It", is based, highlights the on-going physical abuse she suffered at the hands of her ex-husband Ike.

Juanita Leonard, wife of Sugar Ray Leonard, testified in court that the boxer often used her as a punching bag. Although Ike Turner vehemently denies the allegations made by Tina, Sugar Ray admitted that he abused his wife frequently.

Although Oscar Winner Halle Barry never named her assailant, an ex-boyfriend is said to be responsible for causing hearing loss in her right ear. Of the attack, Barry said, "I've never disclosed who it was, but that guy hit me that one time and that was the last time. It [the relationship] was done the minute he did that. The one thing my mother always told me, 'If a man hits you, you leave smoke. You get to gettin'.' So I got my stuff and got goin'." <sup>21</sup>

While we may never know who murdered Nicole Brown Simpson, one thing that is

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<sup>18</sup> Patricia Tjaden, *Symposium on Integrating Responses to Domestic Violence: Extent and Nature of Intimate Partner Violence as measured by the National Violence Against Women Survey*, 47 Loy. L. Rev. 41, 54 (2003).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Nat'l Advoc. for Local Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Communities, Nat'l Coal. of Anti-Violence Programs, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Domestic Violence: 2003 Supplement - An Update from the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs* (2004), at 3-8, 10, available at <http://www.avp.org/publications/reports/reports.htm>

<sup>21</sup> *Redbook* 3/03. Vol.200, Iss. 3. pg. 130.

undeniable is that Los Angeles police were called to the home she shared with husband O.J. Simpson on numerous occasions. Photographs confirm that the football star repeatedly battered his wife.

We instead must deduce from these numbers and the more celebrated cases of the last 20 or so years, that DV is a problem that is complex, far-reaching and insidious. Something else we can surmise is that with numbers such as these and the lack of attention devoted to this grave issue, underreporting of these crimes is an equally significant problem.

If there is to be any hope of minimizing or eliminating these statistics, a few things would likely need to occur. As societies we must see this as an issue that can affect anyone, regardless of your religious faith, your socioeconomic background, your race or if you voted for a Conservative or a Liberal in the last Presidential election. It continues to be a widespread epidemic for many reasons and they are as complex as the issue itself. For reasons to do with shame, guilt, duty, honor and, of course, “for the sake of the children” underreporting, lack of follow-through on pressing charges and bringing assailants to justice allows perpetrators to continually escape answering for their crimes.

If you or someone you know is the victim of domestic violence, please don't continue to allow yourself to be a victim. Recidivists prove all the time that if you take him or her back with promises to change and never do it again, it is a lie! The only way to ensure that you will not continue to be the victim of this heinous crime is to leave. Indeed, it is often easier said than done. Children, other familial responsibilities, financial dependence, and the subsequent brain washing done by perpetrators that victims can't possibly make it on their own or that the perpetrator will retaliate, cause people to continue being in an abusive relationship.

One thing that anyone who is the victim of domestic violence must realize is that the fault lies solely with the perpetrator. Nothing the victim did was the cause for the beating, despite claims made by perpetrators as justification for his or her actions.

Spouses, boyfriends, girlfriends, and other intimates may get angry, indeed arguing will occur. At times vicious words might pass between two people, but it is never acceptable to hit an intimate. Abuse is about control and aggression and it is never an appropriate expression of love between two people.

Below are some resources, which might assist someone who is the victim of domestic violence.

Warning signs of domestic abuse: <http://www.aardvarc.org/dv/signs.shtml>

A little quiz to see if someone you know fits the profile:

<http://www.aardvarc.org/dv/abusequiz.shtml>

Long term effects of domestic violence: <http://www.aardvarc.org/dv/abusequiz.shtml>

Available resources by state: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/violence/state>

What can the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence do for someone who is experiencing domestic violence? <http://www.ncadv.org>

Creating a safety plan: <http://www.ncadv.org/protectyourself/SafetyPlan.php>

If you know someone who is being abused in another country:

<http://www.ncadv.org/resources/InternationalOrganizationResources.php>

Other advocacy groups:

<http://www.endabuse.org/section/aboutus>

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/help/dv.htm>