

A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

One woman in three will experience violence during her lifetime,
most often at the hands of someone she knows.

**This is the invisible epidemic
people don't talk about.**

**The victims don't talk either.
They're shamed into silence.**



We call it by its true names:

.....Rape.....Rape as War Crime.....Murder.....Assault & Battery..... Sexual
Harassment.....Stalking.....Female Genital Mutilation..... Female
Infanticide.....Honor Killings.....Acid Attacks.....
.....Dowry Deaths & Bride Burnings.....Incest.....Sexual Slavery.....

Will we hear these women's stories? Will we take action to turn the tide in:

.....the epidemic **in conflict zones** where women are kidnapped, raped, beaten and killed as an intentional strategy of war and terror?

.....the epidemic in **societies worldwide** where trafficking, abuse and mutilation of women are unchecked, and are often accepted as normal within the culture?

.....the epidemic in **these United States** where the violence and sexual slavery is hidden and denied, because we do not want to accept that it happens here, and so frequently?

.....the epidemic in **Maryland**, where 90 women were killed and 17,860 domestic violence crimes were reported by law enforcement agencies in 2003, estimated to represent 25% of actual incidents? 75% of these crimes were against women.

.....the epidemic in **Frederick County** where 12,000 calls a year come into the abuse prevention hotline, and 7 women were killed in domestic violence in 2004?



How can there be peace on earth while there is political, social and economic acceptance of such violence against more than half of the world's population?

About this issue:

"Women are neither safe in times of war nor in times of peace." So flatly states Amnesty International, in its initiative to raise awareness of violence against women as a universal and pervasive human rights challenge. The danger to women literally begins before birth: at least 60 million girls who would otherwise be alive are "missing" from population figures because of sex-selective abortions or receiving inferior care to boys. Violence is used to reinforce discrimination, existing often as an overt threat to make sure women "know their place." Women are easy targets upon which to vent destructive, out of control emotions.

In the United States, a woman is battered every 15 seconds, usually by her husband or domestic partner, and a woman is raped every 90 seconds. In North Africa, 6,000 women are genitally mutilated each day. This year, more than 15,000 women will be sold into sexual slavery in China, 25,000 in the U.S., 80,000 in Germany. 200 women in Bangladesh will be horribly disfigured when their spurned husbands or suitors burn them with acid. More than 7,000 women in India will be murdered by their families and in-laws in disputes over dowries. Of 2200 women murdered in Guatemala (a country the size of TN) in the past 5 years, there has been one conviction, and the serial, ritual murders of 450 women in Juarez and neighboring cities in Mexico continue unchecked and unsolved.

Violence against women is rooted in a global culture of discrimination which denies women equal rights with men and which legitimizes the appropriation of women's bodies for individual gratification, economic or political ends. Every year, violence in the home and the community devastates the lives of millions of women. Only in the last decade has the international human rights community recognized that world-wide human rights cannot be said to exist until these abuses are corrected. President Bush reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act on January 5, 2006. This is a very good step for the U.S. to take, but much more needs to be done here and abroad. It's time to talk openly about "it". It's time for us all to learn what we each can do to address in our homes, hometowns, the nation and the world what has been called one of the most pervasive human rights abuses of our times. The societal and psychological origins and impacts of these forms of abuse are complex and must be addressed at governmental, community and personal levels.



Women in Black Frederick stands in silent witness mourning this violence. We stand in solidarity with those who are silenced everywhere. We choose silence, knowing it is voluntary and limited, while others are restricted, tortured and killed for their efforts to speak out.

Violence Against Women as a Weapon of War:

Women have been targeted for rape and murder in Bosnia and Congo, in Dafur and in the narco-wars now raging in Columbia. The attitude of impunity in using women as a tactic of war is so pervasive that it has been used by the U.S. Military in Iraq. On 1/27/06, the AP reported that the US Army in Iraq has at least twice seized and jailed the wives of suspected insurgents in hopes of "leveraging" their husbands into surrender, US military documents show. In one case, a task force locked up the young mother of three, one of which was a six-month old nursing baby, a US intelligence officer reported. In the case of a second detainee, one American colonel suggested to another in an email that they catch her husband by tacking a note to the family's door challenging him "to come get his wife."

In times of armed conflict, all forms of violence increase. As far back as Homer's Odyssey, women were seen as part of the "spoils of war", the "loot" available to victorious warriors. In addition to rape, women have and continue to be subjected to sexual violence including sexual mutilation, sexual humiliation, forced prostitution, and forced pregnancy. The increased risk of contracting HIV/AIDS can make sexual abuse a death sentence.

Worldwide, armed conflict has had the following effects on women and children:

- 80% of the refugees are women and children (UNHCR, 2001).
- Trafficking of women and girls was reported in 85% of the conflict zones (Save the Children 2003).
- In the Democratic Republic of Congo 5,000 cases of rape, corresponding to an average of 40 a day, were recorded in the Uvira area by women associations since October 2002 (UN 2003).
- In Rwanda between 250,000 and 500,000 women, or about 20% of women, were raped during the 1994 genocide (International Red Cross report, 2002).
- In Sierra Leone 94 percent of displaced households surveyed had experienced sexual assaults, including rape, torture and sexual slavery (Physicians for Human Rights, 2002).
- In Iraq at least 400 women and girls as young as eight were reported to have been raped in Baghdad during or after the war, since April 2003 (Human Rights Watch Survey, 2003).
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina 20,000 - 50,000 women were raped during five months of conflict in 1992. (IWTC, Women's GlobalNet #212. 23rd October 2002).
- In some villages in Kosovo, 30%-50% of women of childbearing age were raped by Serbian forces (Amnesty International, 27 May 1999).

Eve Ensler, author of the Vagina Monologues says: "What is most troubling in the recent World Health Organization report on this issue is the normalization of the violence. How women and men have come to expect and accept this brutality as a part of daily life. How a slap to a woman's cheek or a man's fist in her face, is not considered outrageous or extraordinary. How we do not value women, hold them sacred, understand that to honor their beings and bodies is tantamount to honoring life itself."

Learn More, Take Action:

V day, a global movement to stop violence against women and girls. <http://www.vday.org/main.html>

Anti-Violence Resource Guide: <http://www.feminist.com/antiviolence/>

US Women without borders, working to end violence against women and girls:

<http://www.uswomenwithoutborders.org/>

Amnesty International Stop Violence Against Women Campaign:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/stopviolence/about.html>

World Health Organization (WHO) Multi-Country Study On Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women, November 2005. Results of interviews with 24,000 women in 10 countries.

<http://www.who.int/gender/violence/multicountry/en/>

Women for Women International(WWI), programs to empower women in conflict zones:

<http://www.womenforwomen.org/wWIindex.do?g11n.enc=ISO-8859-1>

Honorata, wife and mother of five, was held captive, repeatedly gang raped, tortured and abused by armed militias in 2002, when war arrived at her village in Democratic Republic of Congo. Her culture marginalizes rape victims, and she felt isolated from the society that failed to protect her. After sharing her story with WWI she said: "It is one thing to have been through what I have been through...but to have nobody acknowledge it enhances that pain threefold. Your willingness to recognize my humanity has given voice to my distress and meaning to my pain " She says, WWI has "dared me to hope—of having a house, of living in peace, of reclaiming my dynamism, my dignity."

Trafficking young women and girls: Frontline Report, February 7, 2006.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/slaves/>

U.S. Statistics: <http://www.now.org/issues/violence/stats.html>

Coaching Boys into Healthy Men: <http://endabuse.org/programs/display.php3?DocID=9916>

What Men can do: <http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw/>

Toolkit to end violence against women: <http://toolkit.ncjrs.org/>

Get Help:

Heartly House, Frederick: 24 hour crisis hotline: 301-662-8800. www.heartlyhouse.org Comprehensive services for victims and survivors of domestic violence, rape/sexual assault and child abuse.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): (800) 656-HOPE 24 Hr Confidential. Rape Hotline. **National Victim Center:** 800 (394-2255) Operating 8:30AM-5:30PM EST.



For more information about Women in Black Frederick, MD: Check our website at www.wibfrederick.org email info@wibfrederick.org or call 301/834-7581. **All around the world, Women In Black stand in silent vigil, wearing black as a symbol of mourning, for the ravages of war and violence.** Vigils every 3rd Wed, 6:30 pm, First Fridays, 12 noon, corner of Patrick and Market.