

December 3, 2010

Re: When a woman hits her man

Dear Editor,

Thank you for covering the important topic of domestic violence in your paper. Your article is particularly timely because November is Woman Abuse Prevention Month, we are right in the middle of the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women (November 25- December 6) and days before Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women (December 6).

It is important to acknowledge that there are male victims of violence, just as there is violence in same-sex relationships. However, to state that violence and abuse happens to men just as often as it happens to women is completely false. The Statistics Canada study quoted in the article has been proven incorrect a number of times. The study used the dubious method of collecting the data over the phone, which can skew the results. According to Holly Johnson, a leading researcher on violence against women, this method does not take into context women living in shelters, nor does it account for women who have partners who monitor their phone calls. The Centretown News did an excellent job of covering this in their article "Statistics can mislead" (March 12, 2010).

Women who are abused live in constant terror from being controlled, stalked and threatened with serious bodily harm or death. The Domestic Violence Death Review Committee studied homicides as result of violence from the years 2002-2006. Their report clearly finds that 92% of victims of domestic homicide are women. In this study, the claim that men don't report violence simply does not work, as all homicides are thoroughly investigated.

Women in abusive relationships are constantly asked, "Why don't you just leave him?" with no consideration of whether they may be financially abused, have children or pets they don't want to leave behind and certainly not considering that a woman is most at risk of violence once she leaves her partner. The system is not just a "disaster for men." Yes, there are more services for women than there are for men, this is because women have been advocating for these services for a number of years, starting with the most grassroots of actions. There are more services because statistically speaking there are more women who survive violence.

Your article gives very good advice for victims of violence and those who may know them. Validating what a person is saying, offering them a safe place and knowing what the warning signs can be are all great ways that a community can become involved in ending violence against women. The Vigil for the National Day of Remembrance to honour victims of violence against women takes place at 6 p.m. in Minto Park with a follow-up vigil at All Saints Church at 7:30 and all are welcome. This is an excellent time of year to start empowering neighbours, friends, colleagues and family members to talk about abuse. We must break the wall of silence surrounding violence, as abuse can only occur in isolation. This is not a woman's issue, it is not a men's issue. This is an issue of power, control and violence in our communities and it takes a community to end it.

Sincerely,

Advocacy and Public Engagement Committee

The Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women