

29 May 2015

Family Violence Community Forum Submission

When I attended the Community Forum on Domestic Violence, on May 20th. I found people's suggestions ranged from education and targeted advertising to teaching men how to change as the answer. Others thought teaching what is expected of you when in a relationship was the answer to tackling family violence. I heard the statistics that were shared on the night about violence against women and I too am disgusted as expressed by a panel member. However, for me the problem is not about changing men. It's bigger than mere education and advertising.

The problem is also about changing women, things are not only black and white. I feel the angle of this campaign can be expanded as it appears to me to be somewhat narrow minded. I have not yet heard what will be done about this nationwide epidemic but after attending the forum last week I felt like the focus is only about changing men and not addressing all other aspects of Domestic Violence. I sense this will be swept under the carpet, which in my opinion is a big mistake if you actually expect to make a long term difference.

Some other things I noticed during the forum and in my personal life is that a lot of people don't even know what Domestic Violence consists of. I myself have suffered in the past due to various types of abuse, but it's the abuse you can't physically see that controls you, and can eventually destroy you. The manipulation, threats, pain and self-worth are only a snippet of what we can experience. These are the things that some people don't even realize are going on before anything else escalates. I too didn't realize how I was being controlled. Physical abuse doesn't necessarily just happen, there is usually a buildup which turns into aggression and then the two parties are ready to 'fight'.

I did hear a lot of ideas about educating people on what Domestic Violence consists of and I think it would be good to implement something similar into the school curriculum. But if you start teaching teenagers what's not ok, how are they going to control their emotions without communication skills? And then you will have to teach them what their rights are and what their options are if they are in that situation or how they can recognize their own anger. Can you make victims feel comfortable enough and put their full trust in you to make such a step? Are you going to be able to provide the various types of support these people are going to need? Or will funding be cut like it did for homelessness?

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Have you conducted any statistics on people who are homeless? because they have suffered Domestic Violence or who are the perpetrators because they don't know where to go or what to do, especially when Hume's statistics are higher in some areas of Domestic Violence than the State of Victoria!

So in case you haven't realized yet I believe this comes down firstly to communication. Here is a small 20 minute video I found on ted talk. Please watch it and listen carefully to our society's current situation. http://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together?language=en#t-1171074

Now I hope we are on the same page with this but apart from communication what else is crucial here?

At the forum someone spoke of how much these behaviors effect babies. I believe it's the same for us as adults. Look at what's on our TV's, is there anything good there? I think not. I don't see any shows that have people we can look at as good role models. You only know what you see and if you don't see people with mental awareness you won't have any. Mental awareness is something we don't have, we make excuses, we blame other people, we don't take responsibility and we don't know we have choices.

At the forum I spoke about having choices and a guy stood up and said:" You think people have a choice when their abused? You think people have a choice when they grow up hating and end up in jail and you think they have a choice when they get out to re-offend?"

And with all due respect, no there was no choice when that person was young. However after that there where choices and that person chose to make the wrong choice whether they realized it or not. This is the problem here, there is no accountability. And if you were to charge these perpetrators are you going to be able to keep them in jail? Is the punishment/flood of information going to be enough to deter people? How can you put people in jail if people are already being put on bail because the jails are full and then there's that high statistics of people who offend whilst on bail. Have you looked at the statistics for people on bail involved in Domestic Violence crimes?

I want to briefly touch on Immigration. There has to be some kind of better system when people are coming in to understand and abide by our laws on Human Rights. If these people don't know what to do in case of a fire, when they arrive. How are you going to get them to leave there cultural abuse in their country?

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Domestic Violence has been behind every closed door, if we do some commercials I believe nothing is really going to change. It will be another faze that we see come and go through our country and maybe it will give a few people something to think about for a short while. Through communication skills and mindfulness I am confident that, as a country, we can all change for the greater good. Because right now, we are not coping or dealing with life's pressures such as jobs, finance, housing, children etc.

In turn, we don't know how to communicate which leaves us frustrated and unheard and thus the vicious cycle of power continues to spin.

Power, I'm not going to get into power now because this needs to be submitted today but I strongly suggest you look into it as we are all battling to have the "power", which ultimately creates this "power struggle".

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make a submission on such an important topic.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Castiglia.