

As you will notice, I recently submitted my message to this board which you will find above. Upon turning off my computer and walking away, it dawned on me that I should have shared more information with the public with reference to domestic violence, and in particular, how I have gained knowledge on this subject. If what I share with you, a possible victim, does not open your eyes, or at least cause you to pause for a moment and really take in what I am about to say, then I have given all I possibly can, and I will walk away from my computer knowing I tried my best to help someone.

Imagine being a child and growing up with a father who has spent many years on the Chicago Police Force, and his two closest friends were Homicide Detectives in the same city. I was that child. Not only did my father violently abuse me, but I was forced to hear stories – true crime stories no child should ever hear. The stories I heard on a regular basis would make any child's normal nightmare seem like a trip to Disneyland. The point I wish to make with you is that domestic violence has been occurring for many centuries, yet victims continue to make excuses, or convince themselves that the violence will go away all on its own. Unfortunately, I was taught from a very young age that the crime of domestic violence exists, oftentimes goes unpunished, is never spoken about by the victim for various reasons, and the most crucial point is the fact that victims are enabling, or allowing this epidemic to continue to exist! Not only that, but I heard the stories from my father's friends, the Homicide Detectives, that the cases they worked on were usually repeated offenders who eventually killed their spouse or significant other!

If I sound cold-hearted or maybe too blunt – well, this is exactly how I view this subject. By standing firm and no longer allowing myself to be a victim, I lost more than most people do in their lifetime. I lost my entire family: my daughter, my mother, my sister, my aunts, uncles, cousins, and so forth. I did so because I became the traitor who turned my back on the abuse I received, in order to create a better life for myself. The family unit was more important to them than any abuse I might have endured, as a child, and as a young adult. The only reason I lost my daughter is because my ex-husband at that time did not abuse me until I had left him and took my daughter with me. Oftentimes, spouses will use their children as a “bargaining chip” and my ex was no different than many. Not having a supportive family to fall back on, and knowing the statistics of murder from a very tender age, I relinquished my rights of raising my daughter and gave him custody so I could continue to live. As ugly as this all sounds it is quite true and I was left with two choices: live, and see my daughter during the visitations I was allowed; or die, and never watch her grow up, even on a part-time basis.

Of course this, and other traumatic events in my life caused me to have a complete, insane, mental breakdown and I ended up being diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Yet, that's another story in itself. I cannot express enough to the public, and especially to the victims, that this topic of domestic violence is a serious one, and far too many times it leads to the death of the victim. I wish there was another way I can get my message across, but I would be doing a grave injustice to society if I were to add perfume or flowers to my words.

Domestic violence needs to stop – not tomorrow, but today! I may have lost many people in my life but it isn't love I lost. People who actually love you do not abuse you. I don't care what the abuser's excuse is – this is a fact. The greatest lesson I gave myself and I hope I am giving to others as well, is the fact that I am the one who determines how I live out the remaining days of my life, and who I choose to share my life with. If this sets me apart from others, then all I can say is: "way to go, girl!" At least I can focus on giving and receiving true love and I can sleep peacefully at night. These are things that can never be bought. I would trade in every possession I own if I had to, in order to gain peace and harmony in this world. I truly pray others will "GET" this, because if there are no victims...THERE ARE NO ABUSERS!

Respectfully,

Joy