

Women Are Safe, Inc.

P O Box 2
Centerville, TN 37185

HOTLINE : 1-800-470-1117 (Dickson, Humphreys, Perry Counties) **729-5730** (Hickman County)



The Language of Truth

What if I told you that four million African Americans are beaten each year by whites and four thousand of them are killed?

Does that get your attention?

What if I told you that four million gay men are beaten each year by straight people and four thousand of them are killed?

Horrible isn't it? Someone should be doing something!

But how is it that when we tell people the true statistic - Four million American women are beaten each year by their husbands or boyfriends. Four thousand of them are killed. – it seems to pass over them as a vague “what is our society coming to?” kind of feeling and is gone? Have we just accepted this as the way men treat women in our society?

And who is doing the beating and murdering? Well, that would be our sons, our fathers, our grandfathers, our nephews, our uncles and our cousins. But if you listen to the news, this bit of information is often left out. Everyone is so worried about being politically correct that even the media is afraid to point fingers. We hear the phrase “Violence Against Women” and “Child Sexual Abuse”. But these well used phrases leave something very important out of the picture.

I will be the first to tell you I am not a man-hater. I know that most men do not beat women or abuse children. There are wonderful men in my life and I value them immensely. But I have encountered a phenomenon that simply amazes me. If I ask a group of people (either all women, or including both women and men) how many think women should be treated as equal to men, a large percentage of the room will willingly raise their hands. If I ask a group of people how many of them are feminists, everyone becomes uncomfortable. They look around at each other. Many women cross their hands over their chests and shake their heads. Barely a hand will be raised. The word “feminist” has become so maligned in our society that people think it is a bad thing to be one. They think it means an aggressive woman who hates men, believes women are more important than men and is willing to do outrageous things to make her point. Dictionary.com defines feminism as:

1. Belief in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes.
2. The movement organized around this belief.

and defines feminist as:

A person whose beliefs and behavior are based on feminism.

What is wrong with believing that women and men should have equal power in our society? Is this concept so threatening that the very word "feminist" can make people uncomfortable?

From examples like this, I have come to understand that our language tells a lot about our true beliefs. The statistic above places the focus on women who are battered. What if it was worded like this "Each year American MEN beat six million of their wives and girlfriends, killing four thousand." What if colleges did not focus on how many rapes are committed on campus each year, but on how many men commit those rapes? Instead of how many girls get pregnant before they finish high school, why not talk about the boys and (mostly) men who impregnate them? It would be an advocate's dream to never again hear the phrase "Why doesn't she just leave?" and instead hear "Why does he behave like that?"

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Women Are Safe, Inc. is a domestic violence shelter program serving Dickson, Hickman, Humphreys and Perry Counties. If you need help, call our hotline at 729-5730 or 1-800-470-1117. If you need more information about our program, call 729-9885.

Mary Fox
Executive Director
Women Are Safe, Inc.
P. O. Box 2
Centerville, TN 37033
931-729-9885