

Op Ed: The Most Dangerous Place for Women is Inside Their Own Homes

By Rhianna Rogers

In the United States, three women die at the hands of their husbands every day. Around the world, over 1/3 of women will experience sexual, or physical abuse in their lifetimes. In Bangladesh, half of the women who are murdered are murdered at the hands of their husbands. And these are just the reported cases of domestic violence against women.

When you wake up in the morning, you think about your tasks for that day, go to the bank, get coffee and catch up with friends, go to the grocery store, hit the gym on your way home, tidy up the house. When you lay back down at night you reflect on your day, and plan for the one to come. Many people think about the person lying beside them. We think about his happiness or we may think about an old argument that got brought back up that day or the pile of clothes by the bed you wish he would remember to put in the laundry room. Do you ever think that the person beside you may take your life the next day? Has that person who you love ever made you feel so small, so useless that you consider taking your own life? This is the reality for millions of women around the world.

There are countries all around the world that instill the idea of male superiority from birth. Little boys are favored over little girls, fathers choose their daughters husbands, and husbands decide when the couple is having sex, when she is working, who her friends are, and when she has done something to deserve being beaten. In Ethiopia, 78% of married women experience domestic violence each year. Oftentimes this violence is sexual as well as physical. We are taught to avoid dark alleyways, to not walk alone at night, to not put our drink down at a party. We should never have to suspect that the

person we live with, the person we share a kitchen and a bathroom with, would rape us and beat us if we fight him off.

Many of the societies with high domestic violence rates have no commitment to try and end such violence because it is not perceived as a problem. It is a part of their male dominated, patriarchal culture. The men believe it is their right and their duty to dominate their wives, and the women know no other option so they do not speak out. Nobody would listen even if they did.

So what do we do? How do we find the delicate balance between cultural respect, and fighting for the safety of the millions of women around the world who are a victim to domestic violence every day?

We educate, express compassion and understanding, show respect and raise awareness.

The majority of domestic violence, both in the U.S. and abroad goes unreported. We need to give women a safe place to go, to report their experiences. We educate the societies on the dangers of their practices, we educate women that there are other options; there is another way. We respect their traditions and beliefs and we help them to find an alternative expression of their values. On that does not put the lives of women on the line.

The world we live in right now is in constant fear. Fear of terrorism, of mass shootings, of environmental tragedies. But for women all over the world, the most dangerous place for her to be, are within the walls of her own home.

Rhianna Rogers is graduating with a degree in sociology from East Carolina University and plans to teach elementary school next year.

