



FALL 1994

Friends of Interval House Newsletter

THE STORY OF A FALLEN AMERICAN HERO.

The story O.J. Simpson has bombarded the North American public to the extent that it's impossible to get in and out of the grocery without seeing some tawdry headline in a gossip tabloid.

Immediately there were all kinds of spins and twists on the news items and each side dropped tid-bits for the public information. It's been a media circus.

But there has been one positive fall-out from this overwhelming news coverage - people are talking about violence against women. And at last the media is interested in the story of why and how it can happen. Finally people are waking up to see the stark reality of "if it could happen to Nicole Simpson" it could happen to me.

At Interval House we've received many phone calls concerning our opinion of the O.J. Simpson story, why men batter and why women stay. CTV National News asked for our opinion, as did City TV.

Men batter their partners because they need to control her in any way they can.... and fists usually do the job.

An amazing amount of research has been done, and we know that men batter their partners because they need to control her in any way they can.... and fists usually do the job. And we know that women stay because of many reasons; they're afraid to leave, they lack the financial resources and they feel it's their fault and they deserve it.

Some of the counsellors have even heard of stories where abusive partners have posted O.J.'s picture on the refrigerator door and said to their wives, "If you don't behave and listen to what I say, you will end up like Nicole".

It's hard to describe the kind of fear women have when they first arrive at Interval House. It's so tangible. You can see it on their faces, in their every movement and in all their actions.

The average number of times a woman is beaten before she comes to our door is 24 times. She knows her life and the life of her children are in acute danger. Statistics Canada report, and our records show, that

when a woman leaves an abusive relationship she puts her life in greater danger. That's when threats are made real. When women get stalked and when women get murdered.

Regardless of whether or not O.J. Simpson is guilty of the murder of Nicole Simpson, we know he is guilty of wife assault... he was tried in court and found guilty. His crime of wife assault is what we focus on. Not the murder.

What has been so appalling to those of us who do front-line work with assaulted women, is that he was given a "next-to-nothing" sentence, (an all too common an occurrence in Canada as well). To add insult to injury, his business deals with certain corporation were completely unaffected by his crime.

"Everyone fights, it's a private matter - a family affair and none of your business,"

The phrase "everyone fights, it's a private matter - a family affair and none of your business," strikes a cord of fear and anger in those who work for the end of abuse and violence against women. Often these words minimize and justify incredible incidents of violence.

Shelter workers, friends, and supporters of women who have been beaten and abuse are asking, indeed demanding that these attitudes change. And there have been great strides forward in the public understanding of domestic violence.

Interval House, with the help of donors and supporters, has worked to ensure that violence against women is front and centre of the government agenda. We are committed to public education and have done hundreds of speaking engagements in schools, churches and organizations.

We have worked with the police and members of the legal system, in training to ensure that they are aware of the nightmare women face. We lobby for better protection, stricter enforcement, and if need be, harsher penalties.

Here are some of the statistics that we have gathered over the past year, which we thought you might find informative.

Age of Women who came to Interval House

42% were in their 20's 13% were under 20
26% were in their 30's 3% were in their 50's
16% were in their 40's

Country of Origin:

31% came from Canada
16% came from the Caribbean
11% came from South Asia
14% came from Europe
7% came from Central and South America
12% came from Africa
9% came from Australia, Bermuda, China and the USA

Length of time women spent with an abusive partner

40% spent 1-4 years with abusive partner
20% spent 5-9 years
18% spent 10-14 years
13% spent more than 15 years

Percentage of families whose kids witnessed assaults - **69%**

Percentage of women with physical injuries on arrival - **11%**

Percentage of women who laid charges - **5%**

Percentage of charges laid by police - **16%**

Percentage of women assaulted while pregnant - **25%**

Frequency of Assault: Less than ten times - **31%**
more than ten times - **40%**

Percentage of women who receive death threats from partner - **42%**

Percentage of abusers identified by partner who are addicts - **29%**

Percentage of abusers identified by partner as having a psychiatric history - **7%**

Percentage of women who move out on own - **79%**

Percentage of women who returned to partner - **18%**

A Picnic In the Rain.

Every year Interval House hosts a picnic for residents and ex-residents at High Park. There are usually hundreds of women and children who come ready to chat with old friends, eat hot dogs and play lots of fun games.

This year's picnic seemed like it might be completely washed away by the pouring rain, lightening and thunder. But spirits were high and would not be dampened by the bad weather.

The children played lots of games in the rain and there was a very special, surprise guest to entertain our little ones... a clown who was, appropriately, named G Flat.



I hear footsteps

Coming closer I try so hard not to breathe I take shallow breaths as I crouch down hiding behind my baby's crib as he searches each one of the bedrooms I can hear his rage he's calling I'm going to find you too afraid to cry for fear he'll hear me I know he's going to find me if I surrender to him he might kill me for not coming when he had called but if I don't come and he finds me he will kill me I

must now decide I can't call police because they have come three time this week each time took longer for them to get here until they finally stopped coming I must convince him I'm not in the house that I have escaped so he will go cruising looking for me it will take five minutes to grab care keys and get elevator and ten minutes to walk to car and start driving around by this time I have saved a car

ticket in the medicine cabinet for such an emergency my ticket to freedom the phone rings I hear him making plans to go out with friends I breather in relief thank God as he seems to forget like a child and excited he goes out the front door and yells I'll be home about two o'clock as soon as he leaves I grab my baby and ticket and I'm gone.

Y.L.

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