



La Voz de Esperanza

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- Opinions expressed in La Voz are not necessarily those of the Esperanza Center.

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Articles due by the 8th of each month

Policy Statements

* We ask that articles be visionary, progressive, instructive & thoughtful. Submissions must be literate & critical; not sexist, racist, homophobic, violent, or oppressive & may be edited for length.

* All letters in response to Esperanza activities or articles in La Voz will be considered for publication. Letters with intent to slander individuals or groups will not be published.

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As we entered Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) in October, the microcosmic society of the NFL reflected the larger society's problem of domestic violence. One incident, played out in the media, showed the aggressor dragging the limp body of a woman out of an elevator. This video was disregarded by the NFL brass until another tape released by the video rag, TMZ Sports, exposed the abuse perpetrated by Ray Rice of the Baltimore Ravens who had punched his girlfriend (now wife) full on the face inside the elevator.

Each October domestic violence is highlighted in hopes of curbing family and home violence in the U.S. The first year of observance was in 1987, just months after the Esperanza Center opened its doors in San Antonio. That same year, the first national toll-free hotline was opened for women to call. After the Rice incident hit the news this September, the National Domestic Violence Hotline saw an 84% increase in calls. In 1989, the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month Commemorative Legislation was passed by Congress. Since then, a variety of activities take place annually to bring awareness of domestic violence: lists commemorating victims or survivors, plays, made-for-TV movies, marches, conferences, runs, concerts and more. Groups dealing with domestic violence have also multiplied — but it seems the abuse is often disregarded by local politicians, the courts and enforcement agencies.

In San Antonio, The P.E.A.C.E. Initiative, Putting an End to Abuse through Community Efforts, now in its 25th year, has taken the lead in observing Domestic Violence Awareness Month. La Voz first made reference to the observance in 1990 and in 1992, an article in the October issue, *If Domestic Violence is Relative, We're All Battered* by Luisa Inez Newton, noted: "Kids know that other kids are battered... Across the street from my family was the brutal, dark, hidden reality of child abuse and domestic violence, though no one called it that in the 50s. Two little girls, one older, one younger than me, were whipped by their father with belts, brushes and other objects." Luisa goes on to detail stories of rape, incest, and date rape.

This year The P.E.A.C.E. Initiative's theme is "Raising our Future, Not our Hand: A Call to Stop the Spanking and Hitting of our Children." This resonates with the present drama in the NFL — as another story revealed that Minnesota Vikings player, Adrian Peterson, was indicted in May on charges of reckless or negligent injury to a child for "whooping" his 4-year old son with a switch. And, it had happened before. These incidents renewed talk about parents' rights in disciplining children that bordered on the defense of family abuse.

Commissioner Goodell of the NFL has not taken decisive steps in disciplining these players. He has issued longer suspensions for pot smoking, DUI, illegal tattoos and dogfighting than what has happened in these cases. Kathy Marston, convicted in a domestic abuse case, writes about the normalization of violence in this issue of La Voz saying that it is not unusual for the victim to be criminalized, instead. In an effort to save face, the NFL has hired 4 women to serve as official advisers in shaping the league's stance on domestic violence. The women, all highly credentialed in domestic violence work, may make a difference but it has been the censoring of the incidents from NFL sponsors that has led to the players' being banned.

However, it is not the NFL, nor any one perpetrator, that is the real problem of "domestic violence." We need only expand our thinking to what the word "domestic" means and look to our homegrown culture in the U.S. to figure out why our society continues to support a system of violence. Tarcísio Beal in this issue of La Voz looks at the Old Testament to examine violence against women in society. It is, as he says, "as old as humankind." In the 1992 Voz article by Newton, she noted: "Legally, a man can no longer beat his wife in the USA, but neither can his wife see the words 'woman' or 'female' in the Constitution." Indeed, in spite of the fact that this month we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act, we still have a way to go.

Send articles to lavoz@esperanzacenter.org. —Gloria A. Ramírez, editor of La Voz

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VOZ VISION STATEMENT: La Voz de Esperanza speaks for many individual, progressive voices who are gente-based, multi-visioned and milagro-bound. We are diverse survivors of materialism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, classism, violence, earth-damage, speciesism and cultural and political oppression. We are recapturing the powers of alliance, activism and healthy conflict in order to achieve interdependent economic/spiritual healing and fuerza. La Voz is a resource for peace, justice, and human rights, providing a forum for criticism, information, education, humor and other creative works. La Voz provokes bold actions in response to local and global problems, with the knowledge that the many risks we take for the earth, our body, and the dignity of all people will result in profound change for the seven generations to come.

