

Domestic Violence and Media
By: Hedaia Mousa
Social Work Intern at Freedom From Fear

"Domestic violence" is a term that has been largely ignored, hidden, and nonexistent in past history. Domestic violence refers to the use or threat of physical, sexual or emotional force by spouses, partners, relatives or anyone else with a close relationships with their victims. In the past, domestic violence was considered a personal problem between husband and wife, and it was no one else's job or business to interfere between the couples. The mistreatment of one's partner was considered a normal part or aspect of a couple's relationship. Unfortunately the normalization of this violence kept personal law enforcement from taking the calls and considering the reports seriously. In most cases people and society blame the victim for the actions of the abuser, claiming that the victim must have done something to provoke or deserve the abuse or mistreatment. There were no programs, advocacies or justice for anyone who was experiencing domestic violence.

Domestic violence began to be considered a crime in the 1970s. From the 1970s to today, a shift in perspective has allowed the creation of many advocates, programs, and resources that are helping those who are suffering from domestic violence. These resources help spread awareness for domestic violence and advocate for victim reparation. Today much of the information and awareness of domestic violence can be found through many different types of mass media. No matter what is posted on the internet, seen on the news or social media videos the comments and knowledge spread quickly, allowing people to react and speak up against anything.

The influence of media has helped to expose more information, knowledge, and awareness of domestic violence. In recent news, Ray Rice, a running back from the Baltimore Ravens was suspended indefinitely for striking his then fiance, in an elevator this February. Ray Rice was caught on video that was released to the media. Once this video was released to the public the NFL took action against Ray Rice to suspend him. According to the times recorder (Ison, 2014) the attention given to Ray Rice and his domestic violence scandal has influenced many more victims to seek services, overloading a system that currently turns down more than 170,000 requests for shelter each year. The video and event has also revealed other athletes who are accused of other types of domestic violence against women and children.

The influence of this video, released via media outlet and the reaction of the public have guided change and awareness about domestic violence producing positive outcomes for many who are experiencing domestic violence in their everyday lives. The reactions from the video show victims that are able to speak up and seek services without being stigmatized or judged while showing abusers that they will be punished and enforced to take responsibility for their actions. However, why did it take for the media to release a video to the public to actually acknowledge that domestic violence is still a prominent issues going on today? Was it because the abuser was an athlete and in the public eye or has society actually begun to acknowledge domestic violence as an issue? These

are important questions we need to consider regardless of the great positive impact the video brought because domestic violence can easily become ignored or hidden once again.

Many have stated that the only reason Ray Rice was punished for his actions is because he was in the public eye and the NFL had to make an example out of him. It is not important to consider who did the act but the act itself and the problem that domestic violence has always represented. If children grow up to idolize someone like Ray Rice and if his actions had gone unpunished, then they too would have this mindset that it would be ok to hit people, especially their loved ones. Today we will recognize what a great asset mass media has become in spreading awareness in many areas that past society has tried to cover up.