

April 24, 2003

Diane Stuart, Chair
NACVAW
800 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

Ms. Stuart and Members of the Advisory Committee,

I thank you for the opportunity to address you on the issue of male victims of domestic violence and their children. I have been an advocate on behalf of men and their children who are victims of this scourge for nearly ten years. Over that time I have come to recognize three fundamental facts regarding family violence and our institutional and societal approach to it. Those facts are 1.) that men and their children represent, if not half the victims, then most certainly a sizable minority not less than 25%, 2.) that political and ideological bias pervades the domestic violence community and 3.) that this bias has resulted in a lack of services and even acknowledgement that has left hundreds of thousands of men and their children at the mercy of their abusers and their very humanity denied.

I have submitted to Mr. Vargas three packets of documents which I have been told he will copy and distribute to the members of the Committee. I wish to use my remaining time to briefly describe their contents and what they represent for purposes of this issue.

1. *Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings From the National Violence Against Women Survey*, Nov. 1998. This report found that of the 2.3 million victims of intimate partner violence 835,000 or 36% are men. It is noteworthy, I believe, that a reading of the verbiage of this 16 page report would leave one to believe that only women are victims of domestic violence. Only a careful reading of the actual statistics on page 7 reveals to the reader that men represent over one-third of the victims of intimate partner violence.

2. *Martin Fiebert Bibliography* of over 100 studies that found that women use violence in their relationships as often or more often than men.
3. State of Delaware *Law Enforcement Training Program Conference Nov. 2001* extract of a training presentation titled *Identifying the Primary Aggressor- Reducing Dual Arrests*. This presentation made to a room filled with Judges, Deputy Attorney Generals and police officers and funded with VAWA STOP grants consisted of the playing of a video that contained three different scenarios in which police officers responded to domestic violence calls. As each scene was played the Presenter would pause the video and solicit opinions as to who was the aggressor and who the victim. In most the man was initially the apparent victim until the video was played further. But in each any every scenario by the end of the video the audience discovered the female was really the victim. Or in other words these government funds were not being expended to help judges, prosecutors and police officers identify primary and secondary aggressors but rather to inform them that its always the man.
4. Maryland Coalition Against Domestic Violence 2002 Conference presentation titled *"Just Like Men" A critical Look at Women's Violence* power-point extract. As a member of the Cecil County Maryland Family Violence Council I was made aware of the MCADV's solicitation for presentations at their 2002 Conference. I submitted a proposal for a workshop on male victims which I have been honored to present at the National Organization for Victim Assistance's 1999 National Conference in Los Angeles and 2000 in Miami, as well as the Battered Men's Conference in 2001. The MCADV declined my proposal and when I wrote inquiring why they would not take advantage of the opportunity to give exposure to this neglected population I was informed that a workshop on male victims was already planned. I attended this workshop and as a perusal of the power-point document will show it was anything but a presentation on male victims. To the contrary, it was a complete and unmitigated effort to deny male victims and justify female violence.
5. Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence *1999 Strategic Goals*. The Delaware Coalition is the most influential and well funded organization in Delaware. The Coalition has consistently and vehemently fought our effort to bring recognition of and services for male victims in Delaware. While fighting to deny male victims it established as one of its goals for 1999 to "Advocate for women arrested for dv"

6. Letter to the *Delaware Family Violence and VOCA Committees*. In February 2000 I addressed the VOCA committee by reading this letter beseeching the committee to begin to provide for services and at least one shelter in Delaware for male victims and their children. Following my statement the Committee discussed the fact that the Family Violence Committee had committed all of its annual funding to the establishment of a fourth women's shelter and was requesting that the VOCA committee dedicate all of its available funds for that year to that new women's shelter. Despite my request and despite two committee members' questioning of the need for the fourth women's shelter- sighting under usage at the existing three women's shelters- the Committee subsequently voted to allocate all of its available funding, \$2000,000. to be combined with that of the Family Violence Committee's like amount for a fourth women's shelter. To date no shelter has been established for men and even our effort to create a program to provide short term temporary housing for men and their children through use of motels has been thwarted by those who control the domestic violence agenda and, through it, the funding.
7. Letter from the *Delaware Domestic Violence Coordinating Council VAWA Implementation Committee*. The Forum For Equity and Fairness in Family Issues submitted a proposal to the VAWA committee for a meager \$75,000 to fund a program to provide short term temporary housing for men and their children through use of motels. Solely on the basis that the VAWA prohibits funding programs serving male victims our proposal was denied. (See paragraph 4)
8. The Washington Times, 2000. Brenda Working lured her estranged husband to a deserted area on Federal property on the pretext her car had broken down and that their children were with her. When he arrived she unloaded her 38 caliber handgun into him as he sat in his car. When he ran into a wooded area she reloaded and stalked him; shooting him several more times. Upon conviction she was given one day in jail for her attempted murder of her husband. When a Federal Appeals Court upheld the lower Court's power to impose only one day for such a heinous crime, dissenting Federal Appeals Court Judge Kim Wardlaw stated " I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that the District Court would not have given mercy for this aberrant conduct if it had been Michael who attempted to kill Brenda in the brutal and premeditated manner of her attack on him."

9. *The Sad and Destructive Consequences of Gender Stereotyping*. In a 1999 airing of an Oprah Show featuring several male victims of domestic violence, their children and their now repentant abusive wives or ex-wives two quotes struck me as speaking to the reality of this issue- "*We were all crying and upset...mad at the police for taking him instead of mom*" spoken by 14 year old Stephanie, daughter of Rick and "*I totally lose control. Its like I'm not me. I'm a totally different person. Instead of the mild person that I normally am, I'm this monster, this beast.*" Spoken by Stephanie's mother.
10. Letter from Jan Brown Exe, Dir. of the Battered Men's Hotline in Harmony Maine. Last year Ms. Brown wrote to me thanking me for my organization's efforts in assisting men in our area who have called her hotline, regretting the absence of meaningful availability of services for these men and their children and requesting we do what we can to push local and national leaders to begin to provide meaningful recognition and services to these victims.
11. Delaware Capitol Review column, *Gender Bias and Domestic Violence*. This is a column I had published in 1999 pleading that we can never effectively end domestic violence as long as we cling to the politics of gender. Most succinctly, "As long as we, as a society, ignore the reality that domestic abuse not only crosses economic and educational status- but gender as well- we will only be putting a Band-Aid on a hemorrhaging problem."

Ms. Stuart and members of the Committee I thank you for your attention. I beg you to use your influence to begin to turn our governmental efforts against domestic violence toward a model that seeks to help all victims and that ceases to promulgate a bias and stereotyping that if directed at any other group, including women, would be easily and rightly identified as malicious and bigoted.

David R. Burroughs, Chair