



## **The Dragon Behind Closed Doors**

Amanda Curnow | July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018

G.K. Chesterton wrote, “Fairy tales do not tell children the dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be killed” (1909). We as a nation are already aware that domestic violence is a dangerously growing problem. In fact, according to the CDC, an average of twenty people per minute in the US, or ten million per year, are physically abused by an intimate partner (Walters & Jenkins, 2012). Instead of focusing on how prevalent such violence is in our society, we should pay attention to how many offenders are actually caught by law enforcement. The victims need to know that their abusers, like dragons in a fairytale, can be defeated.

A majority of domestic assault and battery offenders are not charged for their crimes. Of 1000 cases, only 41 cases will lead to felony convictions, and only 33 of the abusers will be incarcerated (RAINN, 2014). This makes up a meager 7.4% of all cases. This statistic is probably surprising to many people, as they believe that the victim could easily go to the police and report their intimate partner. Unfortunately, 70% of cases go unreported. The victims who come forward will be assaulted by their partner approximately 35 times before going to the police (Mic, 2015). We as a nation need to find a way to put an end to abuse as soon as it happens the first time.

There are several reasons why victims remain silent. In a 2005-2010 survey conducted by RAINN, victims were asked why they did not report the crimes to the police. The reasons given included, but were not limited to: fear of retaliation (20%), belief it was a personal matter (13%), and they did not want to get their abuser in trouble (7%) (2015). Miserably, 15% of victims said they did not report the abuse because they thought the police could not or would not do anything to help their situation (RAINN, 2015). If they do not feel safe going to the only place they could possibly get help, then they will never achieve solace from their abuse. Somehow, there needs to be a way to ensure that every victim will receive refuge if they go to law enforcement.

Whether they choose to report or not, many victims of domestic violence flee their abuser. 57% of all homeless women report that domestic abuse was the main cause for their current situation (FYSB, 2016). Basically, they wish to get away from the offender, but have nowhere safe to go. While there are shelters open for these victims and their families, the quantity of people far exceeds the availability. In 2015, more than 31,500 people were seeking refuge from domestic violence over the course of one day. Over 12,197, or one third, of the requests were unable to be fulfilled due to a lack of funding, staffing, and resources (FYSB, 2016). This is very deplorable. Even if a victim tried to seek help and housing, they would not be given it. With nowhere else to go, they will end up fending for themselves on the streets.

Instead of supporting victims of domestic violence, our country continues to hopelessly fail them. By doing so, we are just adding to our homeless population, further growing the epidemic. If law enforcement were to actually send abusers to prison, then victims would not have to flee their homes. They would not need to live in fear, and they could go about their daily lives. At most, they would require therapy, a resource that is much more readily available than permanent housing. We need to take abuse claims seriously and serve punishments accordingly. In fairytales, it is possible to slay even the most merciless dragons, as long as the knight in shining armor has the right sword. We need to equip survivors with the resources they need to safely escape their attackers.

### **References**

Chesterton, G. K. (1909). *The Red Angel*. In *Tremendous Trifles*. London, England: Methuen Publishing.

FYSB. (2016). Domestic Violence and Homelessness: Statistics. Retrieved from

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/resource/dv-homelessness-stats-2016>

Mic. (2015, October 26). Domestic Violence Statistics: 70% of Cases Go Unreported. Retrieved from

<https://mic.com/articles/10919/domestic-violence-statistics-70-of-cases-go-unreported#.NBPjkuM6n>

RAINN. (2014). The Criminal Justice System: Statistics. Retrieved from

<https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system>

Walters, M., Jenkins, L., & Merrick, M. (2012). National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey

(NISVS): Summary of Findings for 2010. *PsycEXTRA Dataset*. doi:10.1037/e621642012-003