

# To Speak or To Do

By Emerson Johnston



How many times have you talked about you'd like to be changed? Did you sit there, complain, but ultimately wait until someone else did it for you or did you take a stand and actively try to get what you wanted?

In this day and age, we are surrounded by speakers but we lack doers, those who are willing to go out into the world and make a change. Nowhere is the more of a prominent issue that when it comes to domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is talked about arguably more than any other topic in the world today. Over 100 organizations in the US alone are dedicated to bringing awareness and to stopping domestic abuse however the statistics keep rising and we have seen little change. This stagnant state we see is because of the speakers: those who believe that talking about something is equal to actively trying to fix it. Bringing awareness can only do so much, it is those who actively try to stop issues like this one who are making the real change. This isn't to say that we shouldn't speak out against social injustices but to just speak out is doing people a disservice because if you have the time to say something is wrong, you have the time to make it right.

Domestic Abuse is an issue that not only has grown but has been hidden from the public for many years. What is meant by this is that many know of the existence of Domestic Abuse but few, if any, know the statistics. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, over 46 percent of homeless women reported that they had previously stayed in abusive relationships because they had nowhere to go. In 2003, in Fargo, North Dakota, 44 percent of homeless women reported that they stayed in an abusive relationship at some point in the past two years because they did not have other housing options. When a problem like this one seems so prominent, it can be quite saddening to see why it's being ignored, however, if we choose to neglect this issue as many have in the past, then we are no better than the people talking but not acting.

What is even more appalling is what has actually been done in response to this issue. Many times, in effort to solve an issue, people and policy makers alike make decisions that make the victims worse off than they were before. According to the same ACLU study, "Many landlords have adopted policies, such as "zero tolerance for crime" policies, that penalize victims of domestic violence. These policies allow landlords to evict tenants when violence occurs in their homes, regardless of whether the tenant is the victim or the perpetrator of the violence. A

Michigan study of women currently or formerly receiving welfare found that women who had experienced recent or ongoing domestic violence were far more likely to face eviction than other women". Not only does this seem unfair but it often puts women and children on the streets leaving them with no place to live.

What we see here, and what we see with many other issues today, is people are trying to fix the problem but they fail to realize how they should do it and are instead hurting the people who need our help the most. What we all need to do is focus on the real statistics and listen to those who choose to speak out and learn how actively help people living with domestic abuse because no one should have to choose between violence and shelter.