



Financial Resources for Women & Children, Inc

Caught in the System

FRWC received an email from a domestic violence victim and is sharing an excerpt with her permission.

In This Issue:

FRWC focuses on women arrested for domestic violence.

Are women really as violent as men?

Also:

Mandatory Arrest:

Double-Edged
Sword 2

Same Crime,

Different
Dynamic 3

A Shortcut

to Help Save
Time 4

I attend (domestic violence) class for women due to an assault conviction brought on by my husband. The problem with this statement is that I was the one assaulted but due to the circumstances I was arrested and because the court system is not a system designed to advocate for the victim, it became easier and almost in my best interest to plead guilty to a crime I did not commit. My husband has a history of using the legal system . . . to "punish, control and coerce" me into submissive behavior.

This is a growing problem in our community: perpetrators of domestic violence

becoming savvy to the legal system and using it as one more means of systematic abuse against their partners. The legal system's failure to recognize this as a form of abuse and its willingness to punish the victim just allows the abuser to add one more notch to his belt of methods to intimidate, control and punish his victim.

(Treatment providers are) "overwhelmed" with the number of women court ordered to class who are actually victims of their partners' domestic violence and are now victims of the legal system supposedly designed to protect them.

I am determined to bring attention to this

topic and turn my situation into a learning tool to help other women who find themselves victims in this way. The consequences are alarming as this systematic pattern of legal abuse causes incredible economic harm by damaging the woman's ability to obtain or keep employment due to now having a criminal charge on her record as well as her ability to fight for custody of her children with the new scarlet letter branding her with assault. This is in addition to the humiliation of being arrested, convicted and living with the knowledge that you are innocent but under the abuser's control again.

Mandatory Arrest: Double-Edged Sword

Nationwide, about **92% of batterers are male, and 8% are female**, according to both the U.S. Justice Department and the American Psychological Association. Yet in some U.S. counties, female arrest is disproportionately high, **sometimes nearing 50%**.

Our mission is to develop resources and services that improve the financial stability and long-term safety of women and children who have experienced family violence.

Over the past two decades, the domestic violence community has come to understand that consequences work. Batterers who fear jail terms, fines, and 36-week counseling programs (for which they must pay) stop battering. Consequently, “every state allows its police to arrest perpetrators of misdemeanor domestic violence incidents upon probable cause, and more than half of the states and the District of Columbia have laws requiring police to arrest on probable cause for at least some domestic violence crimes.” (Zorza)

Typically under mandatory arrest laws, once convicted, batterers are ordered into 36-week psycho-educational intervention programs and in most cases ordered to pay fines and perform community service. Failure to do so could result in jail time. Many treatment providers and probation officers have seen reductions in recidivism. Some perpetrators have psychological breakthroughs in therapy and cease to be violent; others are deterred from further violence by the hassle and expense of the consequences. Whatever the motivation, women appear to be safer, so communities applaud mandatory arrest.

However, some law enforcement officers and treatment providers are noticing a dangerous twist: “some batterers became more sophisticated in their psychological abuse and intimidation after attending (6-12 week batterer-intervention) programs.” (APA)

Psychological abuse and intimidation is just as life-limiting to victims as physical abuse and yet nearly impossible to prosecute. Many abusers target their victims’ attempts to attain financial independence, presumably in the hope that if she can’t make a living, she won’t leave. “Examples include calling her employer; ordering the victim to quit; making allegations requiring the victim to appear before the police, court or social services; . . . sabotaging the victim’s car; . . . stealing her work uniform; . . . encouraging continued drug addiction.” (Raphael & Tolman)

Zorza, Mandatory Arrest for Domestic Violence: Why it may prove the best first step in curbing repeat abuse, *Criminal Justice*, vol. 10, no. 3, p. 66 (Fall 1995).

American Psychol. Ass’n, Violence and the Family: Report of the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family (1996), p. 85.

Raphael & Tolman, Trapped by Poverty, Trapped by Abuse: New Evidence Documenting the Relationship Between Domestic Violence and Welfare, pp. 10-14 (1997).

Same Crime, Different Dynamic

- Violence by an intimate partner accounts for about 21% of the violent crime experienced by women and about 2% of the violence experienced by men.
- Much of female violence is committed in self-defense, and inflicts less injury than male violence.
- 70% of intimate homicide victims are female.
- Defensive action by battered women to protect themselves or their children is often interpreted by law enforcement as an act of domestic violence. The number of battered women arrested for committing acts of violence against their partners has disproportionately increased in communities that overuse “dual arrest.”
- Male perpetrators are 4 times more likely to use lethal violence than females.

In general, women are less able to create environments of intimidation and terror within their households.
www.ccadv.org/facta and www.dccadv.org/statistics

Are You Looking on the Internet for Information about Money Issues?

If so, Please Keep Reading...

A June, 2004 Google search returned the following results:

- Search term: “Financial information for women” returned 2,500,000 possible sources in 24 seconds
- Search term: “Money management for women” returned 1,570,000 possible links in .74 seconds
- Search term: “Getting out of debt” returned 1,340,000 results in .14 seconds

Unless you have all day to narrow your search, you might want to read Page 4!!

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Save Time and Frustration: Find a Shortcut to Financial Literacy
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c/o Old South Church
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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.frwc.org

Over the last five years, FRWC personnel have evaluated hundreds of websites containing money management information. We provide links to the better ones and give them an overall score based on a 15-point scale that is the sum of content, usability, level of difficulty, access to additional resources, multi-lingual, available at no cost, accessible anonymously, and privacy policy. In addition to a direct link, we provide a summary emphasizing the best or unique features of chosen sites. We do not receive support from any of the featured sites. The following chart shows the content you can expect to find at www.frwc.org.

Women and Money (Level I)

- Language of money management
- Beginning to save
- Credit building or repair (1 each)
- Financial goal setting
- Budgeting
- Debt reduction
- Smart consumer spending

Women and Money (Level II)

- Insurance
- Saving for a home or college (1 each)
- Small business assistance
- Saving for retirement
- Shopping for credit
- Taxes
- Charity

If you know a young woman ages 16-24, please tell her that we expect to add "Young Women and Money: Decisions That Will Shape Your Life" to our website by mid-August. Better yet, look at it yourself, and then send her a link via email.



FRWC
Old South Church
645 Boylston St.
Boston, MA 02116