

Voices

Women want to be free to choose from the same range of options than men take for granted. In our quest for equal pay, equal access to education and opportunities, we have made great strides. But until women can move freely and think freely in their homes, on the streets, in the workplace without fear of violence, there can be no real freedom.

Amita Roddick

Creating a stronger voice
for women and girls.

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The
Nokomis
Foundation



December 2000  Issue Eighteen

Nonprofit
organization
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Grand Rapids, MI
Permit no. 368

Inside Story



By the time you receive this issue of *Voices* December will be here — along with the hectic pace the end of the year brings. It's hard to believe another year has come and (nearly) gone already. It's been a busy year at the Nokomis Foundation — we approved grants totaling approximately \$330,000 for women and girls; we started the Women's Computer Consortium, our technology capacity building program for local women's organizations; and we launched our New Voices Initiative by forming the Prostitution Round Table.

We're looking forward to the year 2001 — a year with special significance for us here at the Nokomis Foundation as we celebrate ten years of grantmaking for women and girls in the Grand Rapids community! Inspired by our upcoming "birthday," we've been developing new strategies and plans for the future. We promise some exciting changes and new directions in the year 2001 — nothing too drastic, but changes you'll notice. Stay tuned to future issues of *Voices* as we introduce these changes to you.

For now, I'd like to share with you our new mission statement —

The mission of the Nokomis Foundation is to create a stronger voice for women and girls.

The Nokomis Foundation will carry out this mission by providing:

- Advocacy for the needs of women and girls
- Funding, expertise and resources for organizations serving women and girls
- Opportunities to convene around gender-based issues

Kym Mulhern, Executive Director

Recent Grants



The Nokomis Foundation has recently awarded the following grants:

Capacity Building

Communities for Equity, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$6,000 in support of strategic planning.

Dwelling Place, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$10,000 in support of fund development
GROW, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$4,000 in support of computer expansion
Michigan Women's Foundation, Livonia, Michigan, \$10,000 matching grant in support of consultant for endowment campaign

Women for Women International, Washington DC, \$20,000 in support of staff expansion and outreach program

Economic Self Sufficiency

Michigan Small Business Development Center (GVSU), Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$5,000 in support of the "Child Care is a Business" project

Girls

Michigan Women's Foundation (fiscal agent), Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$5,000 matching grant in support of "A Hero for Daisy" event programming
Vision Quest High School, Wyoming, Michigan, \$4,464 in support of Lifeskills 2009-2001 workshop program for girls

Health

Planned Parenthood Centers of West Michigan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$74,397 over 3 years in support of Project SASSY (peer education program)

Spectrum Health (fiscal agent), Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$2,600 in support of Grand Rapids Coalition for Breast Health's community education program

Violence Prevention

Planned Parenthood Centers of West Michigan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$2,000 in support of education programs featuring Jackson Katz

Safe Haven Ministries, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$15,000 in support of the Protec-

Resources

Local Emergency Violence Resources

YWCA Domestic Crisis Center	Grand Rapids	616-451-2744
YWCA Sexual Assault Program	Grand Rapids	616-776-7273
YWCA Nurse Examiner Program	Grand Rapids	616-776-7273
Safe Haven Ministries	Grand Rapids	616-452-6664
Safe Haven Ministries Ramoth House	Grand Rapids	616-940-2393
First Call for Help—United Way	Grand Rapids	616-459-2255
Center for Women in Transition	Holland	616-392-2829

National Domestic Violence Resources

National Domestic Violence Hotline	800-799-7233
National Victim Center	800-FYI-CALL (394-2255)
<i>Operating 8:30 am—5:30 pm EST, the NVC hotline helps locate assistance in your community if you have been the victim of a violent crime.</i>	

Web Resources

<http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/femgen/fgm1.htm>

This site, part of Amnesty International's web site, thoroughly addresses female genital mutilation, including testimony, descriptions of the different rituals and the physical, sexual and psychological consequences.

<http://www.amazoncastle.com/feminism/feminism.htm>

Feminist Utopia offers up everything from definitions of feminism to a suffrage timeline. Log on and submit your ideas!

<http://www.dvinstute.org/>

The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community web page offers a forum and resources for African American practitioners and scholars working in the area of violence in the African American community.

<http://www.mincava.umn.edu/>

Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse Electronic Clearinghouse can connect you to a thorough list of resources on a wide range of violence-related issues.

<http://www.safetyforwomen.com/>

Self Defense Tips & Tricks for Women



Point to Ponder

“I realized that the people, black or white, who survived in the system were those who learned to adjust to, rather than challenge, the system’s insanities and to conform to its rules.”

Nathan McCall in Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America

Did You Know. . .

Many Prostitutes Suffer Combat Disorder

The violence that is pervasive in prostitution is likely to have not only short-term consequences but also profound long-term physical and psychological effects, according to a recent study of 500 prostitutes around the world. In fact, most of the prostitutes’ medical problems appeared to be similar to those commonly found among people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD, the modern equivalent of shell shock or combat fatigue, leaves survivors “emotionally numb and tortured by recurrent nightmares and flashbacks, often for decades,” according to a *New York Times* article on the study.

The study, which included female and male prostitutes ranging in age from 12 to 61, found that:

- Two-thirds suffered from post-traumatic stress (compared to 20-30 % of Vietnam War combat veterans who have been diagnosed with the condition).
- The prostitutes averaged an “enormously high” level of post-traumatic stress, exhibiting a slightly more severe form of the disorder even than Viet Nam veterans.
- The frequency of the disorder appeared to be unrelated to gender, nationality or where they worked – from the streets of Istanbul to expensive brothels in San Francisco.

*“Many Prostitutes Suffer Combat Disorder, Study Finds,”
by Abigail Zuger, The New York Times, August 18, 1998.*

Violence Against Women

What About the Men?

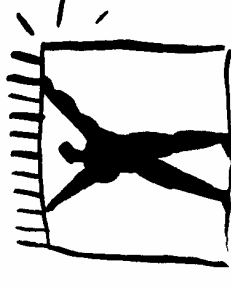
Isn't it Really Men's Violence Against Women?

By Erin Trahan

Uh-oh. Sounds like we're blaming men. We can't say "men's violence against women," can we? It's a generalization; it's not fair! Well, perhaps we need to start calling it like it is . . .

Recently Jackson Katz, educator and media activist, visited Grand Rapids to share his message about violence: "Violence needs to be seen as a gender issue, especially as an issue caught up in how we as a society think about masculinity and manhood." Most commonly, domestic violence and sexual assault are called "women's issues." For Katz and fellow activists, this description is both inaccurate and irresponsible. The language we use to describe issues like violence reflects our underlying attitude about the problem's cause, and in turn, the problem's solution. Talking about "battered women" and the number of women who "were raped" in a given year leaves men, the overwhelming perpetrators, out of the conversation --- and without accountability. Katz would rather us talk about the number of "men who raped." And instead of talking about "violence against women" Katz prefers the term "men's violence against women," or better yet, "gender violence" --- because it has everything to do with gender.

"In the national conversation about violence, it's rarely referred to as a gender issue, although one gender --- men --- perpetrates approximately 90% of the violence," writes Katz in a study guide for his film *Tough Guise*. (*Tough Guise* examines the correlation between violence and the "myths" of manhood as defined by popular culture, especially film and television.) Leaving men out of how we frame the issue of violence is parallel to how we as a culture discuss other social identities like race and sexual orientation.



- Recovery from the experience of prostitution requires intensive and long-term support, spanning years, not months.

These themes about the realities of street prostitution in Grand Rapids have emerged from presentations and discussions in monthly PRT learning sessions. Participants representing more than 30 local organizations have heard from women and girls working in prostitution as well as representatives from neighborhood associations, the criminal justice system, and community-based organizations working with prostitution-related issues. They have also reviewed current research and reports from other communities that are addressing prostitution concerns.

The goal of the PRT is to help women and girls working in street prostitution in Grand Rapids make positive choices for their lives. The project seeks to achieve this goal by facilitating a learning process which will enable community organizations to address more effectively both the needs of prostitutes and the issues surrounding prostitution. In the months ahead, the PRT will continue to explore the current situation in Grand Rapids and focus on identifying best practices. In mid-summer 2001, the learnings will be summarized with recommendations to the community.

For more information about the Prostitution Round Table, contact Dotti Clune (616-454-5445), Jeannie Hosey (616-956-8013), or Kym Mulhern (616-451-0267).

Project Update

The New Voices Initiative The Prostitution Round Table: A Community Learning Venture

By *Dotti Clune and Jeannie Hosey*

As the Prostitution Round Table (PRT) approaches the mid-point of its community learning venture, certain patterns are emerging. In many ways, the situation for women and girls working in street prostitution in Grand Rapids seems to reflect national and international themes. For example:

- Most of the women involved in prostitution are survivors of childhood sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse.
- Almost all are dealing with drug or alcohol addictions.
- Prostitution – the life style, the risks, the fast money – can itself be an addiction. However, treatment that focuses on prostitution as an addiction is rarely offered; in fact, local women report that they have had few opportunities to discuss their experiences in prostitution in supportive settings.
- Women’s relationships with pimps/boyfriends and customers often exhibit characteristics typically associated with domestic violence.
- Most women working in street prostitution have experienced multiple rapes and violence by their customers, pimps/boyfriends and strangers.
- Although most women say that prostitution is not a choice they would make if they felt they had any other choice, powerful forces prevent them from seeking alternatives: multiple addictions; fear of reprisals from pimps/boyfriends; lack of skills for alternative employment; lack of resources and support to start over; shame, a sense of low self-worth, and a belief that they’ll never be accepted in the broader community.

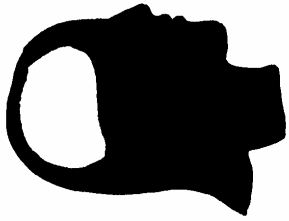


Katz describes:

One of the ways dominance functions is that the dominant group avoids being examined. We focus always on the subordinated group – black or Latinos when we talk about race; gays or lesbians when we talk about sexual orientation; women when we talk about gender. Unconscious or not, this focus helps the dominant group remain invisible and protects the status quo.

Katz and fellow activists, some local to Grand Rapids, call on men and boys to take responsibility for their role in perpetuating myths of manhood, where physical aggression and bullying lie at the core of defending one’s “tough guise.” In this defense, men and boys lose out; an unwillingness to show vulnerability creates serious barriers to intimacy and compassion. Katz explains, “Boys and men need to know that courage does not simply mean being one of the guys . . . it means having the guts to support girls and women, and work with them in their striving for justice and equal treatment.” As feminists have always argued, naming how gendered behavior impacts our lives will benefit both women and men; both girls and boys. So when we talk about violence and its prevention, we must be conscious of what our language implies . . . because most of the time, it is men’s violence against women.

- More information about *Tough Guise* and its teacher’s guide can be found at www.mediaed.org.
- Interested in learning more about local activists’ work to prevent “gender violence?” Contact Randy Flood at the Men’s Resource Center at Fountain Hill (616) 456.1178.



Around the World

Focus on Women for Women International

Focus On . . . Women for Women International

Women who have faced the horrors of war and its demand for relocation now have somewhere to turn . . . *Women for Women International* supports women who are survivors of armed conflict and sustained periods of political and social upheaval, especially women from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Kosovo, Bangladesh and Nigeria. Three programs assist them in their times of crisis, transition, and reconciliation:

- Direct aid through a Sponsorship Program. Sponsors support women in need with a monthly financial contribution and personal letter of support. (Here's where YOU can get involved!)
- Skills training, rights awareness and leadership development through the Renewing Women's Life Skills Program.
- Access to bank credit and business finance, sometimes for the first times in their lives, through the Microcredit Lending Program.

These programs help women survivors know that they are not forgotten and work to rebuild communities that have been uprooted and destroyed by violence. Representatives from *Women for Women International* will make a visit to Grand Rapids in Spring 2001. For more information about the organization, visit www.womenforwomen.org

Herstory

Jan BenDor of Ypsilanti is considered by many to be the Founding Mother of the Rape Crisis Center Movement in Michigan. In 1971 she helped found the Women's Crisis Center in Ann Arbor, one of the first two rape crisis centers in the United States.

Betsy Graves Reyneau (1888-1964) of Detroit, maintained a lifelong passion for justice and civil rights, fighting racism, protesting unfair working conditions and advancing the cause of women's suffrage. Thirty-eight of her paintings portraying Americans of African descent and prominent literary figures are part of a National Portrait Gallery.

From the *Michigan Women's Hall of Fame* <http://members.tripod.com/mwfame/>

If you are a past or present grantee of the Nokomis Foundation, please feel free to share your announcements with us. We will include them on a space-available basis in the next issue of Voices.

Voices is published by the Nokomis Foundation three times each year and distributed at no charge. Articles may be quoted or reprinted in full as long as we are notified and credit is given to both the author and Voices, noting the date of original publication.

Save the Date

A Hero for Daisy

Come celebrate the spirit of Title IX for a special screening of *A Hero for Daisy*, a landmark film featuring two-time Olympian and World Champion rower, Chris Ernst. The film's Director and Producer, Mary Mazzio, will be present to offer her own inspirational remarks. **Monday, February 26, 2001. 7:00 pm at Studio 28.** Contact Katy Frey of the Michigan Women's Foundation (616.742.2389) for more information.

Reach Us

Need to contact us? Our office hours are from 9:00 - 3:00 each Monday through Thursday.

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