



West Cork Whisper

WEST CORK WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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the death of Reeva Steenkamp

On Valentine's Day this year we "rose" in Bantry as part of a global initiative to highlight the issue of violence against women. In a world where one in three women is raped or beaten in her lifetime, One Billion Rising allowed us participate in a worldwide rejection of this violence. We danced for ourselves; we danced for our sisters here in Ireland; we danced for our sisters everywhere.

In Bantry we danced, while on the other side of the globe, Reeva Steenkamp would never dance again. Her life had been brutally cut short by her boyfriend, Olympian Oscar Pistorius. Initial reports of a tragic accident were quickly dismissed by the South African police who have charged him with premeditated murder. That he killed her is certain. He shot four bullets through the toilet door, hitting her in the arm, the hip and the head. He claims that it was a tragic accident; he thought he was shooting an intruder. The police say that there is evidence of intent; his claim of mistaken identity is unsustainable. And because of the peculiarities of the South African justice system - at trial they have one judge and no jury - there has been much comment in the press, on the television, and on the internet, without fear of contempt of court.

The media coverage has been endless. Much of it is concerned with the "Why?" Why did Oscar Pistorius kill Reeva Steenkamp? Some speculate that it was "roid" rage amidst claims that steroids were found in the house. Others allude

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following on from V-day on 14th February we are taking a global perspective for this issue of the West Cork Whisper...

...the death of Reeva Steenkamp

to his disability - suggesting that his love of fast cars and guns relates to feelings of inadequacy about his masculinity. Commentators speculate that he was justifiably paranoid about intruders given the extreme violence of South African society. Pistorius drew on both his disability and his fear of violence in his statement to the court. He said that he was feeling vulnerable without his prosthetic legs; and that he had a heightened fear of an intruder having had death threats and robberies in the past. But whether Reeva Steenkamp was a victim of his fear and paranoia, or his violent temper, it remains a fact that she lies dead at his hand.

Until that dreadful night, Oscar Pistorius was seen as a hero and a unifying figure in a deeply divided South Africa. He was considered a "global icon" by many - a champion who overcame his disability to compete with the best of the best - the first person to compete in both the Olympics and the Para-Olympics. In so doing, he challenged negative stereotypes of disability. But when he shot Reeva Steenkamp, he challenged another pervasive stereotype - the stereotype of the perpetrator of domestic violence. Why? Because he is handsome, successful, rich and famous.

But the reality is that domestic violence does not have a "demographic". Yes, domestic violence rates are higher in countries where it is not against the law, and where it is socially acceptable. But domestic violence is present in every country. And it knows no class boundaries. Education, career and wealth are not barriers to being either a perpetrator, or a victim, of domestic violence.

The death of Reeva Steenkamp, while appalling, was notable for its newsworthiness. Because on that day, as on each and every other day of the year, there were countless women who died at the hands of someone they loved. Depending on the country, from 40 to 70% of all the women who are murdered worldwide are killed by their current or former husband or partner. In Ireland we are no different. Between 1996 and 2012 there were 188 women murdered in this Republic, averaging at about one woman a month. Of the resolved cases 53% were murdered by a partner or ex-partner. These cases rarely make headline news.

Another terrible truth is that the number of women killed is just a fraction of the number of women who are beaten, abused, and raped, every minute of every day in every country in the world. And in Ireland, just as in every other country on this planet, domestic abuse knows no "demographic". It is happening in council houses, in three-bed semi-d's, in mansions, in caravans, in farmhouses, in cottages, in leafy Dublin 4. The perpetrators are council workers, bankers, doctors, factory workers, solicitors, the unemployed, business owners, civil servants, students, farmers, gardai, and politicians. You cannot tell a perpetrator, or a victim, by how they look, what they do, how they speak, or where they live. Nor can you tell by how old they are. Domestic abuse happens in teenage relationships, and continues into old age.

Women, and men, danced here, and around the world to highlight the issue of violence against women. The death of Reeva Steenkamp reminds us that we should not presume who those women are.

- Since 1996 there have been 188 women murdered in the Republic of Ireland. 115 women (61%) were killed in their own homes.
- In the resolved cases 73 women (53%) were murdered by a partner or ex-partner.
- Another 48 (35%) women were killed by someone they knew (e.g. brother, son, neighbour). Thus, a total of 121 women (88%) were killed by someone known to them. In all of the resolved cases, 99% of perpetrators were male and 1% was female.
- In the UK between 2001 and 2002, 46% of female homicide victims compared with 5% of male homicide victims were killed by a current or former partner. Over 2 women a week were killed by a former or current partner during this period.



Our **SUPPORT WORKERS** can help you do **develop a 'safety plan'** if you are at risk in your home.

How to help a friend

When you know or suspect that a friend is being abused by their partner you can have very strong feelings about it - helplessness, anger, fear, etc. It is human to feel these and to want to express them in some way but your feelings don't help your friend. She may well be feeling shame about what is happening to her, may blame herself for her partner's treatment of her, and deny that there is abuse going on. Often abuse escalates over time and it is when it has become unbearable that women will seek help and it is at this stage that you will be needed to support and help your friend.

Do not gossip about your friend's situation; if she decides to talk to you treat what she tells you with respect and confidentiality. Be friendly and approachable and try to keep an open line of communication between you. Above all, be kind towards her, if you provide this she will feel safe to come back and talk again. When she does disclose that there is abuse in her relationship, let her know that this is not acceptable behaviour, that you are worried about her and that she deserves better.

When she does talk, stay calm and try to listen without being judgemental of her (more difficult than it sounds, but this is her life and you won't help her by being righteous and angry). If you get angry you risk behaving like her partner. Be careful that you do not fall into the trap of advice giving. As you are so close to her, it can be very easy to influence her decision and possible place her in a worse position. She will need professional guidance around the options that are available to her. Try to understand that if she could see another way out of the situation she is in then she would take it. Your friend's safety risk can escalate once she starts to disclose. As you will be her support system, you also need to be mindful of your own safety.

If your friend has children and you believe that they are at risk of harm then you can support her to make a referral or you can contact social services yourself.

Give her our telephone numbers - Freephone Helpline 1800 203 136 and Office 027 53847. We are also there to support you.

planning our future

It's been a busy and productive few months for us here at West Cork Women Against Violence, we have a new Board of Management and over two dozen volunteers and this week we welcomed our new intern, Niamh.

Now that we have solidified our staffing and support structures, we are about to embark on the process of producing a 3 year Strategic Plan for the organisation and its services. As part of that process we want to hear from everyone connected to the project and particularly anyone who has used our service as a client. We would like to hear what you think about what we could do to improve the service we offer, what issues related to domestic violence and violence against women do you think we should tackle and what we can do to promote and raise awareness about violence against women. Your opinion really matters to us.

Anyone who wants to contact us with their thoughts, ideas, opinions can email me, drop me a line, pick up the phone, or if you would like to call in and have a chat that can be arranged too.

We want to grow and strengthen West Cork Women Against Violence over the next 3 years and we want to do that in a way that is relevant to women who need us and use our services.

I can be contacted via coordinator@westcorkwomensproject.ie or by writing to West Cork Women Against Violence, Harbour View, Bantry, Co Cork or by phone 027 53847. All contact from anyone who has used our services will of course be treated with the utmost confidentiality and your anonymity will be protected.

Marie Mulholland Co-ordinator

large group meeting 25th april

On the evening of 25th April, in Dunmanway, West Cork Women are having a Large Group meeting for Volunteers, Staff, Board and friends of the Project. We will be talking about Planning our Future and about the current work of the Project followed by a cup of tea. We envisage having 3 of these Large Group meetings through the year, held in different parts of West Cork. If you are interested in coming to this meeting or to becoming a Friend of the Project please contact Niamh at intern@westcorkwomensproject.ie or 027 53847."



For more information see
onebillionrising.org or
One Billion Rising - Bantry - YouTube
 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=bn2JGAg8N4o)

global action FOR A global crisis

"This is not a Women's issue, it's a global crisis"- the words of Actor Robert Redford encouraging people to support the One Billion Rising Campaign. Raising awareness is the key to change and after Valentine's Day, a lot more people now know that 1 in 3 women on this planet will experience domestic violence.



Bantry, West Cork



one billion rising



207 countries and over 13,000 organisations, participated in tens of thousands of events to ensure that February 14th 2013 would be a day to remember. From Nepal and Kabul to Hong Kong and Brazil, solidarity was on display for all to see. The worldwide rejection of violence against women would be a dignified affair, for all ages and all sensibilities. Head shaving was not a requisite and no expertise was required. Quite simply everyone was asked to Rise up and Dance.

Throughout the day, the internet fizzled with news and titbits. The Guardian and other on-line media provided live blogs, which meant that global events could be viewed as they happened. Various celebrities and politicians showed their support by attending events or tweeting approval of the day of action. Actress Ann Hathaway made the most of a press conference, at a German Film Festival, to push the cause and the Dalai Lama went public with pledging his support.

The proceedings began 'down under' with New Zealand and Australia kick starting this historic occasion. Flash Mobs were the order of the day, not only in the Philippines and Singapore but here in West Cork. In Bantry, Wolfe Tone Square was the focus of an enthusiastic crowd which entertained visitors and locals alike with an 'impromptu' hour of dancing. Everyone was welcome to join in the fun and

indeed many people did. It was a great turnout and the One Billion Rising message was loud, clear and very colourful.

- A global movement
- An invitation to dance
- A call to women & men to refuse to participate in the status quo until rape and rape culture ends
- An act of solidarity, demonstrating to women the commonality of their struggles and their powers in numbers
- A refusal to accept violence against women and girls as a given.

In Bangladesh, the world's largest non-governmental organisation, BRAC, initiated a human chain throughout the country. People from all strata of society expressed their solidarity in taking necessary action against the social evil of domestic abuse.

For India the horror over the gang rape of the 23 year old medical student, Jyoti Sing, at Christmas had given massive impetus to the campaign. The result is that One Billion Rising has become the centre of the biggest breakthrough in sexual violence ever seen in the region.

Much of the effort in the UK has concentrated on changing sex education in schools. A "zero tolerance

approach to violence and abuse in relationships" was put to the vote in Westminster. After a lively debate, this was to be the only disappointment of the day as the amendment was not included in the motion subsequently carried. However Prime Minister, David Cameron did tweet his personal support of the campaign.

Fifty cities in Italy participated in the dance revolution. Last year Italy had the sobering statistic of one woman, every three days dying as a result of domestic violence. A figure that has, sadly, increased in recent years.

In the US, campaigners were hoping to use support for One Billion Rising in every state to resuscitate the Violence Against Women Act that provides protection for victims, yet which Congress failed to re-authorise last year. American Grammy award winning music producer Tena Clark wrote and made a video, Break the Chain, which provided the anthem for the day. It was one of many film productions uploaded. The One Billion Rising web site proudly announcing that it's 12th victory of the day, was that it 'Generated the best collection of worldwide dance videos ever'.

So this year saw the usually forgettable, and often depressing, St. Valentine's Day become truly a day to remember. It was the biggest global action to end violence against woman and girls in the history of humankind.

avaaz.org

Sometimes, living in rural Ireland, three miles from a shop and a mile from your closest neighbour it's hard to think global, other times it's easy. Take Avaaz.org an online community of over 20,000,000 peoples that seeks to fight injustice and influence world politics. Violent and abusive men often use their power to obstruct reforms that would protect women. Avaaz.org is an online community that campaigns to fight injustice and influence world politics.

I received an email from a journalist who started her own online petition about a Somali woman brutally gang-raped by government soldiers. The government used her article to jail the rape victim along with another journalist who wrote about it! After international outcry, an appeals court overturned the victim's conviction, but the journalist is facing a sentence. Somalia's government depends heavily on financing from other governments, so the international community can press them to stop the cover up and bring real reforms to end the epidemic of rape by security forces. UN envoy Zainab Bangura has agreed that she will directly deliver the petition to donor countries and Somalia's President. The world took notice of this injustice and showed these women that they're not alone, and that no one has the authority to rape them.

Malala Yousafzai, 15, was shot in the head by gunmen for raising her voice against the Pakistani Taliban and advocating "Western, secular" values. The world was outraged. In response, nearly 1 million of us called on the Pakistani government to fulfill her dream of education for all by supporting a national stipend program to put all of Pakistan's poor children in school. The UN Education Envoy Gordon Brown delivered our petition directly to Pakistani President Zardari, who signed it himself! On that very day, a month after Malala was shot, the Pakistani government officially launched a stipend program for 3 million children.

While my view out the window remains the Irish Sea, my support of these petitions is empowering and educating me and changing the way I see the world.

FRANCES, ALLIHIES

We will be hosting a **WEST CORK DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONFERENCE** on the 21st November 2013. Our next Whisper newsletter will have more information about this.

the 'we can' campaign

The 'We Can' Campaign is built around two central principles - that violence against women is not acceptable and must end and that people can change - that anyone can change their beliefs and practices. These principles have come together in an innovative approach to preventing violence against women.

Launched in late 2004 in South Asia, the Campaign aims to address the problem that violence against women, especially domestic violence, has been so 'normalised' that it is largely invisible and embedded in everyday norms and practice.

The Campaign aims to change this situation by mobilising Change Makers - ordinary women and men who are willing to believe that violence against women is unacceptable and who are willing to embark on a journey of personal change, changing themselves and reaching out to influence ten other people around them.

'We Can' started with an ambitious target of mobilising the support of five million Change Makers across South Asia. If each Change Maker reached out to ten others then the Campaign could influence fifty million people - one for each one of the 'fifty million missing women' of South Asia, women who are not alive because of violence and discrimination perpetuated against them.

Scale is necessary as it enables the Campaign to reach enough people in a society so as to reach the 'tipping point' at which overall social norms start to change.

While 'We Can' aims to end all violence against women, it focuses on domestic violence - on the everyday experience of violence, arguing whilst violence against women in the home is considered normal and acceptable, so violence in the public sphere will never cease.

'We Can' is an alliance-led Campaign, with over 3,000 organisations involved in South Asia alone. 'We Can' promotes an inclusive approach - any organisation or individual can join a 'We Can' alliance or sign up as a Change Maker provided they pledge to support the central principles of the Campaign. Nearly three million Change Makers have signed up to the Campaign since its launch in 2004 which continues to build momentum in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. 40% of these Change Makers are male.

'We Can' has started to build in other parts of the world. A 'We Can' Campaign was launched in British Colombia, Canada in mid 2007 and in Tanzania, Kenya and Democratic Republic of Congo in late 2008. On International Women's Day 2009 'We Can' launched in Holland. Campaigns have since started in Uganda and Burundi. Just a few months ago 'We Can' Singapore was launched. The 'We Can' Global Network was created in 2011 to link together the then 14 national 'We Can' Campaigns. Oxfam GB and Oxfam Ireland have been closely involved in the Campaign, in South Asia and elsewhere, but this is not an Oxfam campaign. Indeed those closely involved in 'We Can' wonder if it is even a Campaign - it has many characteristics of a social movement,

notably the organic growth and people to people approach.

'We Can' has an inclusive and grass-roots focus. It aims to mobilise the support of ordinary people - women who are experiencing violence, men who have been perpetrating violence and the silent majority who recognise that violence is happening around them but who, until now, have not recognised that they can play an active role in ending violence. 'We Can' does not tell people what to do nor does it train people in particular methodologies or mind sets. Rather 'We Can' aims to use high quality, carefully prepared materials to communicate key messages:

- that violence is never acceptable
- that violence against women is a public, not a private matter
- that everyone has the right to a life free of violence
- that small actions can bring about big changes
- that each one of us can find our own actions to end violence.

Anyone wishing to know more about 'We Can' can visit www.wecanendvaw.org and www.wecanglobal.org.



taking care of yourself

"You cannot plough a field by turning it over in your mind". I am a worrier, mostly over things that are completely out of my control. I like this phrase but sometimes words are not enough. Cloudy, blue days visit most of us. To lift my mood I walk, fast, like I am late. This puts all my mental energy into my physical wellbeing. It clears space in my head and I notice the natural beauty around me. Planting and watering flowers and vegetables is very satisfying. It can be a lot of work, like taking on an allotment or a little work like a small window box. The library or bookshops, can help you explore your forgotten talents. For me, it was flower arranging and a book on fixing bikes. The wild flowers are free and my children respect my very limited mechanical talents. The most important self care tip I can share is to reach out. Phone or visit a kind, patient, loving friend.

If you are experiencing or have experience of domestic abuse West Cork Women are here to listen to you.

Call us on
1800 203 136.

POSITIVE AFFIRMATION

I deserve
the very best
in life



support services *for* women

At West Cork Women's Project we support women in a non-judgemental, non-directive way.

When a woman is in an abusive relationship she experiences huge confusion and loss. We cannot heal the losses she has suffered. Many women who use our service don't want to leave the relationship, they love their partners, have children with them and don't want to break up the family home.

But when a woman contacts our service, we listen and support her; in first working out what she wants and then deciding what to do about the abusive relationship. If she later changes her mind we support her in those choices too, whatever they may be. We can empower and facilitate her to make her own choices about the relationship. We do not have any agenda except to help women make their own choices freely. If she decides to stay in the relationship then that is her decision, and if she decides to leave then that is her adult right too.

There is power in making one's own choices. Even when it means that she remains with a man who doesn't treat her as a fully independent adult we always treat her with respect, as she is the best judge of what is right for her in her own life.

we're here to help

If you - or someone you know - think we could help we're offering you this card to cut out and keep in your wallet for when you get the chance or courage to ring us. We've purposely made it discreet so only you will know what it is about. Trust us, Trust yourself



Trust your heart
1800 203 136

cork

West Cork Women Against Violence Freephone 1800 203 136

Cuanlee Refuge, Cork.....021 427 7698

F.L.A.C Service023 8856818
(second Monday every month in the Family Resource Centre, Dunmanway)

Legal Aid Board, Cork.....021 455 1686 / 021 427 5998

Mná Feasa (Domestic Violence Project)021 421 1757

OSS, Cork..... Freephone 1800 497 497
(Domestic Violence Resource Centre for men and women)

S.A.T.U.....021 492 6100

Sexual Violence Centre..... Freephone 1800 496 496

Domestic Violence Social Work.....021 492 1728

Y.A.N.A. North Cork.....022 53915

kerry

Kerry's Women's refuge and Support Services (Adapt).....066 712 9100

Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre..... Freephone 1800 633 333

Legal Aid Board066 712 6900

Tralee Women's Resource Centre.....066 712 0622

national

Women's Aid Freephone 1800 341 900

west cork citizens' information service

West Cork Citizens' Information Service can provide you with information, advocacy and advice on all your rights and entitlements. The service is free, confidential and independent. Open daily, please call for times.

The Square, Bantry,076 107 8390

South Square, Macroom, 076 107 8430

CIS Outreach, Dunmanway every Wednesday 10am - 1pm

Legal Aid Board - monthly on 3rd Tuesday 10.30am - 4.30am - For an appointment with the Legal Aid Board please phone the Legal Aid Office on 021 455 1685

Free Legal Aid Clinic - monthly on 1st Tuesday 6pm - 7pm - For an appointment please contact West Cork Citizens' Information Service by either dropping in or phoning 076 107 8390.

MABS outreach Clinic - Each Friday 10am - 11.30am - For an appointment please phone MABS on 023 885 5155.

West Cork Women Against Violence Project, Harbour View, Bantry, Co. Cork
www.westcorkwomensproject email: admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie