

THE AMERICAN FEMINIST

 FEMINISTS FOR LIFE
OF AMERICA

REGAIN
YOUR VOICE



THE AMERICAN FEMINIST®

A publication of Feminists for Life of America

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Established in 1972, Feminists for Life of America is a nonsectarian, nonpartisan, grassroots organization that seeks real solutions to the challenges women face. Our efforts are shaped by the core feminist values of justice, nondiscrimination, and nonviolence. Feminists for Life of America continues the tradition of early American feminists such as Susan B. Anthony, who opposed abortion.

Feminists for Life of America recognizes that abortion is a reflection that our society has failed to meet the needs of women. We are dedicated to systematically eliminating the root causes that drive women to abortion—primarily lack of practical resources and support—through holistic, woman-centered solutions. Women deserve better than abortion.

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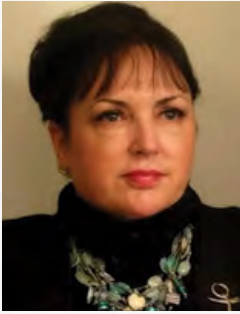
WHEN A MAN STEALS TO SATISFY HUNGER, WE MAY SAFELY CONCLUDE THAT THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG IN SOCIETY—SO WHEN A WOMAN DESTROYS THE LIFE OF HER UNBORN CHILD, IT IS AN EVIDENCE THAT EITHER BY EDUCATION OR CIRCUMSTANCES THAT SHE HAS BEEN GREATLY WRONGED.

—**Mattie Brinkerhoff,**
The Revolution, September 2, 1869



**FEMINISTS FOR LIFE
OF AMERICA**

HASTEN THE DAY...



“The prosecutions on our courts for breach of promise, divorce, adultery, bigamy, seduction, rape; the newspaper reports every day of every year of scandals and outrages, of wife murders and paramour shootings, of abortions and infanticides, are perpetual reminders of man’s incapacity to cope with this monster evil of society.”

—Susan B. Anthony
Social Purity Speech, March 14, 1875

It was the 1970s and unfashionable to join a women’s fraternity. But as a feminist, I was delighted to discover that the first women’s fraternities, like the one I chose, were started during the suffrage movement as women began to enter college so that they could run their own groups independent of men. (Much later, the word “sorority” was coined from the Latin word “soror,” which means sister.) And because my university was fairly new, hazing did not have a long tradition.

I was always the responsible driver, but on one occasion I was at a fraternity party and my sister left early, taking the car we shared home. My sorority sisters began leaving, too, but one guy promised me a ride home. So I stayed. Suddenly, I realized that I was the only woman there.

That’s when I heard some inebriated guys upstairs whistling in unison “Bridge Over the River Kwai,” and I saw them stomping down the Victorian stairway. They had boots on, and I saw legs that once had pants on were now bare. I went for the front door. Others blocked it. Then laughter. They were watching to see how far this would go. So I curled up in the nearby window seat in the foyer, and with all my strength I kept upright in a fetal position with my hands over my eyes.

Their hands tried to dislodge mine. They *wanted* me to see them, and I realized that if I made some smart comment, it would be all that was needed to trigger the gang rape of the homecoming queen. My “no” was not enough. Realizing I was physically powerless against so many strong young men, I used my brain and implored the brother who earlier had offered to take me home to help me. Finally, at *his* behest to break it up, they stopped.

It was absolutely terrifying. *I thought they were my friends.* I bet that some still rationalize it as a harmless prank. But I had escaped the worst, and it was a reminder that having your own transportation is a powerful tool. When they broke into our sorority house a year later, I called the police, and against their protests insisted that they pay for everything they destroyed during yet another “prank.”

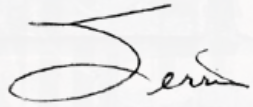
After graduation, I worked as a dining room supervisor in a hotel in Washington, D.C. A senator was walking down the grand staircase when I looked up and his eyes locked on me. *I knew* that look. Nothing happened, but years later, when I was on Capitol Hill sharing our message that “Women Deserve Better than Abortion” and pro-woman solutions during the 30th anniversary of *Roe*, I met a new representative who explained to a small group of us that she never expected to come back to D.C. She had interned for that same senator while she was in college. She told us that she watched him seduce one intern after another. Then his eyes were on her. She had a choice: succumb or leave. She left. And yeah, **I knew that look, and you do too if you’ve ever met a serial predator.** We all know they are in every party and in many different positions of power.

Bullied severely in junior high, harassed while working during school, nearly gang raped in college, and stalked after graduation, in my own way, I stood up for myself. And *now it’s my honor to stand with you for other victims and survivors as Feminists for Life* because **it’s what we do after these defining moments that define us.**

I still consider myself very fortunate when I hear about the experiences of others in the #MeToo movement, including those who share their experiences in this issue. During this national discussion, led earlier by the suffragists, I’ve found out more about those around me, including those in Feminists for Life. We are growing closer and stronger, and our voices grow louder.

Now instead of saying, “Me, too,” I ask, “You, too?”

Because women deserve better,



SERRIN M. FOSTER
PRESIDENT

Editor’s note: *The “monster evil” that Susan B. Anthony referred to in her speech titled Social Purity was intemperance, linking the abuse of alcohol by men to the abuse of women.*



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FFL President Serrin M. Foster
to present

**End the Feminization of Poverty
That Drives Women to Abortion!**

Friday Night Dinner Keynote

FFL National Operations Coordinator and Attorney
Cynthia J. Wood
to teach

**Find Your Assertive Voice: Preventing and
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**#METOO: A HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVE FROM
SUFFRAGE TO NOW**

KELLAN MONROE

#MeToo: A Historical Perspective from Suffrage to Now

In 1868, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton first published *The Revolution*, a feminist periodical covering controversial topics—like abortion and sexual exploitation—which the mainstream media shied away from at the time. The first edition, published January 8, 1868, explained its purpose:

A new paper is the promise of a new thought; of something better or different, at least, from what has gone before.... The enfranchisement of woman is one of the leading ideas that calls this journal into existence.... [W]e think "THE REVOLUTION" a fitting name for a paper that will advocate so radical a reform as this involves in our political, religious and social world.

Though short-lived, *The Revolution* served its purpose to expose abuse and advocate against domestic violence and spousal rape—as well as abortion. At the time, these forms of sexual exploitation were the norm, though society was very hush-hush about them. Anthony and Stanton, through the power of the press, broke the silence.



Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Early feminist reporters, editors, and essayists forced society to confront and talk about women's issues. From Anthony and Stanton, who published essays decrying domestic violence; to Sarah Josepha Hale, the first female magazine editor and an advocate for women in the workplace; to Megan Twohey and Jodi Kantor, who recently broke the story of Harvey Weinstein's history of sexual abuse, female writers have spotlighted systemic harassment and misuse of women throughout history.

In 1869, Anthony penned "A Dreadful Volume of Heart-Histories," a *Revolution* op-ed in which she decried sexual abuse within marriage. The column eviscerated men who felt their wives owed them sexual favors and suggested marital rape was directly responsible for abortions among married women.

Not long after *The Revolution's* outset, sisters Victoria Woodhull and Tennessee Claflin established *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, which published columns advocating against rape and published breaking news reports of sex scandals among prominent men. The newspaper faced legal repercussions, ostensibly for vulgarity, but really because some men objected to the notion that they were not entitled to women's bodies. In an 1872 editorial titled "Press Justice," *Woodhull & Claflin* observed the mainstream media tended to libel women in cases of sexual misconduct—thereby ruining their lives—without knowing all the facts. *Woodhull & Claflin's* also excoriated feticide; they concurred with Anthony that lack of sexual agency directly resulted in abortions.

Publications like *The Revolution* and *Woodhull & Claflin's* gave women opportunities to find their voices. Women like Lucinda Banister Chandler, whose numerous writings included contributions to *Woodhull & Claflin's*, not only denounced all forms of violence but also supported empowering women to take back their sexual agency.

“Woman,” Chandler wrote, “must have the courage to assert the right to her own body... subject to no authority but the voice of God in her soul.”

The Revolution gave writer Eleanor Kirk a platform to talk about patriarchy and domestic abuse and their impacts on women and children. In “What Will Become of the Babies?” Kirk poignantly explained how men’s entitlement to their wives’ bodies and the notion that sex was a wife’s obligation drove women to procure abortions.

Ida B. Wells, one of the earliest African-American female journalists and a co-founder of the NAACP, made a name for herself fighting for the rights and safety of fellow African-American women. Her most famous work is her news coverage of the lynchings of African-Americans.

Empowered by Wells’ words and the NAACP’s efforts, Angelina Weld Grimké picked up her own pen and wrote about the horrors of lynching and the poverty which threatened African-American mothers and babies. Grimké, unlike Wells, penned fictional stories rather than journalistic articles. But her words shed light on the violence African-American women faced and the socioeconomic factors driving them to abortion—perhaps her stories, though framed as fiction, inspired white feminists to pay attention to people outside their own circles.

The 20th century saw new waves of civil rights movements and women’s movements. Women wrote and spoke fervently about their rights to equal educational and employment opportunities. Congress passed pro-women legislation—the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, Equal Employment Opportunity Act, Title IX, and other legislation designed to protect women’s civil liberties in public schools and workplaces—in the 1970s.

Regrettably, many prominent writers and activists of the 1960s and 1970s women’s movement—such as Gloria



Steinem and Linda Greenhouse—believed abortion rights as well as anti-harassment legislation would liberate women. The pro-choice coalition and the inevitable backlash from the religious right sharply divided the women’s movement. But pro-choice and pro-life women united around a fundamental principle of feminism: Women should have equal opportunities to go to school and work, and they should do so in safe, harassment-free environments.

Although anti-discrimination laws and negative media spotlights haven’t eliminated sexual predators, we have come a long way since *Woodhull & Claflin’s Weekly* faced obscenity charges for daring to talk about sexual assault. Rape survivors still face obstacles to coming forward, and women still experience sexual assault and harassment in the workplace, but these topics are far less taboo than they once were. By the late 20th century and into the 21st century, stories of sexual misconduct among politicians, college athletes, and fraternities became more commonplace—perhaps because more women went into journalism.

In 1997, activist Tarana Burke founded Just Be Inc. and began the “Me Too” movement for rape and assault survivors. A survivor herself, Burke wanted to give other women and girls the help and support she did not receive. But the movement did not receive much press attention until 20 years later—even as late as 1997, African-American women like Burke still faced major barriers to voicing their stories.

Sexual abuse survivors came forward in seemingly unprecedented numbers in 2016 and 2017—prominent media figures, politicians, athletes, and entertainment figures all faced rape or assault allegations.

#MeToo: A Historical Perspective from Suffrage to Now

The 2016 election stirred anger and sparked conversations about sexual predators and the passes society gives powerful men and women who protect them. Women of all ideological backgrounds—liberal, pro-choice, third-wave feminists; conservative pro-lifers who avoid the term feminist; self-identified pro-life feminists—have united proclaiming what should be common sense: Men are not entitled to a woman’s body, ever, for any reason.

But not until late 2017, when *The New York Times* journalists Megan Twohey and Jodi Kantor published rape allegations against Harvey Weinstein, did the #MeToo movement encourage thousands of women to share their own stories. They say Weinstein’s history of rape and harassment had always been something of an open secret in Hollywood, but Twohey and Kantor’s exposé confirmed the rumors, legitimized victims’ stories, and ultimately reignited #MeToo.

The #MeToo movement has inspired hundreds of tweets and stories about rape and assault. Conversations about assault and secrets that would have been considered dirty and shameful mere decades ago currently dominate social media. As a result of technological determinism, society has changed the way we talk about violence against women and children. Credit goes to the female opinion writers and investigative journalists who brought these issues to the media’s eye, beginning with Anthony and Stanton’s *Revolution*.

As the mother of the feminist movement, Stanton wrote in *The Revolution*, “We believe the cause of all these abuses lies in the degradation of woman,” declaring “The only remedy, the *education and enfranchisement* of women.” Women’s enfranchisement depends on the women who wrote freely about assault when it was taboo—on women who expose abusers—on women who use the power of the press to give the less powerful a voice. □

The suffrage torch was the brainchild of Harriot Stanton Blatch, daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

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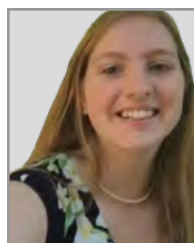


Help Feminists for Life pass the torch to a new generation. Support our College Outreach Program.

As we look forward, help Feminists for Life realize the unfulfilled dream of Susan B. Anthony to address the root causes of abortion. Make your tax-deductible contribution online today.

www.feministsforlife.org/support

Thank you!



Kellan Monroe is a senior political science major at the University of North Georgia. During her time interning at Feminists for Life, Kellan co-authored FFL’s “Report on Resources and Support for Pregnant and Parenting Students at Highest Risk of Dropping out Attending California State Colleges and Universities.”



FINDING MY VOICE

AFTER AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP AND
COERCED ABORTION

JOHANNA E. YOUNG

Finding My Voice

When I was 19 years old and a first-year student attending an out-of-state college, I became involved with a fellow student. It began like an ordinary relationship. We were best friends. We did everything together, isolating me from family and friends in the process. I didn't see the signs right away, but it eventually progressed to physical and sexual abuse. I wanted to escape the relationship after he became extremely possessive, stalked me, and started choking and hitting me, but by late November, I had become pregnant and remained in the relationship because I believed that I needed his support.

The night we took a pregnancy test together, he didn't believe that I was really pregnant, so he made me take yet another test to prove it. His reaction was immediately a negative one. That night, I was firm in my decision that I wanted to keep the baby and that I did NOT want to have an abortion. However, his voice started creeping into my head that I couldn't be a mother without a job, or an education, or without him—because he definitely wasn't planning on being a supportive father. I believed him when he said that I couldn't turn to anyone, that I would be shunned by family, and that he was all that I had to trust. If I had our baby, he threatened to get full custody and take my child away from me because he would somehow prove me to be unfit (due to my depression triggered by his abuse).

I rebelled against him for a short period of time, but that quickly ended when he began using more violence in order to manipulate me. He beat my belly in an effort to induce a miscarriage, and he threatened that he would choke me until I passed out and that he would perform an abortion on me himself with a coat hanger. He would also talk about fantasies he had about killing me and using my death as a pity story to get new girlfriends.

I was completely terrified and had never felt so alone in my life, other than the new life growing inside of me. So

I hid my pregnancy from most everyone, including my entire family. There were a few people who knew about the abuse and pregnancy, but they were students and simply not aware of how to help someone in my situation.

People meant well, but there is a serious lack of knowledge and resources on college campuses about how to deal with both domestic violence and pregnancy—especially when combined. Many people wouldn't think it was the right time to have a baby, considering the fact that I was young and would presumably have to drop out of college and apparently struggle to find a job and make ends meet. It seemed that the general assumption people had about how successful I would have been in my situation was congruent with what my abuser was saying. I started believing in that, instead of believing in myself, but when you're being abused, you lose your self-confidence, self-compassion, self-esteem. There were a few supportive people whom I will always be grateful for, but unfortunately, the negative influences were too overpowering.

By December, my abuser and I went to a clinic four hours away from our college and from anyone I knew, where I

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stalled for an hour on purpose and missed my appointment. I ran back to the car, where he beat me harder than he ever had before, upset that he might have to actually take care of this kid after all. Later that night, he coerced me to start taking herbal supplements with abortifacient properties, and way more pills than the recommended dosage. I got sick from the pills, coupled with the morning sickness, but I did not end up miscarrying.

Not long after this, we parted ways for winter break, where I continued to hide my pregnancy from my parents. I waited until the last possible day of my trip back home, secretly wishing my parents would find out that I was pregnant on their own because I was too ashamed to tell them. I thought about telling them several times, but I didn't want to shatter their expectations for me and I was also trying to protect my abuser, which I later learned is unfortunately normal for domestic violence victims. In order for them to know about the pregnancy, they would also have to know that I was being beat up for it, and I didn't want them to know he was abusing me. I also was terrified of what he would do if I didn't go through with an abortion after the explosion he had when I missed my appointment the first time.

On January 17, 2006, my last day home before going back to college, I finally succumbed to his coercion and had the abortion. He didn't give me enough money to be put under, so I was completely awake throughout the procedure and now have to live with those memories for the rest of my life.

The next day he dumped me, and when I showed him my sonogram, he threatened to destroy it. It was obvious to me by then that he just manipulated me so that he could "get off the hook." This constrained choice I made under duress had empowered HIM, but not me.

Even though we broke up, I still continued to see him, now suffering immensely without his support in dealing with all the emotions that come after having an abortion. But



The sonogram of Johanna's "Jellybean."

instead, he emotionally abandoned me to deal with the recovery on my own, again with little resources or social support available or known to me at the time. A few months later, I finally began to realize that he was not going to change, that the abuse kept getting more and more dangerous and violent, and I was tired of walking around with his marks of possession—bruises and bite marks—on me. I finally got rid of him after he bashed the back of my skull into his door and tried to choke me with his belt. My roommate happened to walk by the dispute in the hallway and encouraged me to take legal action. She really was my angel that day. In retrospect, I believe that was the first time I had felt that I would not be abandoned and left to deal with my problems alone, and that I would continue to be supported during a time when I desperately needed to take back control in my life.

I want people to know that they are not alone in suffering from domestic violence or from a coerced abortion, and that there are people who want to help empower them to rise above those situations. I want loved ones of people in my situation to understand how to help them by going to WomenDeserveBetter.com.

Today, I am in a loving relationship, and I have earned my bachelor's degree while mothering three kids—thus proving that I was always capable!! Now I am applying to grad schools. I am no longer a victim of violence. I am a survivor. I have taken back the voice that my abuser once forced into submission.

Finding My Voice

Perhaps you are wondering why I would share this most personal and painful experience with you. I want better for other women who might be trapped in a relationship with an abuser. I want better for pregnant women who may feel more vulnerable because it isn't just them anymore. I want better for student parents like I was, so that no woman feels forced to choose among her education, her career plans, and her child.

If anyone feels as strongly about helping people as I do, then join us in advocating for more resources, and better access and knowledge of those resources in order to make a difference.

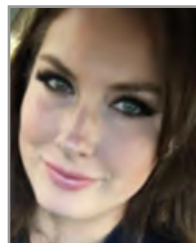
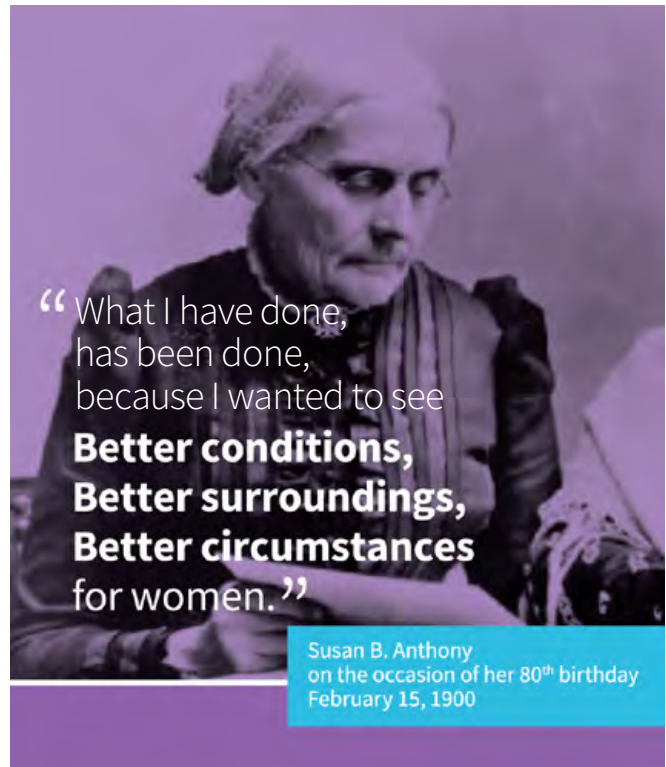
These resources especially need to be available on college campuses, where everyone deserves a chance to graduate and lay a foundation for a successful future.

I woke up one day and realized that I did not have to accept society's expectations and stereotypes of myself. Instead, I challenge society and ask, "Why did you ever think I couldn't do it?"

Why do we doubt women's capabilities and assume that they can't take on motherhood along with their other responsibilities? If the answer is because of social, financial, or economic reasons, then society has failed her; she is not a failure.

We have the power to change that. We have the power to love and support real people out there who are hurting and feel like they've run out of resources and support.

Feminists for Life is dedicated to helping those very people, people like me. Today, I am proud to be one of you, because pregnant women, parents, birthparents, and victims of violence deserve better. □



After her transfer to George Mason University, in Virginia, **Johanna E. Young** joined the pro-life student group on campus. When Abby Johnson, who since founded "And Then There Were None," spoke locally and recommended Johanna look up FFL, she immediately recognized FFL President Serrin Foster as one of her "favorite customers" at her place of employment—and became an FFL member. In 2014, Johanna brought Serrin to present "The Feminist Case Against Abortion" to her campus and subsequently hosted an FFL Pregnancy Resource ForumSM, also moderated by Serrin. This past fall, Johanna (who has presented her story during FFL's Annual Capitol Hill Intern Briefing) also shared her experience with GMU students during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, before Serrin presented her landmark speech to a packed hall.

#MenToo♂

MAXIMILIAN BRIDGES



This is not an easy article for me to write, but it is imperative that I tell my story.

Simply put, I am a male victim of rape.

However, I refuse to let this event define my life or victimize me any longer. The current reports of sexual harassment are shocking, horrific, and constitutive of a culture of power and abuse that does not respect the sexualities of either women or men.

My rapist, prior to the event, had frequently teased me for being both “effeminate” and “wimpy.” The police met my requests to get a restraining order from my attacker with aloofness, simply on the grounds of abuse and threats. Likewise, in my years of recovery, I have heard men use rape as a joke in private conversation and casual humor. But guess what: **Rape is never funny, and no one should be laughing anymore.**

Women and men frequently blame themselves for rape after an event. Those who have this abuse revealed to them are too often skeptical, nonchalant, or dismissive of the claims of victims. Those in positions of dominance and authority, such as producers and politicians, get away with sexual harassment through a culture of greed and power. However, this culture of abuse does not just exist in a vacuum; sex abusers often see their license furthered by a culture that has relativized rape. Pornography and viral fantasy have objectified and debauched the dignity of women and men in levels of obscenity far beyond any generation before.

Far too often, weak sexual assault laws disenfranchise women who are experiencing marital rape and other abuses from their spouses. Survivors often receive poor treatment options while feelings of guilt and shame hinder victims from coming forward. Likewise, **male victims are often seen with double the disdain or pity, due to the**

false notions that females are the only victims of such a crime and that men should be able to deflect such a thing from ever happening to them by being tough.

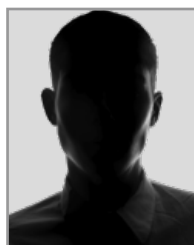
A culture of rape and violence is viciously anti-feminist and anti-life. Women and men who are victims should know they are powerful and strong and that a path to justice and healing is available with help.

Prior to being raped, I held negative views of feminism. I honestly thought feminism was somewhat toxic, a movement predicated more on identity politics, promotion of abortion, and the shaming of men. After my abuses, I can say with full certainty that attitudes, standards, and beliefs that shame abused women into silence directly impacted my recovery from abuse and my ability as a man to get to safety. However, I refuse to live my life defeated by this event, and I stand with my feminist sisters in solidarity to say with them, “Me, too.” □

“

Pornography and viral fantasy have objectified and debauched the dignity of women and men in levels of obscenity far beyond any generation before.

”



Maximilian Bridges is a pseudonym. The writer's identity has been protected at his request.

An Open Letter to Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence

Dear future survivors,

Hope is **alive**. I know this simple sentence isn't always easy to believe, and at times it's almost laughable, in a depressing way. From the depths of despair, and the traps of violence (and the memories of violence), it's hard to see anything beyond the darkness. The abyss of powerlessness swallows us whole, seemingly drowning us, and we let it because nothingness is better than pain.

There is a reason for this: Both trafficking and intimate partner violence use similar tactics to hurt and trap you as the wheels of power demonstrate. The abuse comes in many forms: sexual, physical, financial, emotional. Each is in and of itself overwhelming and—taken together—make for a life of constant suffering.

For many of the survivors of trafficking and domestic violence I have walked and worked with, power seemed elusive, something we knew the perpetrator had, but not something that was within our reach. In fact, telling a victim, "You have the power to leave," was met with blinking, incredulous eyes. "Have you not heard the threats? Do you have pockets of money to give me? Do you understand the connections he has? Do you see my scars, my exhaustion?"

And so this is the reality.

Until one day it isn't. You see, our society equates "power" typically with those in power, in positions of power. We have been told that power is reserved for those with wealth, or connections (including those with various forms of privilege), or physical strength, meaning that power is connected to some thing.

We are rarely taught personal power is found within, that it's not connected to any one thing, and that it's not just reserved for the few, but for us as well.

I think the awakening begins with acknowledging one basic fact. **YOU deserve better.**

Powerlessness is intricately connected to shame, to feelings of inadequacy. Imagine your personal power as a log burning a large fire in your soul. As terrible things happened to you, the fire was snuffed until only a few glowing embers remained, leaving you feeling cold and empty.

Let me tell you a secret: No one took your power away, because it's inherent to you. The few glowing embers are yours, unable to be extinguished because they are part of you. You can always restart a fire and fan even the smallest flame. And so the journey begins with remembering that it is still there and that you **DESERVE** to be warm again.

Fanning the flames starts small. First, find safety. Reach out to resources. Make safety plans. Acknowledge that what is happening is an injustice that you don't deserve. Having second thoughts? **Think of what you would tell your best friend if she were in your shoes, then take your own advice.**

Next comes self-care. Rediscover what makes you feel happy. Start the healing process, which can come in many forms: counseling, spirituality, reconnecting with loved ones.

With each step, the flame grows, and as it rises, so will your energy and desire to grow. Your growth will be unique to you.

None of this is easy. Please know my words on this page, typed effortlessly, in no way match the struggles you have or will endure. But they are spoken with love, and they are written with encouragement, planting seeds of hope, reminding you that hope is indeed *alive*.

Go out and fan the flames of your power.

Reclaim it.

Yours in the struggle,



Joyce McCauley-Benner

Hear what they're saying about

Speaker Joyce McCauley-Benner, **“Slaves Among Us: Sex Trafficking in the U.S.”**: For the past 15-plus years, Joyce has worked as an advocate for vulnerable populations, including sex trafficking victims, domestic violence victims, and low-income families. While working with those populations, she was a case manager, researcher, and legal advocate. Joyce weaves her personal story of pregnancy after rape along with experiences from her advocacy efforts to help audiences understand the powerful connection between the exploitation of women and the exploitation of abortion.

“The sex trafficking talk was EXCELLENT.... It’s really great to have a feminist speak about respect life issues because it draws both pro-life and pro-choice students in.... I liked most the fact that pro-choice students who attended got to listen to a real feminist who is also pro-life!”

—Frances Dijeh, Texas Tech University
(January 2017)

“Victory Over Violence” is Joyce’s personal story of being raped and discovering she was pregnant while working her way through college and not knowing who the father was.

Contact info@feministsforlife.org to book a speaker.



Joyce at the 2017 Pro-Life Women's Conference

A young man with glasses is leaning over a young woman. The woman is resting her head on her hand and looking down with a sad expression. The man's hand is resting on her arm. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

HOW TO SAY NO TO A BOY WITHOUT HURTING HIS FEELINGS

SERRIN M. FOSTER

How to Say No to a Boy without Hurting His Feelings

I was in high school when my younger sister managed to talk me into a blind date. Her boyfriend was a rebel who looked like Clark Gable with long hair. They set me up with his friend. I should have known it would be a disaster when they introduced me to “Nerd.” (Thanks, sis.)

We set off in their Cadillac convertible complete with fins. It was the '70s. And no, it wasn't cool. We set off for the GW Campus Club in Washington, D.C., where anyone with a bad fake ID could get into the basement beer skeller that smelled like a vomitorium. (I hope you don't know what I mean.)

Suddenly, a fight broke out. Two guys on one, and his head was being pummeled against the cement stairs. Naturally, these guys jumped in. The bouncers threw everyone out of the bar onto the D.C. street. I realized that my sister was in a brawl with some guy who was a few feet taller than she.

“Hey, man, you're a *chick!*”

“Yeah, that's right!” as my wiry sister offered hers. Somehow, I didn't appreciate that she was actually on top of him. I started the “girl kick” and slamming him with my purse, the only moves I could come up with to stop her from being hurt.

Inevitably, the police came and broke it up. We ended up in the car with her boyfriend who was upset because my sister had been in a fight, and almost as bad, his Harley-Davidson T-shirt was torn in the melee.

I wanted to go home. But on this rare occasion, I wasn't driving. I wasn't in control. I was at the mercy of these two guys and my sister. I did what most teenage girls would do to escape: I said my mom said I had to be home by a curfew.

“No, she didn't,” my sister replied.

“Oh, right. Dad wants us home then.”

“No, he doesn't.” I was out of excuses and out-maneuvered by my little sister.

So the guys decided “we would go somewhere.” They had a plan to go somewhere to “park.” I knew what that meant and was quite sure what “Nerd” wanted. We drove along the George Washington Parkway and finally turned into a wooded area. This was long before cellphones, so I had only one thing left to do: pray, and pray hard. I screamed inside my head, “Please help me get out of this situation!” And then, it came, a voice from above announced: “Everyone put your hands up. You are on CIA property!” YES. YES. I triumphantly raised my hands. I was elated! The security guards burst out laughing.

That was the moment I found my voice: “NOW we are going home,” I demanded.

Fast forward to 1995. I had been at Feminists for Life for a year as the board considered what we could uniquely contribute outside of our legislative efforts, including a program for teens.

Judy Mann wrote about “New World Daughters” in a 1995 edition of *The Washington Post*:

“...the emphasis we place on feelings in girls, on their interpersonal skills and on their ability to care for others is precisely what sets them up to succumb to sexual overtures by boys. They usually regret it later. Proof of this is found in a study by Marion Howard and Judith McCabe, who asked more than 1,000 sexually active girls 16 years of age or younger what topic they most wanted to have more information about. Abortion? ... AIDS prevention? None of the above. Instead, a whopping 84 percent of the girls checked this item: ‘How to say no without hurting the other person’s feelings.’”

One such program was in Alexandria, Virginia. I met an elegant grandmotherly woman who has seen generations of women in poverty dropping out of school and having babies while they were still children. She had an idea and had applied for a small \$5,000 grant from the state of

Virginia. She got permission to post signs in the girls' bathroom for a teen club to meet once a week after school for two months.

She started with a simple question, and one led to another: What do you want to be when you grow up? (Be a lawyer, a doctor, or an astronaut...) What do you need to achieve your dream? (Go to college.) What do you need to do to get into college? (Graduate from high school and save up money.) What do you need to graduate? (Attend class, study, turn in papers.) They had one meeting where a medical professional would explain how babies were created. But for the most part, they focused on their life plan. At the end of the course, no one wanted to stop getting together. So they partnered with a sorority at Howard University to meet once a month for a meal with a mentor. The rule was: Anything but fast food.

The founder of the group reported that after hundreds of teenage girls went through the program, only a handful got pregnant. The students became focused on listening to that voice inside of teens, discerning the path forward, which meant doing well in high school, graduating, and going to college. Shortly thereafter, the woman also founded Project Manhood for boys.

With the help of strong and loving parents, wise mentors, supportive teachers, and fearless friends, we can support today's teens to find the power in themselves to voice what they want to do—or not—in their own best long-term interest, to choose their own dates, and to be in control of their own transportation. **Most important, to say “no” when they want, and not to worry about his feelings!** □

FFL President **Serrin M. Foster** is the creator of the “Women Deserve Better® than Abortion” campaign, and is editor-in-chief of *WomenDeserveBetter.com* and *The American Feminist*.

Hear what they're saying about Feminists for Life's dynamic pro-woman, pro-life speakers:

FFL President Serrin Foster's landmark speech, “**The Feminist Case *Against* Abortion**,” has been recognized as one of the “Great Speeches in History” in an anthology called *Women's Rights*.



“The lecture was an excellent opportunity for our students to hear a pro-life argument not based on religious principles, and therefore easier to present to non-religious students on campus.... [We most liked] her sincerity and passion, her ability to show clearly the real meaning of feminism, and her conviction balanced with compassion.”

—John More, George Mason University (October 2017)

Contact info@feministsforlife.org to book a speaker.



FINDING YOUR VOICE TO SELF-WORTH

CYNTHIA J. WOOD

Definitions

Sexual Stereotyping - having a fixed general idea or image of how men and women behave.

Sex role static - (more prevalent in the past) was the unthinking, unidirectional, everyday taken-for-granted remarks and actions based on gender stereotypes.

Sex Discrimination - any practice or policy, which results in differential treatment of an individual because of his or her gender.

Sexual Harassment - a form of gender discrimination that involves unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature between the same or opposite genders when there is a **quid pro quo** or creating a **hostile environment**.

Quid pro quo refers to conditions placed on a person's career or terms of employment in return for "favors." It includes implicit or explicit threats of adverse action if the person does not submit to such conditions and promises of favorable actions if the person does submit.

A **hostile environment** occurs when employees are subjected to offensive, unwanted, and unsolicited comments, or behaviors of a sexual nature. If these behaviors unreasonably interfere with their performance, regardless of whether the harasser and the victim are in the same workplace, then the environment is classified as hostile.

Sexual assault is a crime defined as intentional sexual contact, characterized by use of force, physical threat, or abuse of authority, or when the victim does not or cannot consent.

Sexual assault includes rape, nonconsensual sodomy, indecent assault (unwanted, inappropriate sexual contact or fondling), or attempts to commit these acts. Sexual assault can occur without regard to gender, spousal relationship, or age of victim.

Consent is not deemed or construed to mean the failure by the victim to offer physical resistance. Consent is not given when a person uses force, threat of force, or coercion, or when the victim is asleep, incapacitated, or unconscious.

Confronting the Hallway Harasser

It was my first week on my first real job. I was only 21. There was only one door to enter the building in the morning and a long hallway to walk down. At the end of the hallway was a man's office, which you would have to pass to go either left or right. As the front door closed, the man at the end of the hall stepped out of his office and leaned against the wall. Halfway down the hall, I noticed he was staring directly at me. I looked behind in hopes that he was looking at someone else, but no one was there, which added to a sickly feeling inside. As I got closer, so did the intensity of his glance-now-turned-leer, eyeing me up and down. As I passed him, I looked down and quickly made my way to my office.

This went on for the next couple of mornings until I decided to do something about it. On that Friday, as I walked down that same hall, I returned his stare. But my expression was more of, "What is wrong with you? Creep!" He still maintained his stare until I got right up into his face and, in the most annoyed voice I could muster, I said to him, "What's the problem?! Something wrong with you?!" With that, he covered back into his office.

That following Monday, when the front door opened, like the other mornings before, he stepped out. Just as he leaned against the wall, he saw it was me and quickly slipped back into his room. I was never bothered by him again. Unfortunately, it did not change his behavior toward other women.

When I first experienced this encounter, I did not have a name for it. Sexual harassment in the workplace, though it was occurring, had not yet been defined, classified, or coded. That would change that same year. Within months of starting my job in 1980, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued regulations defining sexual harassment and stating it was a form of sex discrimination

Finding Your Voice to Self-Worth

prohibited by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This would end Mr. Hallway Harasser's morning pastime once and for all.

Several years later, I become a Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) instructor for our organization. Part of that training was to help employees understand what Sexual Harassment was (and what it wasn't). Definitions were essential.

We started discussing how Sexual Stereotyping can lead to Sex Role Static and ultimately, Sex Discrimination. There was no doubt a learning curve, especially with our older generation requiring language and attitude changes toward the sexes, some deeply rooted. Terms of endearment, such as "darlin'," "honey," and "sweetie," would no longer be allowed in the workplace. Restricting roles to a specific gender would now become a form of sex discrimination and not be tolerated. But the focus of the POSH training was to be able to identify, prevent, and report instances of sexual harassment and assault within the workplace.

Initially, I took a simplified approach: "Don't do or say anything to anyone that you wouldn't say or do if your spouse, parent, child, or boy/girlfriend was standing right behind you."

Too bad there weren't smartphones back in my day. It sure would have been fun to have videotaped Mr. Hallway Harasser with a hashtag: #sendingtoyourwife.

“

Don't do or say anything to anyone that you wouldn't say or do if your spouse, parent, child, or boy/girlfriend was standing right behind you.

”



“

Too bad there weren't smartphones back in my day. It sure would have been fun to have videotaped Mr. Hallway Harasser with a hashtag: #sendingtoyourwife.

”

Finding Your Voice

Confronting a potential incident of sexual harassment can be difficult. There are times confrontation is not possible, in which case going directly to the supervisory chain is preferable. And remember to document, document, document.

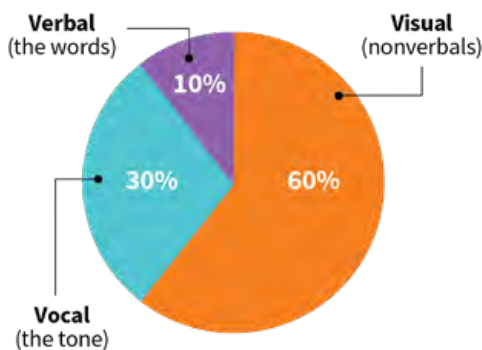
However, it is amazing how much one can handle at the lowest level, having a conversation to let people know what is and is not acceptable. When having these conversations, we tend to speak in one of three voices: Aggressive, Passive, or Assertive.



When I finally decided to confront Mr. Hallway Harasser, I used the **Aggressive Voice**. It is how I am personally hardwired to handle conflict situations. Although he got the message that I would not tolerate his conduct, I did not change his behavior for others. He simply labeled me with the “B” word and pursued other, less aggressive women. Those who approach these difficult situations with an aggressive voice may want to first try **turning down the volume** to become more effective.

Yet, the far worse approach in a sexual harassing situation is the **Passive Voice**, which is not only often not heard but can confuse the intended message. Not speaking up or voicing an objection can even send a message that you are either OK with it or that you will not do anything to stop it. Those who approach these difficult situations with a passive voice should consider **turning up the volume**. They need to find their **Assertive Voice**.

The **Assertive Voice** expresses your point of view while respecting both self and others to achieve a desired response. Had I taken a more assertive approach with Mr. Hallway Harasser, stating that his behavior was not acceptable to me or anyone else and that if it continued I would report him, I may have saved others from experiencing his sexual harassment. In fact, had I explained why it was offensive, he may have stopped on his own instead of having to be reprimanded by his supervisor, which did finally occur.



Examples of verbal, nonverbal, and physical sexual harassment:

a) Verbal sexual harassment may include telling sexual jokes, using sexually explicit profanity or sexual comments, whistling in a sexually suggestive manner, and describing certain attributes of one’s physical appearance in a sexual manner.

b) Nonverbal sexual harassment may include leering at someone, winking, or licking one’s lips in a sexual suggestive manner. Nonverbal sexual harassment also includes printed material including sending sexually oriented notes, letters, faxes, or emails.

c) Physical sexual harassment may include touching, patting, pinching, grabbing, cornering or blocking a passageway, kissing, and providing unsolicited back or neck rubs. Sexual assault and rape are extreme forms of physical sexual harassment and serious criminal acts.

When sending a message, whether aggressively, passively, or assertively, it is important to consider what makes that message impactful. Any message is made up of three components: the Verbal, the Visual, and the Vocal. The words (the Verbal) only comprise 10 percent of the message’s impact. The nonverbal (the Visual) and the tone—how we say it (the Vocal)—make up 90 percent. That means how we carry ourselves—our walk, our posture, our dress—speaks volumes. The tone of our voice can drown out our words. The good news is, no matter how we are hardwired, whether aggressive or passive, we can learn how to adjust our volume in a certain situation to become assertive, to become effective.

We can teach employees about sexual harassment: what it is and how to report it, but where we can make the biggest impact is providing every employee with the tools

Finding Your Voice to Self-Worth

and techniques to handle issues at the lowest level, in a prevention mode. Teaching how to speak in the assertive voice is worth the training bucks.

To become naturally assertive in all instances is possible but does come with a prerequisite: To be genuinely assertive, you must respect yourself and others; you must have respect for your own self-worth and dignity. FFL Speaker Joyce McCauley-Benner offers encouragement to those on the road to healing, “It is also important to recognize that experiencing trauma and abuse including assault makes having this prerequisite challenging. But know that starting the healing process, finding your voice, and reclaiming your power, leads to rediscovering your self-worth and dignity.”

Respect Yourself and Others

Recently, while participating in an exercise class at a local gym, the female instructor informed the class of her weekend plans. She and some friends were going to a male exotic dancing club, and she added that she couldn't wait to have them dancing all up in her face. There were three men in the class, and I wondered what they thought. I waited until everyone had left and approached the instructor, assertively. I explained to her that had she been a man informing the class of plans to go to a strip club and providing his wish for close contact with the female dancers, he would have probably lost his job with

“

If women are to be taken seriously about the issue of sexual harassment, we need to hold ourselves to the same standards we place on men.

”

the numerous reports from the women in the class. Double standards confuse the issue. If women are to be taken seriously about the issue of sexual harassment, we need to hold ourselves to the same standards we place on men. And wearing pink hats calling them a female body part is no way to advance the discussion of respecting our sexuality.

Self-Worth, Self-Respect, and the Pro-Life Feminist Message

If we are looking for the real solution, then we should be teaching everyone, starting with the very young, the concept of self-worth and self-respect. Valuing all people and considering their self-worth from the moment of conception to natural death creates an equal playing field and one where mutual respect can thrive. □



Cynthia J. Wood serves as the National Operations Coordinator for Feminists for Life of America. Prior to FFL, she worked for the federal government for 35 years as an environmental scientist and trainer for numerous workshops, including Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH), Effective Communication, and teambuilding and leadership workshops.

Cynthia received a BS/BA in biology/English from University of North Carolina at Wilmington, completed graduate courses in environmental science from University of Houston at Clear Lake, and received a law degree from University of Houston Law Center in 1999. She is a Bar Member of the D.C. Court of Appeals, Virginia, and Florida.

She is married and has four children.

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and our experts and voices with expertise:



Tim Bailey is a police officer who focuses on assisting victims of violence, domestic and otherwise, while serving the community.

He advises “**When You Need to Call for Help: Domestic Violence**”



Cheryl Blake is a grandmother, mother, retired high school teacher, and adjunct professor who wants you to consider “**Is an Apprenticeship a Good Option for You?**”

and “**What Type of Diaper Is Best for Your Baby—and You?**”



Eric Hollenbeck is an applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapist and teacher who shares tips on “**How to Complete a Job Application**” and “**How to Start a Military Career**”



Julie Kelleher is a mother, teacher, and open adoption advocate who gives you a sense of what to expect in “**An Adoption Journey of Openness and Authenticity**”



Crystal Kupper is a mother, military wife, graduate student, and freelance writer and photographer who speaks from personal experience choosing a baby with special needs and shares **“8 Tips When Choosing International Adoption”**



Joyce McCauley-Benner is a mother, rape survivor, social worker, and sex trafficking and domestic violence expert who speaks for FFL from personal experience and with professional expertise. She answers **“What to Do If You Have Been Sexually Assaulted”** and **“Do You Know the Signs of Intimate Partner Violence?”**



Kathy Parkes is a grandmother, mother, registered nurse, and International Board Certified Lactation Consultant. Check out **“6 Common Breastfeeding Questions Answered”** and **“8 Tips to Help Dad Be a Dad to a Newborn”**



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Danica R. Vassigh is a special-needs mom who shares her insights into **“How to Care for a Child with Special Needs”** and **“How to Navigate Special Education”**



Vicki Whitelaw is a consumer credit executive, debt management expert, and counselor for housing, bankruptcy, and student loans who offers advice on **“Money Management 101”** and **“Making Your Clever Checkbook Calendar”**

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