

Building Bridges of Hope: Spirituality, Religion, and Intimate Violence

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Road Map

- Definitions of Spirituality and Religion
- Details about intimate abuse
- The role of spirituality/religion in perpetuating intimate violence.
- Theological confusion
- The role spirituality/religion in fighting against intimate violence
- Proper response in dealing with intimate violence
- My response
- Conclusion

Spirituality and Religion

- Spirituality is “the sense of the sacred and divine” (Martin & Martin, 2002), emphasizing belief in a higher power, whereas religion focuses on external expressions of faith (Gilbert, 2000, cited in Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2007, p. 283).
- Spirituality includes focus on comprehensively responding to the troubles and social ills of individuals and communities through natural support networks and inner strength. It evolves during the life span as part of the developmental process of the individual and is formulated on the basis of cultural influences and previous and current experiences (Ellor, et al.’ Gilbert, 2000; Ortiz et al., 2000, as cited in Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2007, p. 283).
- Religion speaks to acts of faith, but what supports faith is seen as being inextricably linked to communal worship in the form of religion (Ibid.)

Intimate Abuse

According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (2003), intimate abuse or domestic violence “affects more than 5 million American women annually (cited in Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006, p. 282)

Domestic violence centers around one person’s control over another. DV is not limited to hitting, punching, shooting, stabbing, or killing; domestic violence also terrorizes and harms an individual’s thoughts and feelings. Along with these challenges critical to the lives of many women is their faith (Bent- Goodley & Fowler, 2006).

Women of color often turn to their faith communities before they go to mental health, social service, or medical care providers (Allard, 1991; Bell & Mattis, 2000; Bent-Goodley, 2001a, 2004a; Nason-Clark, 2004; C.M. West, 1998, cited in Bent Goodley & Fowler, 2006, pgs.282-283).

The Role of Spirituality/Religion in Perpetuating Intimate Violence

- According to Chavis & Hill (2009), “religious/spiritual groups are overwhelmingly in denial and silent when it comes to IPV (Horton & Williams, 1988), which poses additional barriers to religious/spiritual victims leaving their abusive relationship.” Many religious and spiritual groups share common values and beliefs about relationships for example, the sanctity of marriage, role of wife in the relationship, rehabilitation of abusers and about their roles obligations. All of these factors influence the dynamics of IPV and the tactics used by some abusers (p.131) .
- Covert messages used in IPV may take the form of isolating the women by denying communal worship or limiting religious activities, thus stifling women’s access to a primary source of support and spiritual renewal (Bent, 2006, p. 284).
- According to Bent-Goodley (2006) some victims/survivors felt, “clergy missed opportunities to stop violence in the home and violence was perpetuated by some clergy based on their own sexism or sex-role perceptions.”

The Role of Spirituality/Religion in Perpetuating Intimate Violence

- A study by Wolfe et al, (2001) revealed the role of churches to support women can be particularly difficult in rural areas where church is the sole source of support for some women. It identified the lack of trained clergy on issues related to domestic violence was a barrier to a church being a supportive environment (Cited in Pyles, 2007, p. 283).
- Nason-Clark (2000) observed “clergy... rarely had contact with shelter workers, seldom... brought an abused woman to the house, seldom... [invited] the staff to make a presentation in their church, and seldom... [volunteered] either themselves or church resources (Ibid).
- Fortune (1991) identified several reasons for what she called the clergy’s “silence and neglect”: lack of preparation, denial and minimization, solo ministry, and theological confusion (Ibid, p. 284).

An Example from Ephesians 5:21-29

21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour.

24 Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, 27 so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church (NRSV)

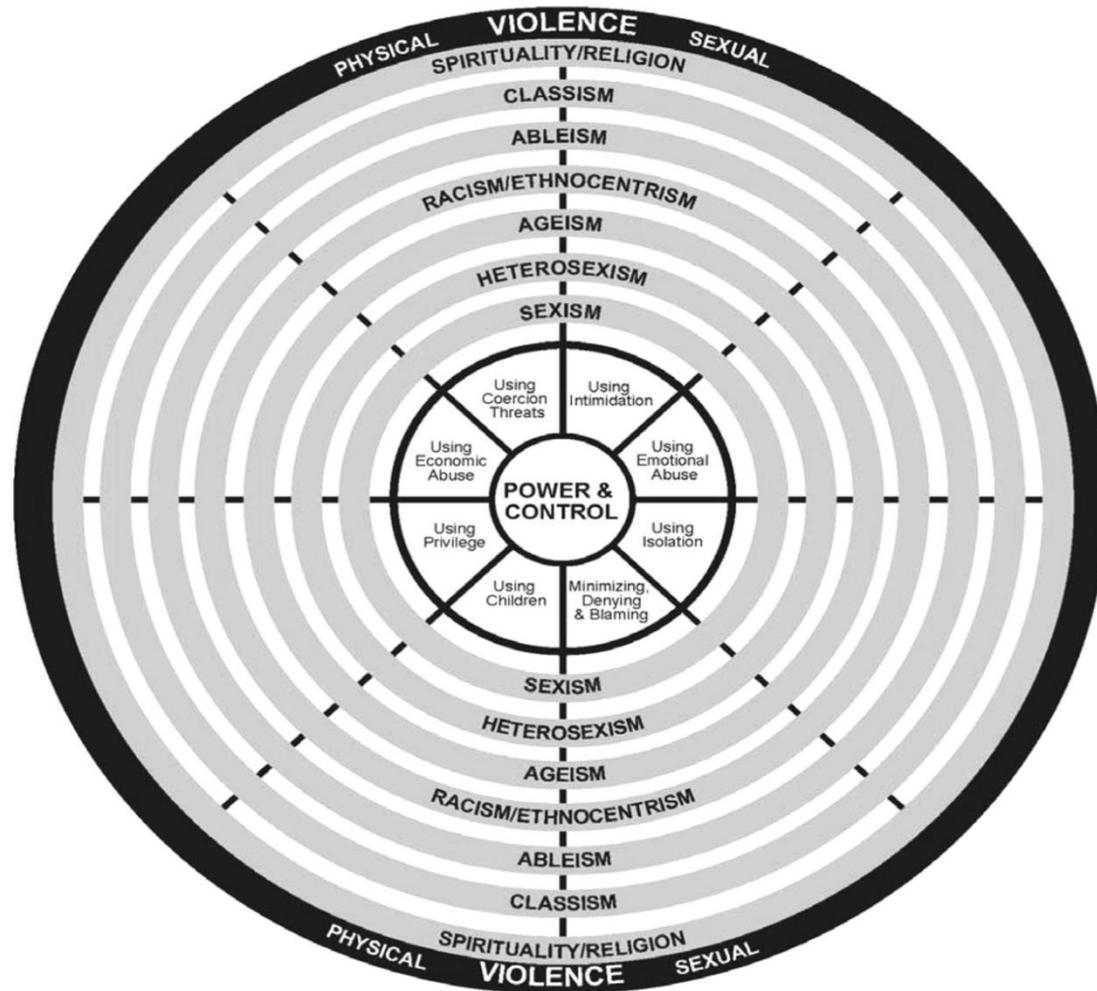
The Role of Spirituality/Religion in Fighting Against Intimate Violence

Many of the interviews in the literature confirmed that while churches and communities of faith can be barriers for women they also can be vital sources of support.

- Researchers have stressed that the theology of the Judeo-Christian tradition actually supports the safety and empowerment of battered women. For example, one can point to the Jewish concept of maintaining shalom bayit (peace in the home) or Christ's model of nonviolence and love (Pyles, 2007).
- In the Quaker tradition the emphasis is on pacifism and de-emphasises the importance of a virginal birth of Christ, holding the position that women and men are equal (Ibid).
- Nanson-Clark (1996) found that the “most obvious sign of the sensitivity of faith communities to the needs of battered women and their children lies within the confines of a-woman-only network of informal support (cited in Pyles, 2007, p.283).
- The truth of this statement is made evident in the book *Keeping the Faith – Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse*, where Marie Fortune tells of a story of a support group she was conducting when a new member shared with the group how she just fled her abuser with nothing. After the session was over, one of the older group members went into her pocketbook giving her some food stamps, stating, “Here I know you will need this” (Fortune, 1987).

Proper Response to Intimate Violence

Multicultural Power and Control Wheel.

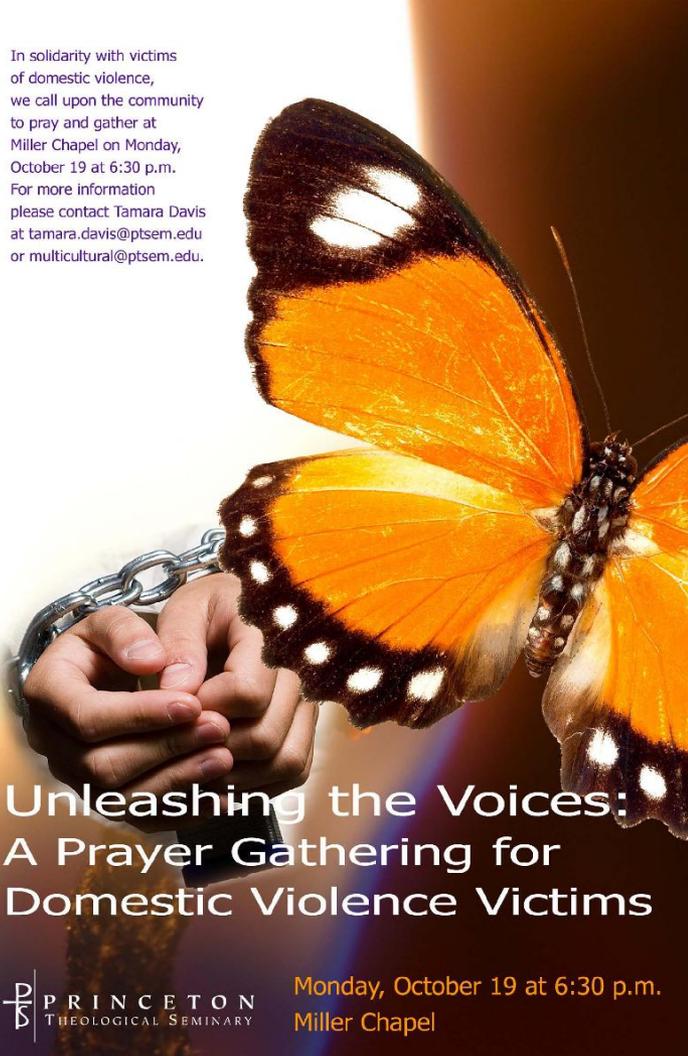


Proper Response to Intimate Violence

Most of the literature revealed clergy is inadequately trained to deal with domestic violence. Wolfe et al. (2001) provide a through clergy training curriculum which includes the following: 1) to understand the nature and dynamics of domestic violence; 2) to develop assessment skills in identifying victims; 3) to discuss potential overt and covert messages that contribute to domestic violence 4) to discuss collaboration with health care and mental health workers and advocates for victims of domestic violence; 5) to become acquainted with available resources; and 6) to describe how the faith community can bring healing to victims of domestic violence and their families (cited in Pyles, p. 289).

My Response

In solidarity with victims of domestic violence, we call upon the community to pray and gather at Miller Chapel on Monday, October 19 at 6:30 p.m. For more information please contact Tamara Davis at tamara.davis@ptsem.edu or multicultural@ptsem.edu.



Unleashing the Voices: A Prayer Gathering for Domestic Violence Victims

 PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Monday, October 19 at 6:30 p.m.
Miller Chapel

RUTGERS
School of Social Work

Center on Violence Against Women and Children

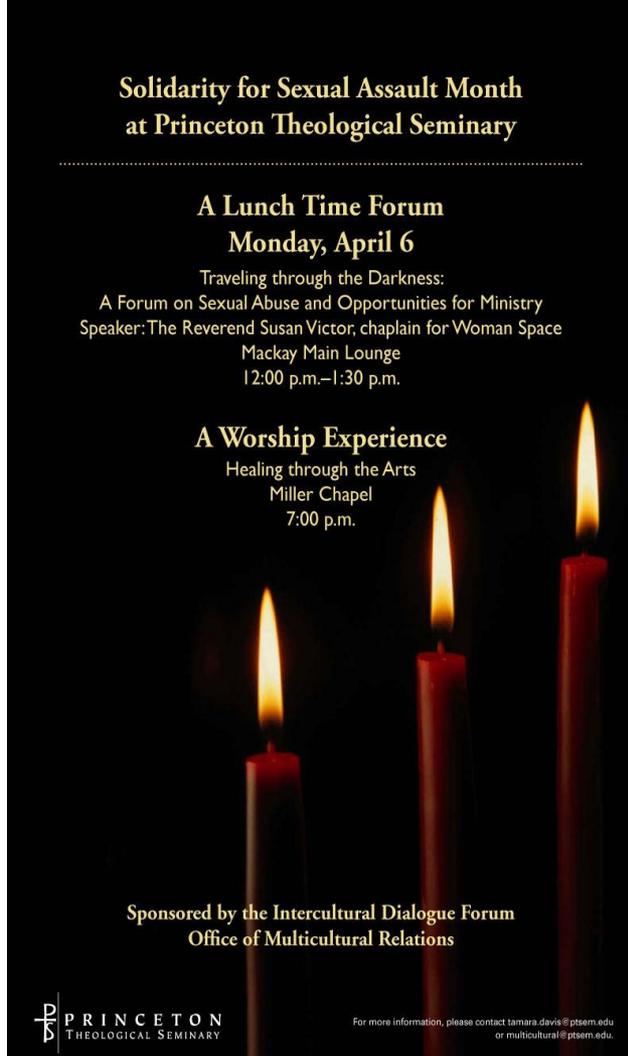
Solidarity for Sexual Assault Month at Princeton Theological Seminary

A Lunch Time Forum Monday, April 6

Traveling through the Darkness:
A Forum on Sexual Abuse and Opportunities for Ministry
Speaker: The Reverend Susan Victor, chaplain for Woman Space
Mackay Main Lounge
12:00 p.m.–1:30 p.m.

A Worship Experience

Healing through the Arts
Miller Chapel
7:00 p.m.



Sponsored by the Intercultural Dialogue Forum
Office of Multicultural Relations

 PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

For more information, please contact tamara.davis@ptsem.edu
or multicultural@ptsem.edu.

PARTNERING  CHANGE

My Response

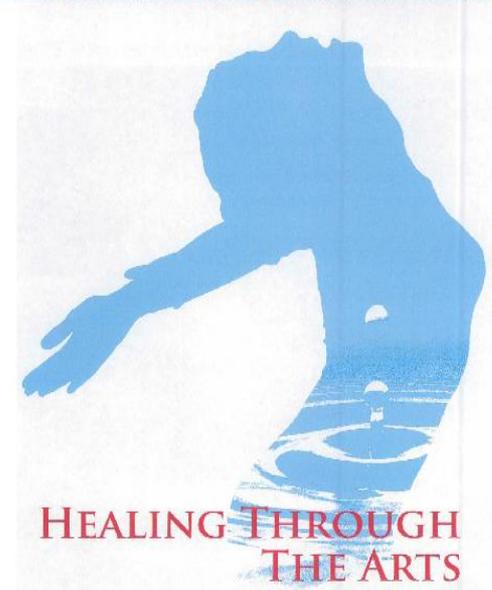
In the Spring of 2010 while the *Healing Through the Arts* Program continued to be on the PTS campus, it extended into the neighboring community of Trenton.

In responding to reports of the gang rape of a 7 year in Trenton who was sold by her 15 year old sister who was prostituting, the program was held in the Rowen Towers Housing development. The case received national press. Unfortunately, the cameras stopped rolling quickly as the already marginalized and improvised community began feeling targeted. Adding to this injury was the fact that church leaders who first boldly spoke out, leading prayer services and anointing the neighborhood began changing their language to “alleged rape” once some of the boys parents were identified as members of their congregations.

In a recent update in this case there are a number of plea bargains on the table. I was disguised to hear the it is proposed to drop sex charges against 5 of the 6 defendants. The charges for the 5 were lessened to trespassing, as the apartment party where the event took place was vacant. So, an apartment is more valuable than a 7 year olds body.

April is National Sexual Assault Month

In Solidarity with Victims, The Shiloh Baptist Church Outreach Ministry presents...



SUNDAY APRIL, 18, 2010 AT 3 PM
ROWAN TOWERS
620 W. STATE ST
TRENTON, NJ

*To bind up the brokenhearted
To proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners
To proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God
To comfort all who mourn and provide those who grieve
To bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes
The oil of gladness instead of mourning
And a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor – Isaiah 61*

Beginning in mid September 2010, as the Mission and Services Coordinator, a statewide position I hold for the American Baptist Women's Ministries. This flyer was circulated by email and snail mail to every local missions and service coordinator within American Baptist churches throughout the state of NJ.

Since then cell phones have been collected. During the ABW Annual Conference in June this campaign will come to an end and all the cell phones will be gathered at the conference and distributed to DV shelters/agencies all over the state.

In December of the same year, as a side project in this initiative I employed the efforts of the men from Phi Beta Sigma, Lambda, Lambda, Chi chapter. They collected over 20 cell phones and accessories for that month.

*"...There is a time to keep, a time to THROW AWAY;
A time to keep silence and a time to SPEAK;
A time to LOVE..." – Eccl 3:6b-8a*



- Family violence costs the nation from \$5 to \$10 billion annually in medical expenses, police and court costs, shelters and foster care, sick leave, absenteeism, and non-productivity. Source: Medical News, American Medical Association, January, 1992.
- Violence by an intimate partner accounts for about 21% of violent crime experienced by women and about 2 % of the violence experienced by men.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE is not specific to AGE, ETHNICITY, NATIONALITY or RELIGION!

1 phone call could be the difference between life and death!



Please join AB Women's Ministries of NJ (ABWNJ) in collecting cell phones for victims of domestic violence. Please donate your used cell phones and chargers between now and the end of May. They will be brought to the ABWNJ Annual Conference/Retreat in June and distributed to various domestic violence agencies throughout NJ. The phones will be reprogrammed to be emergency police response phones. Thank you for your cooperation and contribution!



Help us help victims reclaim their voices!

For more information please contact:

(add contact info and location of collection bin here)

Conclusion

- [Safe Spirit](#)
- Having dual degrees in divinity and social work is like being multi-lingual. Spiritual competency deepens cultural competency. As reflected in the literature clergy remain ill-equipped to deal with the scope of domestic violence without training. Likewise, social service agencies are ill-equipped in to incorporate the strengths faith communities provide or faith plays in the life of victims/survivors of abuse. Each can balance out the other, but first both groups must dialogue in respect.
- In the end, both secular and faith communities are committed to issues of social justice; however it must understood that an uncompromising principle within spirituality/religious communities will ALWAYS be cultivating HOPE. Victims/survivors need to be heard, seen, and addressed with concrete solutions, yet they also need to be encouraged and their situations transformed nurturing renewal beyond just the physical/emotional realm.

Sources

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Thank You's

- Verizon Wireless
- Dean Richard Edwards
- Dean Arlene Hunter
- Center on Violence Against Women and Children
- My maternal grandmother Jennie Davis & Aunt Dolly, who both died at the hands of their abusers, my cousin Diane Scott who is deaf due to it, my mother Sharonna Davis-Dunkins, and others who overcame their abuse. You all remain the influences of my work.