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Completely Different “Experiences” From the Same “Experience”

by Christine Williams, Family Time Director

I think most people realize the truth that many sexual assaults do not get reported and even fewer perpetrators are brought up on charges, let alone serve any jail time. In fact according to the Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) only 6% of rapist will ever spend a day in jail.

In light of this reality it was extremely distressing for me to read about the Ben Roethlisberger sexual assaults that occurred in two different states against two different women. Criminal charges were not even filed, in either case. I must clarify that I am in no way blaming these victims for the fact that there are no criminal charges being filed! In fact considering that I have been supporting someone I know personally who has experienced sexual assault has only allowed me to look at these most despicable assaults with a higher level of scrutiny.

I would like to point out how Ben Roethlisberger “gets off” with a punishment handed down through the National Football League Commissioner instead of the Criminal Justice System. Compare his punishment with what I know personally the victim of the sexual assault has experienced.

I believe it is important to first look at what the Sexual Assault laws are in the two different states and what the potential penalties would be if the cases were handled through our Criminal Justice System.

The 2008 Roethlisberger incident of sexual assault would have the following penalties under Nevada Law according to <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/nrs/NRS-200.html#NRS200Sec366>:

NRS 200.366 Sexual assault: Definition; penalties.

1. A person who subjects another person to sexual penetration, or who forces another person to make a sexual penetration on himself or herself or another, or on a beast, against the will of the victim or under conditions in which the perpetrator knows or should know that the victim is mentally or physically incapable of resisting or understanding the nature of his or her conduct, is guilty of sexual assault.

2. Except as otherwise provided in subsections 3 and 4, a person who commits a sexual assault is guilty of a category A felony and shall be punished:

(a) If substantial bodily harm to the victim results from the actions of the defendant committed in connection with or as a part of the sexual assault, by imprisonment in the state prison:

(1) For life without the possibility of parole; or

(2) For life with the possibility of parole, with eligibility for parole beginning when a minimum of 15 years has been served.

(b) If no substantial bodily harm to the victim results, by imprisonment in the state prison for life with the possibility of parole, with eligibility for parole beginning when a minimum

of 10 years has been served.

The 2010 Roethlisberger assault would have the following penalties under Georgia Law according to <http://www.lectlaw.com/files/sex06.htm>:

16-6-1. Rape.

(a) A person commits the offense of rape when he has carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. Carnal knowledge in rape occurs when there is any penetration of the female sex organ by the male sex organ.

(b) A person convicted of the offense of rape shall be punished by death, by imprisonment for life, or by imprisonment for not less than ten nor more than 20 years. Any person convicted under this Code section shall, in addition, be subject to the sentencing and punishment provisions of Code Sections 17-10-6.1 and 17-10-7.

But believe it or not here's the actual punishment that was handed down. Ben Roethlisberger was given an 8 game suspension. Here's the equation as I see it: he can't “work” for 8 (games) = 2 women's lives that are *forever* changed. First I'd like to point out his *job* is playing a *game*, and throwing a football. Secondly, I might correlate this with being a student who is suspended from school. Which is it actually: a “punishment” or a “break” or maybe a “vacation?”

At this point, I feel it is very important to give an example, coming from the *other side*, not from that of the perpetrator, to share the agonizing experience of one woman who was sexually assaulted, and how her life has been deeply affected. Unfortunately, I can assure you, it has forever changed the way she sees the world, and, as you will see, there certainly is no comparison to the effect the “alleged incidents” have had on him.

This one young woman, 15 years of age, planned to go to her first party with a friend. She thought she wouldn't tell her mother since she probably wouldn't approve. So she lied and said she was just hanging out with a friend and watching movies. Instead, she went to this “party” and had a couple drinks. She received a lot of pressure to take shots and then was taken to a room. When he started becoming very sexually aggressive, she tried to leave. She immediately realized the door (exit) was locked. He proceeded to rape her. Then another guy was let in the room, and he raped her as well.

The next morning afraid to tell anyone because “she had been drinking” she thought she would “just forget this horrible experience by not telling anyone and forgetting it.” Well that did not and incidentally could not happen because she began experiencing debilitating “panic attacks” and was unable to make it through a school day. She also was suffering from PTSD. She would jump and become terrified at any sudden movement or noise.

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Different “Experiences” continued from page 2

Voices

by Sandy Kelly, PAVE Advocate
Department of Corrections

After telling her mother, she was given the option of handling the assault in any way she believed was best for her. Even after receiving support services through a sexual assault and recovery center, as well as receiving weekly psychotherapy, she continued to sink into a darker, deeper depressed state. She became suicidal and was hospitalized. Upon being released she attended intensive outpatient psychotherapy for two months.

She has not been passing classes for two years now. She started this year to become involved in her favorite sport but couldn't handle the “stress” of playing and quit after two weeks. She has not played in any other sport or become involved in any extracurricular activity. She does not have an intimate relationship; she did not attend her prom due to fears and insecurities. She doesn't trust anyone. She is plagued with nightmares and fears. She will not walk anywhere in town, or attend other social events, terrified that one of her perpetrators may see/attack her again.

Due probably to a number of factors—including prescribed medication she now has to take for Depression, PTSD and Anxiety, the social isolation, and no physical exercise—she has gained approximately 30 lbs. In summary she is living in a personal prison.

She is very, very slowly striving to regain the will and desire to begin to muster up dignity, self-respect, peace, and joy. She is just beginning, two plus years after her sexual assaults, to pass in school (just this past quarter). She has just recently found one close friend for the past six months who has proven trustworthy, understanding, and accepting of where she is at emotionally.

It is clear to me the impact to her and her life has been devastating. I can't help but wonder how the two victims in Nevada and Georgia are doing. I certainly hope and pray they are doing better than the woman I know so well. I wish I never met anyone or heard of anyone being sexually assaulted, ever! But I have, and unfortunately statistics show that probably anyone reading this article will at the very least know someone if not have experienced or yet to experience sexual assault in their lifetime. How very sad.

The combined charges in the two states would have put Roethlisberger “away” for a minimum of 20 years, if not two lifetimes or even death. Instead, it seems these were just two evenings among so many others of “hooking up” with someone, or a moment or two in his lifetime. But for these women, their lifetimes will likely be defined by these “moments,” and their worlds will be forever changed. ■

I sit at my desk and shake my head. How can we as a community continue to allow the terrible abuse that is so prevalent right here in Bennington County? That's right, Manchester, Pownal, Shaftsbury, Bennington, Dorset, Woodford, and Arlington. From PAVE's statistics, no town is “Abuse Free,” no matter how much it is denied.

Women (mostly) and children continue to be at the mercy of violent men who have punched, bitten, spit on, strangled, raped, thrown things at them, pushed them out of cars, banged their heads against a car window, and grabbed their children from their arms.

This is what I hear from women time and again:

“I rather be treated badly than not have heat.”

“He put a gun in my mouth and pulled the trigger... either it was jammed or not loaded.”

“There are so many nights that I think I should drop all this and have him back. I can take it...then I look at my kids.”

“The worst is when he spits in my face.”

“I am going to get kicked out of my house...there are so many holes in the walls. Where will we go?”

“The worst is when he spits in my face.”

“One time he pushed me down the stairs...since then he always makes me walk in front of him and he pretends that he is going to do it again.”

“He put me in the closet and urinated on me.”

“He watches lots of porn; he doesn't care if the kids are around or not.”

“If he gets to me before his probation officer does, I might not survive it.”

“In my house, I am in my own prison.”

“I feel like the world is not a good place for me.”

We know women endure abuse for many reasons. As a community we have to say, “NO MORE! We are here to help. This violence will not be tolerated.” The solution to the problem—even the word problem sounds too small—has to become a community movement beyond PAVE. ■

When Pornography Rears Its Ugly Head

by Nancy Feinberg, Volunteer Coordinator

Whatever your thoughts are about pornography between adults, it is legal. That doesn't mean it is victimless.

The pornography industry has helped to create a subculture of exploited, trafficked, and marginalized women. We are also learning about the harm being done to society as a whole due to the use of violent pornography in shaping attitudes and beliefs against women, and in preparing young boys and girls for social relationships. How did we get to this point?

First, pornography is the "primary sexual education of most people in the US."¹ (Sex education in the schools and by parents is still somewhat problematic.). For our purpose, we define pornography as sexually explicit material that "objectifies and exploits women, while eroticizing domination, degradation and/or violence."² It is, as Cordelia Anderson of Sensibilities, Inc. described, "body punishing sex....**that has nothing to do with sex, or with mutual pleasuring, or with connecting with another human being.**"³

Chuck Derry of Gender Violence Institute states: "We are tying men's most powerful physiological pleasure centers directly to women's pain. That's sadism. That's what porn has become."⁴

We can thank the internet for bringing porn out from the back rooms and underground markets, and dropping it directly and instantly into people's laps. The Net has made porn characteristically Accessible (abundant and mobile), Affordable, and Anonymous, and has increased and changed Arousal patterns 24/7.⁵

Derry points out the following startling three statistics⁶: On average, a child sees his first images of porn by age 11. Amongst fourth and fifth graders, sex and porn sites are the third most popular internet searches (after YouTube and social networking sites). Demographically, 17 year old boys are the highest consumers of pornography.

The empirical data in

one study focusing on juvenile sex offenders found that a disproportionate number of such offenders had been exposed to pornography as a child; specifically, twenty-nine of the thirty juvenile sex offenders had been exposed to X-rated magazines or videos, and the average age of first exposure was about seven-and-one-half years.⁷

According to this study, children, and even adolescents, do not have the ability to readily differentiate between what is a "simulated" sexual act and what is "real" sex between humans.⁸

Derry states also: eighty-seven percent of college men watch pornography weekly; 20% watch daily. Thirty-one percent of college women often watch at the request of the man.⁹ How, if at all, do these statistics correlate with the survey of fraternity men who believed that "women enjoy

physical roughness, secretly desire to be raped, and enjoy being forced into sex?"¹⁰ Or with M.P. Koss' statistic: "84% of men, whose actions matched the legal definition of rape, said that what they did was definitely not rape."¹¹

Seven in 10 men watch pornography.¹² We know that not all men who watch pornography become habitual users. However, some do. Like an addiction, one expert explains:

Pornography is more exciting than satisfying because we have two separate pleasure systems in our brains, one that has to do with exciting pleasure and one with satisfying pleasure. The exciting system relates to the 'appetitive' pleasure that we get imaging something we desire, such as sex or a good meal....Pornography, by offering an endless harem of sexual objects, hyper-activates the appetitive system.¹³

The user's appetite gives way to (s)exploration of more deviant and pathological materials. New sexual desires, once thought too abhorrent to imagine, are now merely a fingertip away, 24/7, on the internet.¹⁴

Studies have shown that men who use and depend upon violent pornography engage in higher rates of sexual violence, domestic violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation, not to mention loss of respect for women's sexual autonomy and an increase in the notion of women's subservience."¹⁵

As men objectify women, they lose empathy, dehumanize that person, and become desensitized to a woman's pain or humiliation. They have trouble being intimate. And are aroused more by the object than the person whose "humanness" gets in the way.¹⁶

In addition to constant access to internet porn, the marketplace bombards consumers with over-sexualized products and gimmicks that objectify women and girls and sexually eroticize violence. Images of women's body parts, of women in violently seductive poses, and even women as corpses, are used to seduce the customer into buying a product that has nothing to do with the images portrayed.¹⁷ These images usually give "power" and "domination" to male models. Pop icons, revered by young, impressionable followers, glamorize sadomasochism and eroticize domination and violence in music videos, and risky behaviors in real life. The messages are the same: sex—dangerous and hard. Art imitating life or life imitating art?

Women and girls feel unrepresented as whole persons who have any higher ambition than to be a sexual object. They hear: "THIS IS HOW YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE—if you want to be noticed." Unrealistic images and expectations wear away at their self-esteem. They may self-annihilate—

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Pornography

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develop eating disorders or choose to undergo plastic surgery. Women and girls often feel pressured to engage in sexual acts they don't feel comfortable with, just to appear "cool" or to hold onto their boyfriend.¹⁸

The porn industry is not going to go away anytime soon. However, we need to realize that we, as parents, educators, and/or advocates, are in competition with pornography for the health of our young boys and girls. We have an opportunity to raise awareness, but we need everyone to do the right thing: parents to talk with children about their behaviors, teachers to teach a realistic sexual education curriculum, lawmakers to appropriate funds to support sex education programs in the schools. If we intervene early, we have the potential to re-teach empathy and non-aggression. To pornography, I say, "Off with your head."

¹www.praxisinternational.org, Thinking Aloud audio conference discussions, *Primary Prevention: Pornography, Violence and Organizing Men in Rural Communities*, "Part 1, An analysis of pornography and its connection to violence against women" (March, 2010.) Speakers: Chuck Derry and Cordelia Anderson.

²Praxis.

³Praxis.

⁴Praxis.

⁵Praxis.

⁶Praxis.

⁷Mary Eberstadt and Mary Anne Layden, *The Social Costs of Pornography: A Statement of Findings and Recommendations* (New Jersey: Witherspoon Institute, Inc., 2010), 31.

⁸Mary Eberstadt, 31.

⁹Praxis.

¹⁰www.wcasa.org, Campus Sexual Assault, 2000.

¹¹www.wcasa.org, Campus Sexual Assault, 2000.

¹²www.topnews.us/content/210872-study-70-men-and-30-women-hooked-porn-online.

¹³Mary Eberstadt, 19.

¹⁴Mary Eberstadt, 20.

¹⁵Praxis.

¹⁶(Use Caution: disturbing images) www.youtube.com, Brittany Trice, et al., "Objectification of Women in Media."

¹⁷Praxis.

¹⁸Praxis. ■

Mission Statement

To end domestic and sexual violence and to provide supportive and educational services to individuals, families and the community.

P.O. Box 227, Bennington VT 05201
Office: 802-442-2370; Fax: 802-442-6162
pave@pavebennington.com
24-hour hotline: 802-442-2111

A Lesson in Patience and Non-Judgment

by Holly Schmitz, Finance Manager, PAVE Advocate

I received a call from my niece, Pam, who was calling for a friend, Jenna (fictitious names, of course). Pam was at a family get-together when Jenna showed up with a black eye and visible bruises. My niece spoke to Jenna in private about perhaps seeking some help from an advocate at PAVE. She reluctantly agreed but wanted Pam to make the initial call to me on her behalf. It was arranged that Jenna would call me around 10:00 a.m. the next day.

When Pam realized Jenna hadn't called as agreed, she began getting upset and fretting that Jenna was wasting my time. I explained to Pam that it was okay. I had my cell phone with me and I was going about my day.

I also had an opportunity to explain to Pam that Jenna would call when she was ready. I asked her, "Is it your need, or the client's need?" I went on saying that sometimes it takes awhile to take the first or second steps. I assured Pam this was very normal, and patience is a key. We have no idea what it's like to walk in someone else's shoes. That conversation seemed to help my niece realize how difficult this situation is for Jenna.

Later that evening, Jenna did call, and we had a long talk. Her story was very complicated and very sad. She told me it had been a long time since she spoke to someone who actually believed her, validated her situation, and reminded her no one deserves to be treated so badly. I also realized she needed a big dose of kindness.

Before we hung up, I told her I would make some phone calls the next day to see what her options might be. (Jenna did not live locally.) After quite a few phone calls I found a domestic violence agency that would help her and provide access to free legal council. I gave Jenna all the information: names, phone numbers, addresses. I reminded her if she needed me further, she should not hesitate to call.

Some time went by and I asked Pam if Jenna had made any calls. She had not. Again, I could hear the frustration and judgment in Pam's voice. It was another opportunity for me to explain to Pam that it is Jenna's decision to go forward and she simply isn't ready. Pam has never experienced domestic violence personally, and she was struggling with Jenna's lack of response.

It was commendable of Pam to try to help Jenna out of a horrible situation, but, unfortunately, she lacked patience and empathy. This is a lesson we all need to remind ourselves of: judging a person who is experiencing domestic violence is probably the least productive way to help them. Conversely, treating someone with respect, dignity, and patience may make the caller come back to us when she is ready. ■

April in Review

by Mary Grey, PAVE Advocate, Bennington Police Dept.

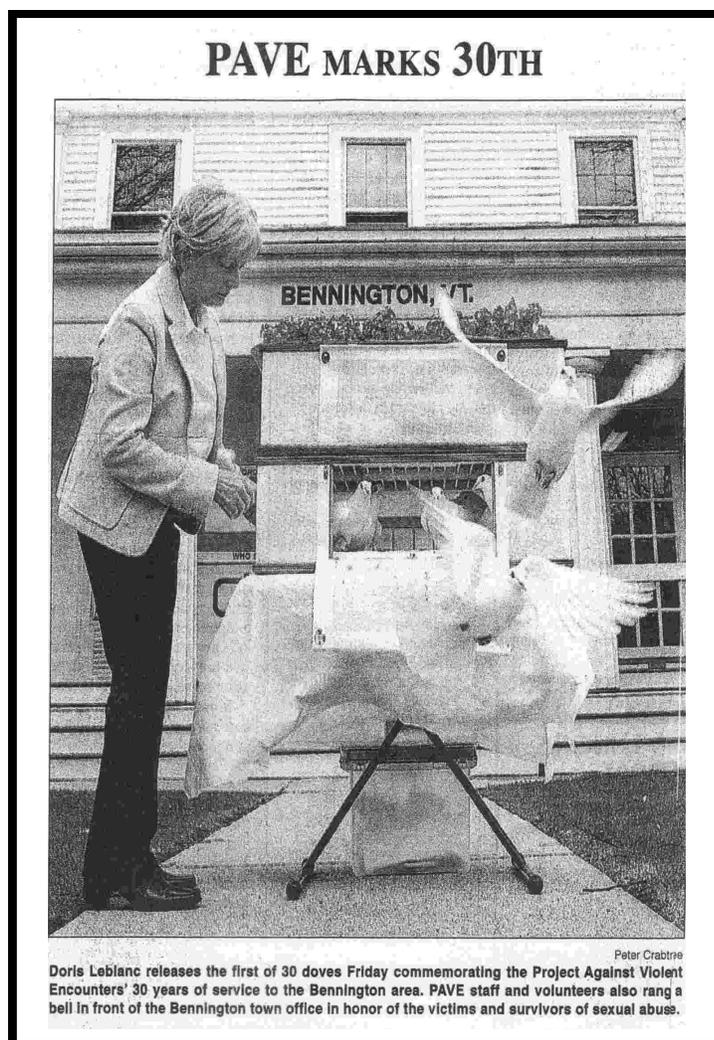
April 2010 was proclaimed Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) with a formal presentation to PAVE from the Town Of Bennington Select Board Chairperson, Lodie Colvin. This was the beginning of several PAVE sponsored events, some old and some new:

- April 9th—The traditional Bennington Town Hall Bell Ringing ceremony to commemorate and honor victims and survivors of sexual assault. The bell was rung every 2 minutes symbolizing how often a woman is raped in the United States. To mark the occasion of PAVE's 30th anniversary, 30 doves were released—a sign of peace and hope for our mission to end domestic and sexual violence.
- April 12th— Kiah Morris led the Clothesline T-shirt project. This was an opportunity for victims/survivors to express their anger and pain through art. The T-shirts were hung on clotheslines and displayed at the Healing Arts Exhibit on April 30th and May 1st.
- April 22—The first annual Take-Back-The-Night March and candlelight vigil took place. This was an opportunity for the community and our local colleges to participate in making a statement that we will not accept sexual assault in our community, our schools or our homes. Forty marchers, young and old, male and female, and babies (moms pushing strollers) and with signs and voices, gathered at the Bennington Town Hall lawn. They marched up Main Street to St. Peter's Episcopal Church for the vigil. It is anticipated that next year will bring more marchers to the cause and will become the second annual Take-Back-The Night March.
- April 27th—Southern Vermont College hosted PAVE guest speaker, Susan S. Russell, MA Criminal Justice/Victim Services Consultant. Ms. Russell shared her personal story of kidnap, rape, beating and being left for dead. Her miraculous survival and recovery brought her to work with police in apprehending her offender. This experience prompted her to work in the criminal justice system to bring about changes in

the Vermont laws.

- April 30th and May 1st—A fitting end to the SAAM activities with the *Healing Arts Exhibit* on Main Street. These community art projects displayed art in many formats and were exhibited for the public. The T-shirts done earlier in the month were prominently displayed on clotheslines that ran the length of the gallery. A wall-sized blank canvas, paints and markers, provided the space to anyone who wished to express himself or herself artistically.

These PAVE SAAM events were a collaborative effort involving PAVE staff and members of the community in an effort to bring about community awareness. I would like to think we succeeded. ■



Youth Violence: How much of an Influence do the Media Have?

by Tara Parks, Family Time Assistant

A study conducted by the American Psychiatric Association found that children who came from a chaotic, "at risk" background, showed a dramatic acceleration toward violence if they were exposed to any of the following four conditions: easy and early access to weapons, especially handguns; early involvement with drugs or alcohol; association with other anti-social children like themselves; and pervasive exposure to violence on TV including such programs as the evening news. Long-term exposure to these influences has shown to desensitize children to violent acts. Consequently these children are more likely to behave in a violent manner. ("What's Behind Growing Trends of Violence?". USA Today (Society for the Advancement of Education). FindArticles.com. 02 Jul, 2010. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1272/is_2643_127/ai_53390127/)

Mark Shipman, medical director at the San Diego Center for Children for 30 years, said "environmental influence cannot be underestimated" when working with troubled youth. He states that "children learn so much from modeling. At home, at school, in their neighborhoods, they see how conflict is resolved, and that is how they learn." (USA Today)

With these findings in mind one can assume that if a child is frequently exposed to violent television, they will first become desensitized to the violence and then begin to imitate the unrealistic solutions they have learned, just from watching daily television shows. The National Campaign to Stop Violence conducted interviews with youth in the nation's most violent neighborhoods. The following is the list of children's top 10 causes of violence and the order in which they cited them: (www.adherents.com/misc/violence.html)

1. The Media
2. Substance Abuse
3. Gangs
4. Unemployment
5. Weapons
6. Poverty
7. Peer Pressure
8. Broken Homes
9. Poor Family Environment/Bad Neighborhoods
10. Intolerance/Ignorance

Certainly it is noteworthy that the youth included in this survey recognized media as the number one cause of violence amongst them. Even more intriguing is that exposure to the media was cited as a greater influence than gangs, poverty and even rough home environments.

The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center Media Violence Facts and Statistics reports:

- 61 percent of television programs contain some violence, and only 4 percent of television programs with violent content feature an "antiviolence" theme.
- 44 percent of the violent interactions on television involve perpetrators who have some attractive qualities worthy of emulation.
- 43 percent of violent scenes involve humor either directed at the violence or used by characters involved with violence.
- Nearly 75 percent of violent scenes on television feature no immediate punishment for or condemnation of violence.

"Many television programs fail to depict the harmful consequences of violence. Specifically, it finds that of all violent behavioral interactions on television, 58 percent depict no pain, 47 percent depict no harm, and 40 percent depict harm unrealistically. Of all violent scenes on television, 86 percent feature no blood or gore. Only 16 percent of violent programs feature the long-term, realistic consequences of violence." (Prevalence of Media Violence.<http://www.safeyouth.org>.)

With the prevalence of media violence in television shows, movies and video games, the importance of parent oversight cannot be ignored. Many families deal with issues of



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difficult for each other?
~ George Eliot

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Contact PAVE to discuss volunteer opportunities. Thank you.

Mail to: PAVE, P.O. Box 227, Bennington VT 05201

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We are grateful to the volunteers of R.S.V.P. who help assemble this newsletter.