

The Victim's Informer

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE

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Groups Support Victims' Rights

By Matt Smith

Cleburne Times-Review

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"For 24 years, three months and one week, she was the light of my life," said Dicky Stanley.

That light went out on July 24, 2005, after Julie Bradley, who was intoxicated at the time, lost control of her vehicle on Interstate 35W, crossed the median, became airborne and slammed into Carmen Stanley's oncoming Volkswagen Beetle. Stanley died.

Bradley received a conviction of intoxication manslaughter and a 20 year prison sentence. Stanley's family, husband Dicky Stanley and children Morgan, Tyler, Rachel and Cooper Stanley, were left to pick up the pieces. And to deal with a grueling trial.

This is where Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the victim's assistance coordinator of the Burleson Police Department came in.

Suzette Pylant, victim's advocate for MADD, and Wanda Page of the Burleson Police Department, assisted the Stanley family through the trial and attended court hearings.

Their support certainly helped," said Dicky Stanley. "I got in contact with MADD and Wanda about the time Julie Bradley was indicted, maybe sooner. They kept us abreast of how the justice system works, what to expect and how things pop up that you might not agree with. They were a great line of support."

MADD's three-fold mission involves stopping drunk driving, supporting victims of violent crimes resulting from drunk driving and preventing underage drinking, Pylant said. Steering families victimized by drunk driving through the legal process plays a big role in that mission, she said.

"We don't get involved unless there's a victim," Pylant said. "And we consider everyone except the drunk driver the victim. That includes the family of the person harmed, the family of the driver—even friends, law enforcement and EMT personnel."

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The Victim's Informer graphic design & layout by Mike Jones

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“Board” Yet?

Janice Harris Lord

Texas Board of Criminal Justice Board Member

Serving since January on the Board that oversees the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) has been anything but boring!

In fact, it's been overwhelming. The scope of the organization is so huge that in order to effect meaningful change, I've decided to focus on only a few issues, at least for the time being. Those most important to me are victim services, mental health issues, and evidence-based rehabilitation programs.

For this first column, let's talk about evidence-based rehabilitation. Most victims of crime and their advocates are primarily interested in justice, but I think we all recognize that true justice is rarely, if ever, achieved. What is a “just” sentence for severely injuring, traumatizing, or killing another human being? It simply isn't to be found.

Another issue for many victims is the great hope that their offender will not terrorize anyone else. To that end, TDCJ provides rehabilitation services for those offenders with potential for change, as noted in our 4-prong mission: (1) to provide public safety; (2) to promote positive change in offender behavior; (3) to reintegrate offenders into society; and (4) to assist victims of crime. A key recommendation of the Sunset Commission that evaluated TDCJ in 2006 was that TDCJ offer offender treatment and rehabilitation programs proven to reduce recidivism.

First, let's consider what evidence-

based practice is not. A particular type of treatment is not evidence-based just because it works on one person or a few persons. Many variables go into whether or not a certain treatment will be helpful for a significant percentage of offenders. What kind of offender is a particular treatment most likely to help? If it seems to change behavior in that type of offender, does the behavioral change last? What is it about the treatment that seems to help; for example, does a positive relationship between the treatment provider and the offender matter? (Research has already shown that without a positive relationship, only rarely does any treatment strategy help.)

Let's say that over a period of time, a certain treatment program administered by a certain kind of provider seems helpful for a certain kind of offender. We still don't have an evidence-based practice, but we do have a promising practice.

For the treatment program to become evidence-based, actual data must be collected from its use on a large population of offenders and compared with a similar population of offenders who live in the same conditions but did not receive the treatment. Assurance must be made that positive effects were the result of the treatment program and not

something else. Thus, when someone asks if a certain treatment works, and the program is evidence-based, our response might be something like, “For offenders with a history of alcohol abuse but no other drug involvement and no previous violent offenses who complete the 6-month program with few or no program violations, there is a 75% chance that they will be able to remain clean and sober with no TDCJ recidivism for two years.”

In other words, evidence-based practice as a goal of TDCJ's rehabilitation programs means that we offer treatment programs based on actual data, not ideology or a few feel-good stories (although those are always nice to hear).

My guess is that many of you, as did I before coming on the board, thought that punishment was TDCJ's only goal. It's not, although we would all be terribly naive if we thought rehabilitation programs could fix everyone. People change only if they want to change. For those who do want to change, I'm glad that TDCJ and the Texas Legislature are focusing on evidence-based practice. What do you think? Don't hesitate to contact me through the TDCJ Board Office at 512-475-3250 or write me at P. O. Box 172222, Arlington, TX 76003.

One Woman's Journey from Victim to Survivor

By Mildred D. Muhammad



There are many definitions for the word "victim." I have never thought of myself as one because of the way women are treated under this title. Therefore, I did my research of this word, to find a definition that would describe it in terms that I would understand. The definition that settles within my spirit is as follows:

Victim: One harmed by or made to suffer from an act, circumstance, agency, or condition. For me, this definition is correct for every aspect of what I went through as a victim of domestic violence.

Sniper Targets Wife

My journey into domestic violence began early in my childhood, when no one was clear on what domestic

violence really was. It would take me years to understand it and still, after my personal experience, I'm puzzled as to why this terrible social disease has not come to an abrupt halt!

I am Mildred D. Muhammad. My former husband, John Allen Muhammad, the convicted sniper for the DC metropolitan area, would be arrested for randomly killing innocent people in a reign of terror that held the

Washington, DC area literally hostage for weeks in 2002. It would come out later to the public that I was the intended target, although law enforcement knew it at the time. The theory: after my death, John would come in as the grieving father to reclaim the children, and to receive the crime victim compensation monies. No one would have been the wiser because I would have been randomly killed like the other victims. He would have been looked upon as a loving father re-gaining custody of his traumatized children.

Abuse Not Physical

Because my abuse was not physical, I was not taken seriously by anyone! I was a lone voice crying in the wilderness for help and my cries went unheard. I truly believe if I'd had a scratch or a bruise or broken bones, then "real" help would have been available to me.

Psychological Warfare

John's abuse towards me was mental, verbal, spiritual, economic, and involved stalking – all the abuses that cannot be seen by others! He was very strategic, analytical, and proficient with the way he carried out this abuse.

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One Woman's Journey; continued from page 3

Because he was trained in the military as a combat engineer, he was skilled in psychological warfare and used me, without my knowledge, as his "test project." He would make me think I was not clear on what I was saying. In domestic violence, it's called "crazy-making." I thought I was going out of my mind. He would jokingly put me down in front of others, but I knew he was serious. Others would laugh because they thought it was funny. I would walk away hurt. I remember telling him how I felt. His response: "It's mind over matter. I don't mind because you don't matter!"

Fasting

When we separated, he would give me \$50 a month for food for me, our three children and my mother to live on. Someone had to sacrifice for there to be enough food for everyone to eat. I began practicing, thoroughly, one of my pillars of my faith: fasting. I would eat enough to sustain myself, but the bulk of the food would go to my children and my mother. He still had a key to the house and would come into the house in the middle of the night and stand over me. I was too scared to move. I believe that had I moved, I would have been killed. I knew since he was trained in military warfare, his night vision was already in effect. Had I opened my eyes, he would have seen the white of my eyes. I could not take that chance, so I listened closely for footsteps and movements as he left the house. I soon saved enough money to have the locks changed on the doors. That angered him even more!

I truly believe from my personal experience that those of us who suffer without physical scars in silence with verbal, emotional, mental, economic and spiritual abuse are traumatized severely as victims. All the evil, hurtful things that are said will continue to play long after he is out of the picture. I believe that it is equally difficult to come back from, to live with, and to move forward from.

"As My Enemy, I Will Kill You"

When John said to me, face-to-face, "you have become my enemy and as my enemy, I will kill you," I knew it was time to leave. Anyone who really knew John knows that when he said that to me, his intent was very clear. Now, what was I going to do about it? I began going first to friends. They sent me back telling me that he was tired, and asked "did I have food ready for him when he was hungry?" Moreover, some even asked what I did to him, or what wasn't I doing for him. In essence, it was "my fault."

When he forced his way into the house, I called the police. When they arrived, he had already left the residence. They told me that since his name was on the lease, there was nothing they could do. They told me I should file a restraining order to begin a paper trail to document his behavior. They gave me the paperwork stating where to go to file. The next day, I went to the courthouse to file the restraining order. It was a one-page document that took me four hours to complete, not because it was complicated, but because I was crying so hard, I could

not see the page. I was thinking, "what am I doing here, how did it get to this, and what did I do to make him feel this way about me?" So many questions, not enough answers! I even thought of walking out, not filing the paperwork at all. I called a friend and was told to complete the paperwork. "You have to protect yourself and your children," my friend said. After that conversation, I went to the bathroom, washed my face, and completed the paperwork. That was the hardest thing I had to do at that time. The restraining order was issued in February 2000.

Child Visitation

We had decided verbally that visitation of our children would be every other weekend. A friend of ours would transport our children between us. That went well for two weekends. The third weekend, March 22, 2000, would be the last weekend I would see my children. March 27th was my mother's birthday. He was supposed to bring them back by 5:30 p.m. for her birthday because my children and I had plans to take my Mom to her favorite restaurant. 5:30 p.m. came and our friend brought a note to my mother from my youngest daughter, Taalibah. In the note were two dollars and a picture she had drawn telling her grandmother, "Happy Birthday." I asked our friend where the children were. He said he didn't know. I began paging John at that time. It was at 7:35 p.m. that he returned the call. Our son, John Jr, was on the phone. I asked him to ask his dad when he and his sisters would return home. I heard him ask his dad the question. Then he



came back to the phone and said we would be back in an hour. “We are shopping for the clothes you told dad we needed,” he said. I said “okay.” That would be 8:35 p.m. When the time came and went, I began paging him again. It wasn’t until 11:35 p.m. that he called back. This time it was John Sr. I asked, “When are you bringing the children back?” He said, “We are enroute from Seattle and will be there shortly.” Again, I said “Okay.” It was in the process of hanging up the phone that I became nervous. I felt butterflies in my stomach. I knew something was wrong. He did not bring them back! My heart stopped beating; my world became gray! My children were gone! My life as I had known it with my children was over.

I didn’t panic. I waited until the next day. I called the school at the time I knew they should be there. I spoke with the secretary and asked if my children were there. She said, “no, Mrs. Muhammad. You can call back anytime.” I continued to call for that week. They were not there. Finally, I went to the school that Friday. I spoke with the secretary. She said they were not there. I went to Mrs. Bullock’s class. She was John’s favorite teacher. The children were outside playing for recess. I went into her classroom, closed her door, walked over to her and said, “John has kidnapped the children.” I began crying uncontrollably. She hugged me, and helped me to sit down. She gave me tissue to wipe my tears. She asked, “Have you called the police?” I told her no. She told me to go home and call the police. She gave

me a strong hug and told me if I needed anything to let her know. I needed that. On my way home, I could only think of my mother. When I arrived home, she saw me and screamed to the top of her voice because she did not see the children with me. “He took our babies, he took our babies,” she said as she was crying. “What are we going to do?” I said, “I don’t know Mom, but I will do something.”

I learned later that John had emptied the bank accounts, which left me penniless. Because of the stress I was under, I had passed out. The doctors found that I had lost three units of blood and needed to be hospitalized. It was at that time that my mother called the hospital, and informed them that John had called her and said that he was coming to kill me. The hospital took the necessary precautions and secured me in a different room. After four days in the hospital, my mother moved to Maryland and I moved into a shelter. I was there for eight months before moving back to Maryland. It would be September 4, 2001, before I would get my children back. I learned that John had taken them to Antigua the night he was supposed to bring them back from shopping. He had them there for 18 months without my knowledge. And it was there that he met and victimized Lee Malvo.

D.C. Shootings

The shootings began in September 2002. Everyone was terrified of the sniper, including me! We were looking for a white box truck with two white men doing the shootings. The police

came to my home October 23rd to question me about John. They later took me to the police station where they would tell me they were naming him as the sniper. They knew he came here to kill me. They placed my family and me under police protection until the threat of danger was over.

After that time, I went to various agencies for assistance. However, because I did not have the physical injuries to “prove” that I was a victim, I could not get the financial assistance that I needed for my children and me. They offered counseling, but we needed food, clothing and shelter. Most, if not all, agencies are set up to assist victims/survivors that have physical scars with their financial well-being along with counseling. For those of us who don’t have any scars, we have a serious uphill battle getting the assistance we need.

Commitment to Positive Difference

This has to change! There are thousands of women who suffer in silence (i.e., professionals, service workers, homemakers, etc.) who don’t have physical scars because their victimizers are aware of the attention this will bring to the situation. You never know who you are sitting next to . . . a victim or a survivor? Just like there is a “victim compensation” program . . . there should be a “survivor’s compensation” program.

I began thinking of other women who have suffered because they did not have the scars to prove their abuse and began my organization, After The Trauma, Inc. My focus is to help survivors of

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SPOTLIGHT on Victim Services Division

New Director for TDCJ-Victim Services Division

As of October 1st, TDCJ-Victim Services Division has a new director. Angie McCown started at her new position this month, replacing Raven Kazen, who retired in May. Ms. McCown comes to TDCJ from the Department of Public Safety, where she developed that agency's Victim Services Program. She also worked in the Victim Services Division of the Austin Police Department.

A native Texan, Ms. McCown has a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of Texas and a masters degree in psychology from the University of Houston, Clearlake. She has lived in Austin for many years with her husband, Rick, their yellow lab, and a substantial herd of miniature dachshunds. A full biography of Ms. McCown will appear in the next issue of *The Victim's Informer*.

Groups Support Victims' Rights; *continued from front page*

People caught up in such situations often don't understand the legal system or their rights as victims, Pylant said. Page agreed.

"We help victims understand the judicial process and what to expect," Page said. "To be an active part of the process and understand what resources are available. All of this helps with their healing.

"The benefit is they receive support and information. They have someone to walk with them from the beginning all the way through the criminal justice center."

Services offered include responding to the crime scene, hospital or police station, Page said. Other services involve helping victims understand their rights, assisting them in filling out victim's compensation application forms through the attorney general's office, notifying them of court dates, providing information on counseling, shelter and other services.

MADD provides many of the same services, Pylant said, in addition to helping family members prepare impact statements.

"After someone is sentenced, the victim's family can, if they choose to

do so, give an impact statement," Pylant said. "It doesn't affect the sentence, but it gives the victims their say."

Because the pain associated with loss remains long after the trial, follow-up is essential, Pylant and Page said.

"We follow up for years with some families," Pylant said. "Of course, some families want to move on. But we're there if they need us."

That victims have someone they can call on afterwards is important, Page said.

The problem, both said, is that most remain unaware of the services offered through MADD, the Burleson Police Department and other victim's advocate groups.

"We're doing exceptional I think," said Dicky Stanley about how his family is coping four years after Carmen Stanley's death.

Dicky Stanley credits MADD, Page and the Warm Place with helping make the healing process possible. The Warm Place is a Fort Worth-based organization that helps children and their families deal with the grief from losing a loved one. Stanley family members attended the Warm Place in the months after the trial. Dicky Stanley now serves as a

facilitator there.

"I'm not a counselor," said Dicky Stanley. "I can't cure those people. All I can do is be a shoulder, lend an ear, and let them get their story out. Talking about it is the greatest way to get through the grief."

Such journeys, from victim to victim advocate, are not uncommon, Page said. She became involved after her daughter was shot and paralyzed in a violent crime in 1988. Page began working as a victim's advocate for the Burleson Police Department on a volunteer basis in 1989 and later became a full-time employee with the department.

Grandview resident Diane Abel likewise went from using MADD's services to working for the organization. In 1998, her 24-year-old son, Jeff Abel, died in a wreck in which he was the drunk driver. Abel went on to serve as president of a MADD chapter for a time. She now speaks to high school students, driving schools and first-time drunk driving offenders about the dangers of drunk driving.

"My goal is that I don't want to see another family go through this again," Abel said.

One Woman's Journey; *continued from page 5*

domestic violence get the assistance needed.

This organization has become my passion. I have spoken at victim assistance conferences across the nation about my experiences, with the hope that it will help other survivors in their recovery process. I personally provide support and referrals to other survivors who contact me in desperate need of guidance and assistance. I wake up everyday committed to making a positive difference for women like me.

I feel I am up to the challenge. This is the work I'm to do to add another link in the chain of organizations in

the struggle to help other women who find themselves in a domestic violence situation.

I am one voice. Let our voices together continue to make a sound loud enough to be heard by those who can change the laws to protect the women in this country!

I'm a Survivor and I'm not going to give up!



Mildred D. Muhammad is the Founder/ Executive Director of After the Trauma, Inc., a Maryland-based National Organization that assists women and children who are victimized by domestic violence.

For more information, please visit their website at www.afterthetrauma.org.

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<http://www.tjpc.state.tx.us/>

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<http://www.oag.state.tx.us/conferences/>

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 TAASA Annual Conference
 Austin Airport Hilton Hotel, Austin, TX
<http://www.taasa.org/>

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
**Address Confidentiality Program
 (ACP)**



With increased public access to personal information, there is a rising need for address confidentiality for victims of family violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Fearing for their safety, many victims do not obtain a driver's license or register to vote.

Texas has a new program to help these victims of family violence, sexual assault, and stalking keep their actual address confidential. The Texas Address Confidentiality Program (ACP), administered by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), provides a substitute post office box address and free mail forwarding service for participants

For more information concerning the Address Confidentiality Program and the laws governing ACP, go to: www.oag.state.tx.us/victims/acp.shtml