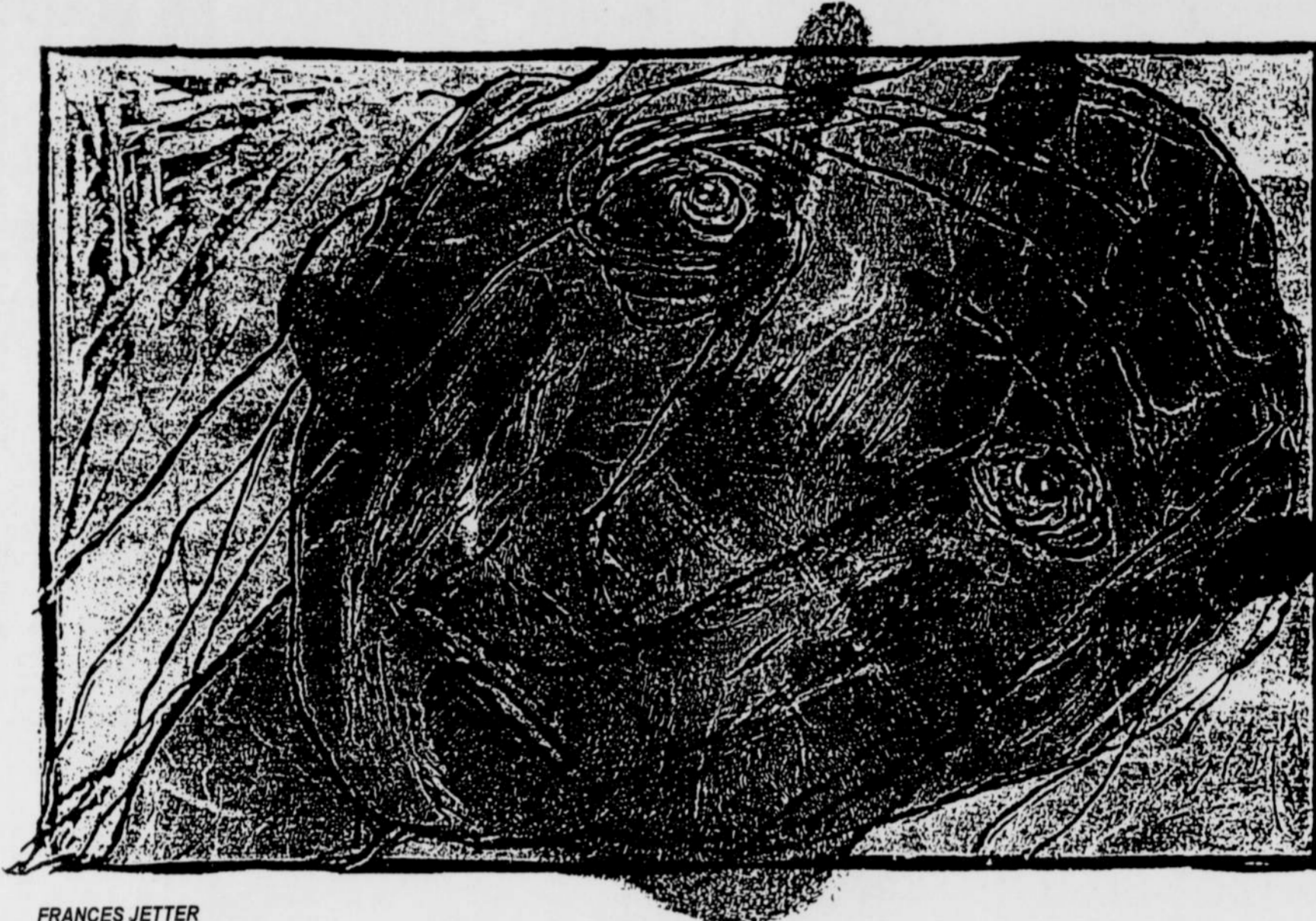


YOU ARE NOT ALONE



FRANCES JETTER

The most vulnerable victims of violence and murder are women. They are usually assaulted for purposes of rape and frequently die in the course of it. There is a lie among men that women willingly submit to rape or that it is impossible to rape a woman if she fights back. Contradictorily, it is suggested a woman should be passive if a man is raping her or she will be hurt, which of course would be her own fault for resisting.

Men joke about rape. They call it assault with a friendly weapon. That kind of thinking gives the men who think that way the sense they can use their friendly weapon on any woman at any time or place whether she likes it or not. The assumption is that women — all women — are subservient to all men. This idea is not limited to the Walter Mitty sort of men who deflect deep inferiority with lurid fantasies of *machismo*. Men who hate women, who are psychopathic in their contempt for women, promote the same opinion. These men make war on women: they batter, rape and murder women. They use their muscle and social power to dominate women absolutely and crush them when they resist. They beat up their wives and girlfriends habitually

(daughters also), and beat them again if they complain or seek help — and often, eventually beat them to death.

Women who have fought back have been ostracized, imprisoned and executed: thousands, perhaps even millions were burned to death as witches during medieval times and afterward as late as in 17th century New England. Nineteenth century suffragists were often attacked and jailed and although modern feminists have suffered less than their forebears, more verbal abuse and ridicule than physical assault, the problem of violent attacks by men against women is no less serious than it has ever been. Organizations to protect women from assault and battery have sprung up all over the USA, inspired not by official concern but by battered women themselves.

The articles on these pages are reprinted from earlier issues of the *Times Eagle* in observance of October as both Domestic Violence Awareness Month and the 24th birthday of the Clatsop County Crisis Service/Women's Resource Center. ~MPMc

BY KAREN MELLIN

Domestic violence sounds like an oxymoron, the juxtaposition of two absolute opposites that contradict each other in a joining that startles the mind. Home ought to be a safe place; but it isn't. The words *domestic violence*, so unsuitable to each other, indicate a schizophrenic condition that is pervasive in our culture. However, we are not alone. Domestic violence is an integral part of most cultures that reside on Mother Earth, our home. It affects us all, everyone of us. Whether we choose to talk about it or keep it hidden, our shared experience binds us in one universal wish: we don't like it one bit, and we want to see it eliminated. No small task.

Eliminating violence from our society is the major goal of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence. These coalitions provide assistance to programs that serve victims of domestic and sexual violence, such as the Clatsop County Women's Resource Center,* and their purpose is to change societal conditions that cause violence to exist. Awareness of the problem is the first step in dealing with the cure. Violence against women won't subside until public attitudes change.

A sense of entitlement is a major cause of violence against women and children by men. Many males believe they have the right to get what they want from women even if it includes rape, torture, mutilation, sexual slavery, incestuous and extrafamilial child sexual abuse, physical and emotional battery, deprivation, sexual harassment, genital mutilations, unnecessary gynecological operations, forced motherhood, forced heterosexuality, forced sterilization, psychosurgery, abusive medical experimentation, cosmetic surgery and other mutilations in the name of beautification. Jane Caputi & Diana E. H. Russell coined a new word in a *Ms.* Magazine article that best describes this gruesome list of violent behaviors against women. They called it *Femicide*, which is sexist terrorism motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership of women.

It happens all the time. It is estimated that a woman is battered every 15 seconds in America; it is the single largest cause of injury to women. These figures are from the United States Department of Justice, which reports that more than one-third of women homicide victims over 15 are killed by a

male spouse or boyfriend. The Journal of the American Medical Association states that 50% of the families where the wife is being abused, the children of that family are also abused. Until recently law enforcement and judicial systems have viewed spousal abuse as a "private matter" and have been hesitant to intervene or treat domestic assault as a crime.

Violent crimes against women have escalated in recent decades, say authors Caputi & Russell. "We see this escalation of violence against females as part of a backlash against feminism. This doesn't mean it's the feminism: patriarchal culture terrorizes women whether we fight back or not. Still, when male supremacy is challenged, that terror is intensified. Women who stepped out of line in early modern Europe were tortured and killed as witches (estimates range from 200,000 to 9 million killed), today such women are regarded as...deserving whatever happens to them."

The Statement of Philosophy of the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence recognizes that the root causes of this violence stems from a belief in the supremacy of one sex over the other that is legitimized by a complex series

of institutional and social arrangements that define and treat women as subordinates. "It is painful for most women to think about men's violence against us, as individuals and collectively, because the violence we encounter, and the disbelief and contempt with which we are met when we do speak out, is so often so traumatic and life threatening that many of us engage in denial or repression of our experiences," state Caputi & Russell. However, "We must demand an end to the global patriarchal war on women."

All women have the right to freedom from violation and to their own self-determination. We must all, collectively and internationally, take on the task of formulating strategies of resistance to the massive and formidable horrors that confront women and children everywhere. We must eliminate violence from our lives.

Karen Millen was director of Clatsop County Women's Crisis Service for seven years. She wrote this article for the NCTE in 1990.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

BY MARGARET FRIMOTH

The fear of male violence is bred into women's very souls. It is the fear of being harassed, beaten, threatened and kidnapped, of being raped, of being tortured and treated as less than human, and then killed at the hands of male power. The single most common fear of women is being violated by a man she does not know — the stranger rape, the mugger, the burglar. However, women are constantly surrounded by many forms of male violence. It is in our homes and in our relationships. Our stories are in the newspapers. We hear it in popular music. We are shown violence to women and children in advertising and on TV shows and the movies. Still we fear the stranger more than we recognize the violence that threatens us every day.

Women are trained to be conflicted about these fears. We are simultaneously taught to fear men because of their greater physical strength, and to rely on men as our benevolent protectors. Most of us learn to minimize our fears. When we discuss the intuitive dangers around us and our terrors of walking alone at night or the subtle threats that come from male peers, we are often categorized as oversensitive or hysterical. When we find ourselves in abusive relationships, we are told we love too much. When we reject the blaming and focus on the acts of male violence as the problem, we are targeted as angry women and men-haters. And most importantly, we have been taught to fear the targeting more than the physical dangers, so that when one woman is targeted other women learn to step away and remain silent. Their silence is seeped in fear. Historically women who have been models of strength, outspoken

and verbal about the abuses around them, have been publicly ridiculed and socially chastised. Many women are beaten when they speak out. No less than 3 million women were burned as witches. Male violence and the fear of violent male retaliation has effectively hidden these truths behind the guise of male protection. Individual violence is also systemic violence. Women and children fall prey to both these violences.

If I were granted the power to eliminate all the violence done by women to men and children, would there still be violence in the world? Yes, indeed! If I could eliminate all the violence done by men to women and children, would there still be violence in the world? Yes, probably, but this thought calms me more than the previous question. If men were held accountable for acts of violence neither individual nor systemic acts would be socially tolerated. I am weary of being assigned to the role of caretaker based on my gender. I am exhausted from caring for women and children without substantial financial stability. Perhaps men could hold themselves accountable by passing a "restitution tax" subject to all men based on the premise that men are the predominate violators of women and children. Money from this tax could fund women's crisis services and child abuse centers. Crazy? Radical? Perhaps. But the thought brings to mind a more peaceable kingdom. Perhaps it is time for outrageous responses to the outrageous acts of violence.

Margaret Frimoth is a former director of the Clatsop County Women's Crisis Service and is the director of VOCA (Victory Over Child Abuse) Camp. This article has been excerpted from one she wrote in 1989.


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