

Listen. I can hear us talking. I can feel our strength. We are networking and connecting, and we will never be abused again. We are helping make it easier for others to get out. And we're healing ourselves.

— Cheryl WaterWomon, (p. 29)

The process of healing is slow and painful — for many women, it is a never-ending process. For this reason, as Sandra Butler points out, our focus should not be solely on individual healing, but “on doing what we set out to do in the first place, and that is ending violence against women” (p. 119). It is time to move beyond acknowledging the problem, beyond theorizing causes, beyond fabricating excuses, and beyond accepting apologies. In the words of Andrea Dworkin, “...we can't keep sticking women together who have been broken up into little pieces” (p. 41). It is time to stop the war.

Women have been immobilized by a ground-in sense of worthlessness fueled by a society that values men's “rights” over women's existence. Developing a sense of self-worth will require more than a recognition of our own personal value, it will necessitate a community reaction to the violence perpetrated against us — a public response that demonstrates that we really do matter.

In our first issue on violence against women (Vol. 11, No. 4) published this summer, we provided a forum for women to speak out about the abuse in their lives. Our goal in this issue is to move beyond recovery into empowerment and change. Because we recognize that this will require an individual, community and institutional response to the everyday violence that permeates women's lives, the articles included here focus on change at each of these levels.

At the individual level our contributors expand on the strategies that were presented in “Violence against Women” by expressing a need for women to combine their energy, talents, and resources as we struggle to cope with the isolation, the exhaustion and the pain of our work. The bulk of the articles in this issue are focused on change at the community level. The energy and commitment of these

contributors is as fervent as their message is clear: they will accept no less than a “zero tolerance” of abuse. Ironically, we received fewer articles on strategies at the institutional level — where much of the power, the resources and the responsibility for change abide. (CWS/cf is planning an issue on Gender Equity and Institutional Change in 1992).

Although we do not agree with every strategy recorded here, we acknowledge the expertise of the women who have presented them. As Andrea Dworkin explains: “...every woman who has had experience with sexual violence of any kind has not just pain, and not just hurt, but has knowledge...And can begin to think strategically about how to stop it” (p. 39). Indeed, the strategies contained in this issue are as diverse as the women who offer them.

We also recognize that this issue contains gaps in important areas. These gaps do not reflect a limitation in knowledge but rather they reflect the limitations in time, energy and personal space for the women actively working in the area of violence. As many women have told us, the demands of their work leave no time for writing.

“Violence against Women” was designed to raise public awareness of the war against women and children. In “Strategies for Change,” we provide strategies for initiating a public response to the everyday violence that permeates our lives. While the voices recorded here are diverse and the strategies varied there is one common goal that has united us all: “Not one more woman. Not one more child” (p. 120).

The violence must stop.

— by June Larkin, Eimear O'Neill,
Carmen Perillo and Luciana Ricciutelli

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