EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

As you may all know by now, October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. I would like to dedicate this issue to all the Aasiyas, Reshmas and Nazishs who were not so lucky to have survived the abuse they endured at the hands of the abusers who finally took their lives. Each year, 1 in 3 women who is a victim of homicide, is murdered by an intimate partner.

I want to thank and applaud those survivors who have come forward and are willing to tell their stories - because it is a difficult step to take. I want to thank them for when they stand up and talk about the abuse they endured; about being afraid of not knowing what to expect when the abuser came home; about finding the skills to protect their children from the abuse directly or indirectly; and about clearing and laying the path open for other victims to come forward and be heard, saved and allowed to dream again without fear.

No adult or child should have to live a life of fear in his or her own home. No adult or child who is a victim of domestic violence should ever feel that he or she can get away with this abuse and not be called to reckon for their actions.

As a community, we need to make sure that the victims know that they are not alone; that there is support and resources available to them in their moment of need and that violence in any form will not be tolerated.

When we hear words like, “I don’t know what I would have done and how much longer I would have survived the abuse, if it was not for your organization ……” we know that we are in the right place at the right time and doing the right thing. The backbone and pillars of this organization are not just the Board or the funders but also the volunteers who dedicate and contribute their time and effort in bringing the solace that these victims so desperately seek in their lives. This is the other group of individuals that I would like to dedicate this issue to.

As you may know, the Domestic Harmony Foundation was started by a group of women who were perseverant and farsighted. DHF continues to provide its services through volunteers who are not fringed or frightened by community pressures or individual threats. They address the issue of domestic violence head on and without inhibitions. I want to dedicate this issue to those DHF volunteers and advocates who contribute in so many levels and in so many different areas of this work. As once best said by Jefferson Award Winner Alice Sandstrom, “Volunteers polish-up the rough spots in our communities.”

Violence against women is no more or less prevalent among South Asians or immigrants than in other cultures. It happens across all communities and populations, but immigrant women have a harder time in their journey to safety—whether or not it means leaving an abusive relationship—because of their immigration status, language or education barriers, social isolation, and lack of financial resources. They also have less access to legal and social services than others. Immigrant women tend to suffer in silence because of the cultural stigma of shame and divorce in the community. The pivotal role that DHF volunteers play in the complexities of domestic violence in South Asian women’s lives can be extremely demanding yet well understood only by them.

Each volunteer brings his or her own strengths and expertise to the organization. DHF would not be able to continue to do this work without the help of the amazing group of volunteers it has been so fortunate to have and also without the funding and support from the greater community.

We encourage more volunteers and funders to step up and come join our fold in whatever capacity possible, be it as attorneys, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, case workers, IT specialists, business and community members, or as lifetime friends and supporters.

As UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman said, “As long as one in three women and girls may be abused in their lifetimes, [eradicating] violence against women must be everybody’s business.”

Shaida Khan, Executive Director
Domestic Harmony Foundation, in cooperation with CLASSroad e-learning, is pleased to announce the promotion of a pre-marriage course. This is being setup as you read, so please check back on our website periodically to get started on this.

A successful marriage does not just happen. Nor is it simply a matter of luck in finding the right person. It takes hard work, understanding and determination. This pre-marriage course will help you develop the skills needed to ensure that you have a successful marriage filled with love, compassion, cooperation and mutual respect. This course provides over three hours of video content by trained family therapists and leaders, plus notes and online quizzes on topics such as Myths vs Realities of Marriage, Self-Reflection, Qualities to Look for in a Spouse, How to Get to Know Someone, Compatibility and the Importance of Commitment. You can sign up for the course at: www.classroad.com/dhf and pay just $50.00/user for a 60-day access.

The advantages to taking this course online are numerous. There is no driving to class required, so you save time and money. Further, this course can be completed at your own pace, and you can login at times convenient for you. This is an easy way to acquire affordable, high-quality education, taught by qualified Marriage & Family Therapists, and a Director of Religious Affairs of the Islamic Centre of Southern California. You will also be provided the contact of one of the instructors if you are in need of further pre-marital counseling.

This is yet another service being brought to you by DHF, as we are committed to your well-being and want you to be equipped for a life of harmony.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH EVENTS**

**Shine the Light:** Manhattan borough domestic violence task force commemorated Domestic Violence Awareness Month by joining with the Governor’s Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence to *Shine the Light on Domestic Violence in Times Square*. Everyone was requested to take a stand with them at a special lighting ceremony on Wed., Oct.12th at 6:45pm at Duffy Square (SW corner of Broadway & 47th St). DHF joins other institutions for peace and domestic harmony in requesting all to please remember the victims who lost their lives from domestic violence; acknowledge the courageous spirit of those victims who are now free from their abusers and give hope to those still living with abuse by wearing purple or shining a purple light in your window throughout the month of October.

**DHF at Hofstra:** As October is DV Awareness month, DHF has organized an event titled “Healthy and Safe Relationships” to be held at Hofstra to bring attention to increasing dating and relationship violence on campus. Among the speakers will be Dr. Rafia Hamid, specialist, behavioral health & social service, and Ms. Nadia Pervez, Esq., to bring awareness on students’ legal rights and what to do if the relationship turns into harassment & stalking. The event is open to all and will be held Oct.26, 2011, 11.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m., Monroe Theatre, Hofstra University., followed by a Q&A session. For more information, click on the [link](http://www.classroad.com/dhf).

**Black Women’s Blueprint:** Black Women’s Blueprint is a civil and human rights organization. They have organized an introductory workshop intended to bring further cultural awareness, sensitivity and understanding to those who work with trauma survivors, and specifically sexual abuse survivors of African descent. National sexual assault statistics indicate African-American women experience sexual abuse and other trauma at rates disproportionately higher than many other groups. For more information, click on this [link](http://www.classroad.com/dhf).

**DHF Legal Clinic:** DHF, in conjunction with the Nassau County Bar Association & the Nassau County Coalition against Domestic Violence will be holding a *free legal clinic* to provide information to Domestic Violence victims on a myriad of legal topics like, matrimonial, custody, child-support, landlord-tenant law, estate planning, family law, immigration, and criminal law, to name a few. This will be held Nov.16, 2011, 1.00 to 2.30 p.m., 7 Jaymie Drive, Westbury. Call 516-385-8292. Walk-ins also welcome. Please print the flyer provided on this [link](http://www.classroad.com/dhf) and share within your community and post at various Long Island locations such as stores, restaurants, laundromats, etc. to get the word out.

DHF Project Cookbook

Domestic Harmony Foundation (DHF) is publishing a cookbook that will showcase recipes from around the world and encourage families to share meals and spend more time together. DHF is looking to have the cookbook printed by April, 2012, and we plan on selling copies of this diverse collection to raise funds that will go towards our work with individuals and families in need.

We invite you to submit a traditional family recipe or your version of a fusion of East/West cuisine and share with us its unique story or tradition. This is a great opportunity for you to share, not only your pride in your culture and cuisine with the rest of the community but also give a gift to the next generation and contribute to a worthy cause! Share as many recipes as you like in these categories: appetizers, salads, side dishes, main courses, desserts, drinks and sauces/condiments.

Please also feel free to give copies of the attached recipe format to friends who may want to contribute a recipe too. The recipe format calls for the recipe itself, your name, along with a brief description of the dish and its importance to you, your family, or your culture. Help us to make this cookbook exceptional and truly representative of our diverse community!

E-mail the recipe together with a digital photo (if available) at your earliest convenience or by November 30, 2011 to info@dhfny.org. Please indicate ‘cookbook’ in the subject line.

As mentioned above, the proceeds from the cookbook sales will go towards supporting DHF’s work in the community through various outreach and educational programs and assisting victims of domestic violence. If you have any questions, you may email Nazli at: n99310c@yahoo.com or Jasia at: jasia@dhfny.org. Please continue to support DHF’s efforts by joining in this fun, family-focused project.

DHF at India Fest

Domestic Harmony Foundation (DHF) took part in the 20th Annual India Fest organized by the Indian Association of Long Island (IALI) and held on Aug. 7, 2011 at the Huntington Hilton in Melville, NY.

This was attended by an overwhelming crowd of over 9,000 people from all over the Tri-state area, including mainstream Americans as well as youngsters. This was the largest showcase of India’s culture in the Long Island area, and attendance was free. On show were India’s arts and crafts, jewelry, clothes, accessories, various foods, henna application, raffles, games, entertainment, etc.

As part of its outreach efforts, DHF had a stall of its own and provided awareness about domestic violence services available to the community and built strong relationships with community and religious organizations as well as professional individuals such as lawyers, teachers, social workers, nurses and other community members. Many shared their support and dedication, eagerly willing to offer help and resources. It was truly a day to celebrate unity and the beauty of our culture among the South Asian community.

DHF was interviewed by TV Asia as well as the South Asian Insider. Brief highlights of the event was aired on TV Asia in their Community Roundup program on Aug. 10th and repeated on Aug. 11th, providing DHF with much-needed exposure before the South Asian community.
**Tributaries - A Poem**

written by Nandini Nessa

*The poem below may not be reprinted or reproduced without the permission of the author*

This has been written by a survivor and can best be described as a Journey of a Woman from Oppression to Liberation.

I am a passerby
passing by bridges
& troubled waters
driving on festive nighttime bridges
no destination. only doubt.
yesterday’s lament
tomorrow’s promise

I used to be in the world. I used to love with abandon.
I used to walk alone in the woods.
Now, I am not here.

I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ I am not here/ tributaries carved
broken bottle neck rivers
residue of your fingers
cigarette ash
this map of shame
this map of lost cities
burned and buried ghost towns
sovereign truths
won in the most intimate of wars
keep fires contained
keep secrets from tearing everything apart.
watch, my love.
watch these scars inside
start to glow

I feign sleep
I whisper prayers with a sliver of hope
I hatch a plan.
You will awake.
No breakfast.
No note.
I am gone.
No destination. no doubt.

Illuminated bridges give way to a carnival.
I remember the old magic of roller coasters.
I sit beside a stranger
I am squeezing my eyes tight.
I am squeezing her hand.
I am screaming.
I am crying.
I am laughing.
I have not forgotten how.
I have not forgotten how.

Did You Know?

Only approximately one-quarter of all physical assaults, one-fifth of all rapes, and one-half of all stalkings perpetrated against females by intimate partners are reported to the police.

**DHF Summer Youth Group**

During the summer of 2011, Domestic Harmony Foundation (DHF) once again ran the Summer Youth Group as it was received quite well at its initiation last year. The purpose of running the summer youth group was to create a healthy space for teenagers and young adults between the ages of 13 and 24 where they could openly discuss issues important to them with their peers, learn more about how to secure college admissions and make themselves more competitive in the job market, be exposed to the necessary skill set required to be an effective leader, work towards creating interfaith harmony, and finally, as co-survivors of domestic violence, communicate effectively with other youngsters dealing with similar issues. While the youth group was open to all youngsters who fit the age criteria, DHF especially strived to attract young co-survivors of domestic violence. In addition to the trauma they underwent, many of the co-survivors that DHF works with have also been displaced from their homes, towns, or even countries. DHF recognizes that it is essential and a part of the healing process in providing them the time and the opportunity to speak with their peers about the myriad of stresses they are currently facing and also facilitate the development of new supportive relationships. The youth group took place every Sunday for two hours from July 3rd to August 7th. Below are descriptions of some of the weekly sessions written by the participants themselves:

**Interfaith Leadership Workshop**  
*Presented by Omer and Shamsha Chaudhri*  
*Written by Rubab Rehman*

The first session of the Youth Leadership summer program at DHF was led by guest speakers Shamsha and Omer Chaudri. It consisted of a thoughtful and engaging discussion on the relationship between your own identity and interfaith relations. The Chaudris emphasized the importance of joining and becoming involved in an organization you are passionate about as the first step towards becoming a leader. Embracing one's Muslim identity, especially when participating in a secular community group, would also promote the overt integration of American Muslims into mainstream society, and gradually diminish the fallacious notion that Muslims and Americans are two distinct and inherently incompatible groups. Conducting effective interfaith work and demonstrating leadership skills seemed to be intertwined. The youth group members came away with the intention to seize every opportunity that they come across to grow as leaders who could ultimately pave the way for increased tolerance and collaboration among groups of diverse ethnicities and religions.

**Building a Bright Future**  
*Presented by Dr. Sultan Abdulhameed*  
*Written by Samra Farooq*

Under difficult and tiring circumstances, it may truly be difficult to preserve a sense of hope. Yet, as mentioned in the Quran, "And who but those who have gone astray abandon hope of the Lord's mercy?" (15:59) Indeed, those who abandon hope of everything, of the Allah's (swt) forgiveness and cling to the facade of constricted choices, fail to realize the options open to them towards beneficial guidance. A loss of hope, on the other hand, tends to lead to feelings of anguish and despair. This negativity can lead to issues in relationships with people, as it difficult to deal with those who are consistently cynical or pessimistic. Quoted from his book, The Quran and the Life of Excellence, Sultan Abdulhameed states "We are human beings. We have the ability to change what we are thinking". In other words, to escape from a bleak situation, we must induce in ourselves the willingness to move on by altering our disheartening thoughts and think more often about faith, and what we must do in submission to our Benevolent Lord to attain hope. By exercising faith, we will then have a better future in store for us.

**The College Admissions Game**  
*Presented by Tehreem Rehman*  
*Written by Afnan Gilani*

Tehreem Rehman, a rising junior at Columbia University, conducted the workshop on college admissions. A good time to start looking into future careers and colleges is during the summer after your sophomore year, in order to ascertain which colleges are known for having expertise in your desired career field. The goal during junior year should be to ace the Advanced Placement exams and SATs. You would also want to reach out to teachers, friends, and relatives who have attended the school you want to go to and solicit different views on the institution. There are thousands of colleges to choose from but where do you start? Important things to look for in a college are their location, college rank, and of course, financial aid offered. Definitely try to visit the colleges you have narrowed down, register for their campus tours, and don’t shy away from even making an appointment with a faculty member. In addition to grades and demonstrated interest, colleges also look at your extracurricular activities. Steer away from joining a bunch of clubs and sports to merely fill up your resume. Rather, join a decent amount that relate to your aspiring career, and make sure to stick with them in order to prove your dedication to these organizations and your career path. “The College Admissions Game” can be very overwhelming at first, but if done step by step, can be easily accomplished.

**Financial Planning Workshop**  
*Presented by Soofia Naqvi and Tabassum Baig*  
*Written by Tehreem Rehman*

Credit building is a long process and the earlier you begin, the better. You need to have good credit in order to apply for student loans, and these days, even large companies will examine your credit before they agree to hire you. If you foresee any difficulty in paying back your loans immediately after graduating from college,
DHF Summer Youth Group (cont'd.)

you can defer paying back your loans by postponing the official graduation. Simply take a 2 or 3 credit class to buy some time before you being paying back your loans. In order to facilitate effective credit building, it is best to keep only two or three credit cards that remain in good standing rather than sign up for several cards. This is important so that you do not forget about the payment schedules, and end up with late payments on your record. In addition, you should not spend more than half of your credit limit as that actually hurts your credit score. Avoid department store credit cards as they prove to simply be a burden on your credit. Just maintain 2-3 credit cards and ensure that these have no annual fee. Credit building may seem daunting at first but with some basic rules in mind, it can be transformed into a fairly simply task, that would prove to lay the groundwork for sound spending habits leading to a sound credit record for the future.

Healthy Relationships Workshop Presented by Dr. Rafia Hamid Written by Tehreem Rehman

As humans, we are part of an intricate network of relationships with numerous categories of people - friends, family, colleagues, teachers, and even God. Although these relationships can represent a positive support system for us, they also have the potential for causing emotional turmoil. In order to successfully overcome the myriad of societal pressures we face on a daily basis and to avoid engaging in behavior that we do not feel wholly comfortable with, it is imperative to first conduct an introspection of our personal values. Becoming aware of our values before we continue to immerse ourselves into relationships with other people enables us to establish more meaningful relationships. Conflict is natural in relationships, but it must be resolved appropriately in order for the relationship to endure the tension. This would subsequently make the relationship grow stronger and becoming deeper. Ultimately, in healthy relationships, there must be some kind of “mutuality”, and most importantly, respect.

Ultimately, we hoped that this group would fill the void of youth development services, especially within the South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Muslim communities. Yet, it was incontrovertible that in order to adhere to DHF’s overall mission of addressing the issue of domestic violence on Long Island, recruitment would focus and lay emphasis on positive reinforcement of a healthy future for co-survivors of domestic violence. Many of the youth group participants, including some of the co-survivors, were able to open up and talk to each other about some of the issues they were dealing with in life - stress from school, peer pressure, racism, bigotry and feelings of loneliness and isolation. This was no doubt the biggest accomplishment for the youth group.

Strangulation & Domestic Violence

Strangulation is one type of assault that many victims of domestic violence experience. It is one of the most lethal forms of violence used on victims, which symbolizes an abuser’s power and control, where the victim is overwhelmed and is at the mercy of the abuser for her life. For years, advocates have stressed the importance to police and prosecutors on how dangerous any act of strangulation is and demanded that more abusers be held accountable.

The effects of strangulation are not always readily apparent. Injury can occur, but not be visible, and the victim may not realize the impacts of that injury until hours or days later.

Besides, there are other physical, neurological and long-term psychological effects of being strangled. This form of physical assault was not addressed as a specific crime, and the threshold for assault in New York State is very high. Most often than not, even if the police are called in following a strangulation attempt, they would write a domestic incident report for harassment in the second degree, and not assault in the third degree.

Advocates for victims of domestic violence have been stressing how dangerous any act of strangulation can be and demanded that abusers be held accountable and charged appropriately.

In response, New York State passed a bill on strangulation in November 2010. The law addresses the unique and intricate nature of strangulation, making the act not only a crime but also creating misdemeanor and felony level charges for this crime.

On May 17, 2011, Bushra Husain, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, gave a presentation to DHF volunteers and staff on the new strangulation law and implications on how to better advocate for clients and conduct a thorough investigation, as asking questions that could elicit specific information about the signs and symptoms of strangulation is an important part of the interview process.

NY Penal Law Article 121
DHF has been holding a series of lectures and discussions titled “Using Education to Uplift and Empower Oneself.” These lectures featured speakers and topics that addressed the issue of empowerment through education, self-awareness, and positive, proactive thinking. The lectures were open to DHF members, supporters, survivors, ICLI community members and invitees. A wide cross-section of speakers from various walks of life were invited, as well as book and video discussions held. Speakers utilized reading materials or spoke from their own education and experience to address issues that were relevant to DHF's clients and general community members. Topics generally addressed the importance of education (either as a way towards a career and stability or as a path for self-awareness or general understanding). Speakers could choose their own specific subject matter and present it in any way they liked. These lectures and discussions were usually held on alternate Sundays and generally ran for about one or one and a half hours, starting at 10.30 a.m. through 12 noon. Here is a brief synopsis of some of the discussions held, in case you missed any. We do have a few more coming up before we break for the summer. Call us and sign up with your email address so that you are on our distribution list.

June 19, 2011—DHF invited Engy Abdelkader, Esq. at the Islamic Centre of Long Island, Westbury for a lecture and discussion on “A Muslim Woman’s Guide to her Civil Rights: When Faith Practices Trigger Discrimination”. Engy Abdelkader, Esq. is a renowned human rights attorney based in the New York/New Jersey area. She spoke about individual civil liberties and the impact on Muslims in America post 9-11. Interactive discussions were held that touched upon the current issues faced by Muslims in America, and how to go about creating improvement and a more conducive environment to Muslim practices, political involvement and empowerment and civic engagement. On the one hand, we tend to be less outspoken about our rights and stand up for it, and on the other we face false representations in the media that have contributed to the development of a phobia against Muslims and Islam in general. Ms. Abdelkader encouraged the audience to participate in the discussion, and many ideas and points were brought up in finding a solution for Muslims. Many audience members brought up the issues of racism in America, and how we can learn from its history. Many people continue to face this and it is hard to bring about immediate change. However, she pointed out that it is important to be a body of united Muslims and bring up challenges to higher authorities to develop a stronger voice as Muslims.

One of the examples she mentioned that we can learn from and derive satisfaction, is that of a Muslim lady who was held up for security screening at an airport and was required to have her head scarf removed. After considerable attempts to stand her position, she eventually agreed to remove it but subsequently filed a lawsuit against this requirement of public exposure that was against Islamic religious practices. Due to this, it is now standard practice for a female, Muslim or not, to have the right to request a private screening area to satisfy religious practices. This was an excellent example of a small step resulting in major changes affecting an entire religious community while creating respect and awareness of practices that have importance for Muslims. Another critical aspect where we seem to be lacking is political clout. This can change if we are more aware of our democratic rights and how to exercise it; the first step of which is to become registered voters, and be counted as a bloc that needs to be taken into consideration during every local, provincial or national election. It is extremely crucial to initiate this kind of progress and awareness for Muslims in America, and it can all begin through the grassroots effort and involvement of the individual, the community and entire religious, cultural and ethnic groups.

Engy Abdelkader’s publication: A Muslim Woman’s Guide to her Civil Rights

Suggested Reading

**Even After All This Time** by Afschineh Latifi. Even after all this time is the story of a family torn apart by war and violence. This is also the story of two adolescent girls who found themselves on their own in America, forced to become strong young women before they even had a childhood.

**Half the Sky** by Nicholas Kristof & Sheryl Wudunn. Half the Sky lays out an agenda for the world’s women and three major abuses: sex trafficking and forced prostitution; gender-based violence including honor killings and mass rape; and maternal mortality, which needlessly claims one woman a minute. We know there are many worthy causes competing for attention in the world. We focus on this one because this kind of oppression feels transcendent – and so does the opportunity. Outsiders can truly make a difference.
**PREVENTION**

*If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow.*

–Chinese Proverb

**Did You Know?**

According to a 2008 report: 38.3% of child victims were maltreated by their mother acting alone. 18.1% of victims were maltreated by their father acting alone. 17.9% were maltreated by both parents.


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**Women Forced to Take Justice in Their Hands in Rural India**

Their leader is 48-year-old Sampat Pal, who first decided to act when she witnessed domestic violence.

“My neighbor was a young girl who had been married very early. Her husband used to beat her, so I argued with him,” remembers gang leader Sampat Gulabi Pal. “He threatened me, so I came back with five women and we beat him up. Since then, this movement has taken off. Whenever a woman is beaten or harassed, she comes to me.”

Banda is one of the poorest districts in Uttar Pradesh. Women bear the brunt of discrimination here – dowry demands and domestic violence are common.

“For the last month, my brother-in-law has been hitting me with a stick. He hit my son so badly that he started bleeding,” said Siya Rani, who has come to Sampat for help after being beaten in her own home. She explained that she “approached the police but they didn’t help.”

“When women are harassed, instead of letting them waste years in courts looking for justice, we go to the village and try to arrange a settlement,” states Gulabi Gang leader Sampat Pal. “After all, men and women are two wheels of the same vehicle.”

Although most of the gang’s actions are on behalf of women, they are increasingly called upon by men. When local farmers decided to take to the streets to demand compensation for failed crops, they asked the Gulabi Gang to be there.

“The Gulabi Gang takes up the cause of anybody who faces injustice, whether they are poor or rich,” shared supporter Ashok Srivastava. “It may take money and time, but these women fight against injustice and raise their voices for the innocent.”

But Sampat herself is in danger of being criminalized. Following complaints by the police, she is waiting to hear if she will be formally charged with rioting and attacking government employees.

“The police tell us, ‘Don’t take the law in your own hands.’ So I tell them, ‘We have no option. When we have no faith in the police, we have to protect ourselves.’” Sampat Pal argues.

In rural India, with the administration often corrupt and failing to deliver, and with women still amongst the most oppressed, it was only a matter of time before movements such as Gulabi Gang became popular.

Source: Rt.com: Women forced to take justice in their hands in rural India

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**Schoolgirl in India defies child marriage tradition**

Today 6.4 million Indians under the age of 18 are married and 130,000 girls under 18 have become widows according to the government’s latest National Family Health Survey. In India overall, roughly 47.6 percent of girls are married by the age of eighteen (The implications of early marriage, 2004). Though the statistics are contentious, it is estimated that in some parts of India like the state of Rajasthan, nearly 80 percent of the marriages are among girls under the age of fifteen” (Gupta, 2005, p. 2).

This is the region where 15-year-old Sapna Meena joined a small but growing number of girls to stand up against the practice of child marriage.

“My family was in the midst of planning my wedding,” recalled Sapna, her black hair pinned in a bun and a gold stud in her nose, as she sat on a step outside her home in Badakakahera village in Rajasthan state. My grandfather had decided that while he was alive he wanted to see that I get married and settled. I was scared to say anything against it at first. I went to my mother and told her I wanted to study more and get a job, and only after that would I get married,” added the girl, who is from a subsistence farming community that ekes out a living by growing crops like wheat and maize.

Sapna did not stop there. She went to local officials three hours bus drive away in the city of Bhilwara to get help. Not only did the authorities play a mediating role and have her family suspend the wedding plans, but also awarded Sapna a certificate of gallantry for being an “agent of change” in her community.

Sapna is proof that, through education and exposure to the modern world, girls are beginning to take decisions over their own lives and are helping to lift the curse of early marriage that has plagued India for centuries. This practice remains one of the biggest obstacles to the development of women in India.

At religious festivals such as “Akha Teej” in Rajasthan, hundreds of girls as young as 10, dressed in traditional red saris and adorned in gold, are married off in dusty villages and small
Schoolgirl in India defies child marriage tradition (contd.)

Did You Know?

On average, more than three women and one man are murdered by their intimate partners in this country every day.


PREVENTION

"Domestic violence does not only happen to adults. Forty percent of girls age 14 to 17 report knowing someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend, and approximately one in five female high school students reports being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner."

– Dianne Feinstein

In 1990, Pakistan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Child, which prohibits child marriages. In addition under the Muslim Family Law Ordinance, and under the Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929), a girl must have attained the age of 16 and a boy must have attained the age of 18, and both need to consent before the marriage can take place.

Historically there have been no measures taken by the state to ensure that marriages are consensual and in many instances the age of a girl will be changed on her marriage certificate in order to avoid questions over her being underage.

The ability of individuals to bypass the law without any fear of repercussions has also perpetuated customary practices of selling girls into ‘marriage’ in exchange for money, settling disputes with the exchange of girls known as ‘vani’ or ‘swara’ and the use of girl as compensation for crimes and the settling of disputes. While the formal laws in Pakistan do not condone these practices, the courts do little to address them, allowing informal justice systems to implement a law of their own.

Vani is a tribal custom in which blood feuds are settled with forced marriages. The bride spends her life paying for the crime of her male relatives.

"She's just like a slave in their house," says community activist Zia-Ullah Khan, "because she comes from the enemy's family, and the people took vani to compensate their revenge. They try to give pain to the girl and her family members."

No one knows how many women suffer this fate in Pakistan, but anecdotal evidence suggests a lot. Although UNICEF officials are optimistic of changing attitudes, fears remain that last year’s flooding may accelerate the practice of child marriage. Nearly 20 million people were affected by the floods and many not only lost their homes, but also the means to earn a living. Parents may now reluctantly decide to push their daughters into unwanted early marriages because of poverty.

Sources: Unicef.org and bbc.co.uk

VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN DISCUSSES DATING VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ASSAULT ON THE VIEW

Vice President Joe Biden joined the ladies of The View on Sept. 27, 2011 to discuss violence against women. When Biden was growing up, domestic violence wasn’t talked about. There was a cultural stigma that the woman was to blame. Biden’s father taught him differently though and to intervene because it was never okay for a man to hit a woman. The bill known as the greatest breakthrough in civil rights for women in nearly two decades was drafted by U.S. Senator Joe Biden, now Vice President. The Violence Against Women Act or VAWA is a U.S. Federal Law signed on Sept. 13th, 1994 by Pres. Clinton.

Continue reading on Examiner.com VP Joe Biden talks domestic violence on The View - National Domestic Violence & Abuse | Examiner.com
The U.S. Department of Labor announced protocols to complete the portion of the non-immigrant U visa application process. Requiring certification by a law enforcement agency that the applicant is a victim of a qualifying crime and is willing to cooperate with law enforcement in the investigation and prosecution of the crime.

"U" Visas, as they are known, are designed to help victims of qualifying criminal activities who have suffered substantial physical or mental abuse. Individuals who receive U visas may stay in the United States for four years, and may eventually apply for permanent residency. U visas are issued by U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services.

The U visa certification process has been delegated to the Wage and Hour Division’s regional administrators located in five cities around the country. The division will refer the underlying qualifying criminal activity to appropriate law enforcement agencies in accordance with its normal referral procedure. After the division completes a certification, the victim of the qualifying criminal activity must still submit his or her application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for a determination of whether to approve the application.

"I am pleased that the department’s Wage and Hour Division has developed protocols and can begin completing U visa certifications for immigrants who are victims of crimes and willing to cooperate with law enforcement," said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. "Because many wage and hour investigations take place in industries using vulnerable workers in abusive situations, the Wage and Hour Division is often the first federal agency to make contact with these workers and detect criminal activity in the workplace, which it may then refer to the appropriate authorities."

The Wage and Hour Division is responsible for enforcing federal labor laws pertaining to the minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, child labor and special employment, family and medical leave, migrant workers, lie detector tests, worker protections in certain temporary worker programs, and the prevailing wages for government service and construction contracts. The U visa certification process has been delegated to the Wage and Hour Division’s regional administrators located in five cities around the country. The division will refer the underlying qualifying criminal activity to appropriate law enforcement agencies in accordance with its normal referral procedure. After the division completes a certification, the victim of the qualifying criminal activity must still submit his or her application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for a determination of whether to approve the application.

The Wage and Hour Division will consider completing U visa certifications based on five qualifying criminal activities – involuntary servitude, peonage, trafficking, obstruction of justice and witness tampering – when it detects them in the process of investigating a violation of an employment law under its jurisdiction, for example, as related to minimum wage and overtime rights.

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For general information about federal wage laws, call the division’s toll-free helpline at 866-4US-WAGE (487-9243). Information is also available on the Internet at www.dol.gov/whd/

For more information, see the Department of Labor U Visa Process and Protocols Questions & Answers.
This is the first in our series of inspiring stories.

Abedin’s life is an inspiring story where a Muslim girl manages to reach the top. Saleha Mahmood Abedin, Huma’s mother, a Pakistani was born in 1940 in pre-partition India and is a renowned and respected Islamic scholar with a PhD in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania. Late Zainul Abedin was born in 1928 India and also earned his PhD in American Civilization from the University of Pennsylvania in the 70s.

Born in 1976 in the U.S., Abedin is fluent in Arabic and a constant in Hillary Clinton’s center of power. She started working as an intern in 1996 and succeeded to the rank of Clinton’s deputy chief of staff. This may be her official title, but personally Abedin is much closer to Clinton. “I have one daughter. But if I had a second daughter, it would be Huma,” Clinton said at the Abedin Weiner pre-wedding party in 2010.

Vogue did a spread on Abedin in 2007 in which Clinton said, “Abedin has the energy of a woman in her 20s, the confidence of a woman in her 30s, the experience of a woman in her 40s, and the grace of a woman in her 50s. She is timeless, her combination of poise, kindness, and intelligence are matchless.”

She is also known for her impeccable style, favoring designers like Marc Jacobs and Prada. Oscar de la Renta, a friend, designed her dress for her wedding to Rep. Weiner last summer.

Huma Abedin, the wife of former Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-New York), has been unwittingly pushed into the spotlight following her husband’s admission that he sent lewd photos to women he had met online.

Abedin, who is 35, was noticeably absent at the press conference when a tearful Weiner, 46, confessed to the inappropriate relationships but also said that he and his wife "have no intention of splitting up over this."

Sources:
Dawn.com: An inspiring immigrant story
Huffingtonpost.com: Huma Abedin: biography of Anthony Weiner’s wife
Observer.com: Hillary’s mystery woman: who is Huma?

Photo Acknowledgements:
Wedding Portrait: (AP Photo/Barbara Kinney)
Traveling with the First Lady: (Paul J. Richards/ AFP/Getty Images)
Nazish Noorani became the latest statistic as a victim of Domestic Violence. Her cold blooded murder during the month of Ramadan in many ways was unsettling to the South Asian and Muslim communities. She was a vivacious 27 year old mother of two very young sons who had been married for just six years. Her husband, Kashif Parvaiz, 26, grew up in Brooklyn and ran a small contracting business there.

Ms. Noorani and Mr. Parvaiz were both shot several times as they were walking down a quiet residential street in Boonton, NJ pushing a stroller with their 3 year old son on Aug.16th, 2011 after breaking their fast (Iftaar) of Ramadan with family. Ms. Noorani died of a bullet wound to the heart. Mr. Parvaiz got shot and survived with superficial wounds. Since there was no attempted robbery, the police and the community was stumped about the motive. Police became suspicious of Mr. Parvaiz when he started giving them inconsistent accounts of the incident and changing the description of the attackers to imply racial bias. Upon further questioning he admitted to setting up the shooting with the help of a female friend from Massachusetts.

Both Mr. Parvaiz and his female friend Ms. Antoinette Stephen were charged with first-degree murder. According to the arrest affidavit, Mr. Parvaiz told the investigators “that there were issues in his marriage and that he was angry at his wife for allegedly speaking negatively about his family.” According to the Morris County Prosecutor “there is obviously a relationship” between the two defendants and that “for a significant period of time” they had plotted the killing.

In the days following the killing, Ms. Noorani’s family portrayed Mr. Parvaiz as an abusive philanderer who had lied to them about aspects of his life from his college degrees to his contracting business. According to the Boston police, Mr. Parvaiz had an apartment there and was arrested in February on charges of assaulting a 20 year old woman after an argument. He was described as her boyfriend in the police report and that the dispute had to do with “the fact that she has been unfaithful to him”. The woman told the police that he had slapped her in the face and pushed her. The prosecutors dropped the charges against him later on when the woman declined to cooperate with them.

But, the most disturbing aspect of this killing is that it could have prevented. According to Ms. Noorani’s family, her marriage was not going well and she lived in fear of Pervaiz. Just a month before her murder, she had sent an ominous text to her older brother “one day you’ll find me dead & it’s going to be Kashi who did it, so save this text. You’ll need it.”

Domestic Harmony Foundation (DHF) urges our communities to step up and speak out about domestic violence. The families of perpetrators and victims should intervene before it is too late. There should be no shame associated with the couple or their families, if a marriage cannot be saved. There could be irreconcilable differences in any marriage and families can take on the role of helping the couple involved to move on amicably. Friends and colleagues could even suggest seeking help when they suspect patterns of abuse. Furthermore, clergy could take on a preventative role by giving sermons and advice about non-violent ways to solve issues. All can support and endorse organizations that are working towards ending this epidemic. For more information about DHF please visit our website: www.dhfny.org

For more information, go to: Wsj.com

In memory of Nazish Noorani, a Memorial Fund has been created for her two young children: http://www.nazishmemorialfund.org/

**She Made Me Do It** - Heat of Passion Defense Crumbles in Court

How do we understand the death of loved ones at the hands of those with whom they are most intimate? Unfortunately, in life as well as in law, these have typically been considered or termed as “crimes of passion”, and this case was no exception. Here, the state Supreme Court agreed to consider reinstating the murder conviction of a man who fatally stabbed his former girlfriend after San Francisco officers mishandled her abuse complaint. People vs. Tari Bertram, a domestic violence homicide case was prosecuted in 2008 by Elizabeth Aguilar Tarchi, Assistant District Attorney for San Francisco with a heat of passion defense where the jury returned a verdict on second degree murder. The verdict was recently reversed on jury instruction error, and a Petition for Review is pending before the California Supreme Court.

Staunchly defended by traditional legal scholarship, these theories center around the notion that defendants are less culpable when they lose “self-control.” This sounds plausible and humane, but leaves unanswered an important question: Which losses of self-control merit the law’s compassion? The San Francisco Domestic Violence Consortium, 17 agencies providing services to victims, said the new standard “eliminates accountability for abusers who claim provocation.” “By eliminating the requirement that a reasonable person would have been provoked to lethal violence, the (appellate) decision permits abusive killers to further abdicate responsibility for their choice to use homicidal violence,” the consortium said in a filing with the state’s high court. Source: Sfgate.com: Calif. High Court Takes Up Notorious S.F. Killing
**ADVOCACY**

This case stems from a lawsuit filed by Jessica Lenahan (formerly Gonzales). She charged that police repeatedly failed to enforce a restraining order against her violent husband, who kidnapped their three young daughters in 1999. The children were killed later that night. The ACLU Women’s Rights Project works regularly to protect the rights of domestic violence survivors. They coordinated nine friend-of-the-court briefs on Jessica’s behalf as they strongly believed that police departments must be held accountable for complying with mandatory arrest laws and enforcing orders of protection.

As background information, in 1999, a court granted Jessica Gonzales a protective order barring her estranged husband Simon from contact with her and her three daughters, ages seven, nine and ten. The court order also required the police to enforce its terms by arresting her husband if he violated the order.

Simon abducted the young girls a month after the court order was issued and Jessica immediately called the police. The police told Jessica there was nothing they could do, and said she should call back if the girls did not turn up. Jessica called the police that night. Eventually she even drove to the police station to plead for help in person. The police refused to take action, enforce the court order and help find her children. Later that night, Jessica’s husband Simon drove up to the police station and opened fire with a gun he had purchased that day. Simon was killed in a gun battle with police. Afterwards, police officers discovered the dead bodies of Jessica’s three daughters in Simon’s truck.

Lenahan filed a lawsuit against the police, but in June 2005 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that she had no Constitutional right to police enforcement of her restraining order. She did not give up her quest for justice and filed a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, saying that the inaction of the police and the Supreme Court’s decision violated her human rights.

In the first case brought by a survivor of domestic violence against the U.S. before an international human rights tribunal, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) found that the United States violated the human rights of Jessica Lenahan and her children. The decision underscores that the U.S. is failing in its legal obligation to protect women and girls from domestic violence.

Source: **ACLJ: Jessica Gonzales v. U.S.A.**

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**WHY DON’T BATTERED WOMEN LEAVE?**

**SUBMITTED BY A SURVIVOR**

Women often do not leave abusive relationships mainly because they feel trapped. They face many hurdles when striving to leave and get to safety, as the choices they face are neither easy nor free of risks.

Many fail to comprehend why women do not leave when there are apparently so many sources of help available. However, it is never that simple. When a woman in such circumstances does decide to leave, she faces the possibility of a threat of physical harm to herself, her children, friends and family. In some cases, the batterer bombards her with suicide threats and even harms himself to make her feel guilty. He can cover himself in a blanket of shame that threatens to suffocate and paralyze you. In other instances, he continues to harass or stalk the victim and subject her to emotional, verbal, or even physical harm that could result in serious injury or even death. The victim is afraid not only for herself, but she also becomes terrified for the well being of her children. Her children could be emotionally or physically harmed, she could lose her children as a result of parental kidnapping or a legal custody decision, and to top of it all, she feels that she may be adversely impacting the kids’ welfare by breaking up the family. Finances also play a major role in the woman’s decision. By leaving the abuser, she has to leave the family income, possessions and the familiarity of her neighborhood and surroundings. If she is working, she may have to quit a job or relocate to fulfill the responsibilities of a single parent. Oftentimes women have to rely on one income and the family suffers financially. Some women even have to leave their job because of threats and harassment.

Basically women do like to be taken care of and if they are in a bad relationship, it is hard for them to get out of it and lose the partnership investment, help with the children, household, and transportation. They are afraid to be judged by the community and labeled as bad wives or mothers. Societal pressures force them to keep the relationship going based on religious or cultural beliefs or even just because kids need to have a father around. In any circumstance, it is hard to break the relationship, despite the suffering being endured. Women care about love, shared memories and commitment and in most cases women want the violence to end, and not the relationship.
Domestic Harmony Foundation (DHF)
P.O. Box 35
Syosset, NY 11791
Tel: 516-385-8292
Email: info@dhfny.org
To sign up for future events, become a supporter or to make a donation:
http://www.dhfny.org/contact_us.html

“Domestic violence causes far more pain than the visible marks of bruises and scars. It is devastating to be abused by someone that you love and think loves you in return. It is estimated that approximately 3 million incidents of domestic violence are reported each year in the United States.” – Dianne Feinstein

Join the Club!
Join the Club of growing DHF Supporters! Details of the program are provided here below, with a breakdown of Supporter Donation Levels:

- **DHF Bronze Supporter** $ 20 and up annually
- **DHF Silver Supporter** $ 100 and up annually
- **DHF Gold Supporter** $ 500 and up annually

Besides the satisfaction of knowing that the contribution would be utilized towards empowering and improving the lives of domestic violence survivors, other benefits to you would be:

- Receive information on upcoming DHF events, such as Speaker Series, Movie Screenings, etc.
- Access to Free English classes
- DHF Newsletter subscription
- DHF Supporter Pin
- DHF Giveaways
- Discounts on DHF Hosted Paid Events
  - DHF Bronze Supporter – 10%
  - DHF Silver Supporter – 15%
  - DHF Gold Supporter – 20%

Join in today by donating at our website:
http://www.dhfny.org/donations.html and specify “Supporter” level.

Editor’s Note: Article submissions by our readers and professionals in the field are always welcome. They should be specific to the topic of domestic violence and your experience as a survivor or service provider; or pertaining to a DHF-sponsored event. Please specify if your name may be mentioned in the byline. We reserve the right to refuse any submissions as well as exercise editorial privilege. We are unable to offer any compensation for these submissions. Please email your articles to info@dhfny.org, and mention “Newsletter Article” in the subject line.

Other News Headlines

- Report Reveals Barriers to Justice for Survivors of DV who Act to Protect Themselves
- Obama Administration Fulfills Core Element of I-VAWA
- Hurting Homes, An article by Munira L. Ezzeldine
- Did You Know You Can File to Renew or Replace Your Green Card Online?
- Sewing Her Way Out of Poverty
- Preventing Violence, Promoting Justice: A Summit!
- Domestic Violence Awareness Month Briefing: VAWA & FAITH