

support and advocacy for  
victims of violence and trauma



## **Witness Justice e-Newsletter**

**October 2008**

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**OCTOBER IS  
Domestic Violence  
Awareness Month**

**Family Violence Prevention  
Fund**

**National Center on  
Domestic and Sexual  
Violence**

**National Coalition Against  
Domestic Violence**

**National Domestic Violence  
Hotline**

**National Network to End  
Domestic Violence**

**Office on Violence Against  
Women**

**The "Spin" that Revictimizes**

SLAP! The sound of an abusive parent slapping his child. It's hard. His son will feel it for years, because each blow does more than bruise his son's face-it mars his son's psyche as the emotional trauma instantly changes his view of the world and his ability to trust others. The abuse may also cause this young boy to act out at school because children lack the maturity and language skills to talk about what is happening; they often communicate to us through behavior. So for this young boy, we can recognize that something is wrong in his life. But will his peers also feel it? A recent study by the National Bureau of Economic Research suggests that an abused child's behavior will affect his classmates, who thus become the collateral damage of that slap.

The study, which examined elementary students from 22 Florida schools, found that students with histories of domestic violence did not fare as well as their peers on standardized tests. They also experienced more disciplinary issues. The study produced statistics that seemed to suggest that students from troubled homes may affect the test scores and disciplinary issues of students from non-troubled homes.

There may be a reason for the statistics produced by the study, and domestic violence may be a part of that, but other factors were not explored. The study findings are positioned in a harmful and misleading way so that one might conclude that isolating children that distract in the classroom is the solution - and it is not! The answer lies in what we should be doing to better support these children, not separating them because a study marks them as "the problem." Each person has something to contribute and brings value to our communities - and shared personal experiences bring new understanding and education in things we may not have experienced.

What we might ask is how trauma is affecting classrooms throughout the United States. When we consider that traumatizing experiences like abuse, neglect, violence, terrorism, disaster, and war affect many families, it may also be helpful to know how that experience does impact learning. It wouldn't be a stretch to understand that traumatic experiences do impact students, peers, and teachers. It is important to recognize that deteriorating achievement in the classroom likely has several causal factors and that blaming the victim will do lots of harm and very little good. And, not surprisingly, this makes a case for trauma-education and trauma-informed approaches in yet another system of service - that of education.

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In an effort to reduce unwanted e-mails from Witness Justice and to ensure you receive the information that is important to you, please [click here](#) to update your profile preferences. It only takes a minute!!

**California Guitar Trio  
Benefit Concert**

**LAST CHANCE TO BUY  
TICKETS!!!**

## Hot Potato: Children, Trauma, and the Child-Welfare System

The California Guitar Trio will play a benefit concert for Witness Justice on Tuesday, October 21, 2008 at 8:00 pm, EST. The concert will be held at All Saints Episcopal Church in Frederick, MD.



Tickets are \$20.00 per person and proceeds will benefit Witness Justice programs and services. For more information and to **purchase your tickets** [click here!](#)

**Be sure to come early for the silent auction benefiting Witness Justice!! Doors open at 6:30 pm.**

### Quick Links

[Witness Justice Team Heal Trauma National Center for Trauma-Informed Care](#)

**New Schedule!!  
Fall v-Trainings**

Imagine two six-year-olds tossing a tinfoil-wrapped, hot potato back and forth-an interesting, whimsical, even humorous scene, unless the six-year-olds represent health care systems and the spud being tossed around is a traumatized kid. Yet this is what can happen when systems are not trauma-informed.

Each year, thousands of children who flee domestic violence, neglect, or a combination of the two are relocated by the court system into foster homes. As a result, the foster care network hosts a huge population of "out-of-home" children: 500,000, according to a 2006 study by the Child Welfare League of America. About half of them suffer from the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, chemical dependence, or other psychological conditions triggered by the trauma they experienced.

Yet, as reader Nancy S. points out, children who enter the child welfare system become caught between systems. "The child welfare system considers the impact of trauma to be a mental health issue," she explains, "and the mental health system considers trauma to be an issue of the child welfare system." The competing systems play a cruel game of "hot potato." The result? The children are the ones burned by systems that are not trauma-informed. "In the end," Nancy S. notes, "the children are not understood, services are misguided, and relationships are difficult."

### Advocating for Change

An organization can become trauma-informed by following the steps of [The Sanctuary Model](#), developed by [Sandra Bloom, Ph.D.](#) According to the [Andrus Children's Center](#) - an organization devoted to helping children (and their families) who have or are likely to develop behavioral health issues, The Sanctuary Model presents a trauma-informed approach to organizational change by offering seven characteristics to transformation which must be adopted by committed leaders and staff in order to achieve full systems change. The seven characteristics of this model are cultures of: nonviolence, emotional intelligence, inquiry and social learning, shared governance, open communication, social responsibility, and growth and change. Each of these characteristics work to promote an end to the "hot potato" between systems that inadvertently traps traumatized children and has the potential to make a bad situation worse by re-traumatizing them.

The Andrus Children's Center offers [additional information](#) on The Sanctuary Model, as well as information for your organization to begin

# V-Training

**October 17, 2008**

Mildred Muhammad presents "Journaling: The Benefits," inspired by her own experiences as a victim of domestic violence.

**November 18, 2008**

David Washington presents "Identifying the Needs and Interventions for Substance Abusing Individuals with a History of Overwhelming Experiences"

**[Click Here to Enroll](#)**

Start Talking About  
**Trauma-Informed Care**

Visit  
**[DaretoTransform.ning.com](http://DaretoTransform.ning.com)**

*Revolutionizing Mental  
Health and Human Services*

**iGive.com Surfathon**

Surf for Witness  
Justice!



**[Click Here](#)**

for details that could help you earn \$1,000 for Witness Justice by window shopping online.

implementing change.

If the child welfare system doesn't become trauma-informed, there will continue to be a price to pay -- and the children pay it.

Editor's note: each month, the column "Changing Systems - Changing Lives," will explore a topic raised by readers, discuss issues relevant to that topic, and provide suggestions for effecting change in trauma-informed care systems. Witness Justice invites suggestions for future topics; please email suggestions to [editor@witnessjustice.org](mailto:editor@witnessjustice.org).

## **A Bailout for Those on Wall Street, A Helping Hand for Many on Main Street with the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act**

In the last few weeks stories about Wall Street, crashed businesses, and stalled stocks have dominated the headlines. And the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, which was designed to stop the events that lead to those headlines, has met with simultaneous boos and cheers. Some see the Act as a "bailout," while others view it as a much needed helping hand.

But in passing its "Economic Stabilization Act," on October 3, Congress extended a helping hand to a group not associated with "Wall Street." The Act included the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, which requires insurance companies to treat mental illness, including addiction disorders, in the same way they treat physical illness. Specifically, the Act requires "parity" between the coverage for mental health issues and the coverage for physical ailments. It will eliminate the ability of insurance companies to charge a greater premium for mental health coverage. The groundbreaking legislation was, according to a statement released by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, designed to curb "discrimination against those who seek treatment for mental illness."

For more information on the bill, please visit <http://edlabor.house.gov/issues/mentalhealthparity.shtml>.

## **Board Member Profile of the Month**

New members of iGive can earn an additional \$5.00 for WJ just by making a purchase within 45 days. Hurry - this offer expires on 12/31/08

SHOP TODAY FOR WJ!

DOWNLOAD THE NEW  
iGive TOOLBAR

With the new toolbar you can now earn money for WJ just by searching the internet!!

### Verizon Velocity

Purchase qualifying Verizon products to help us meet our fund-raising goals! We can earn up to \$65 with one purchase.

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Simply call the special Verizon Velocity number below and provide our special tracking code. It's that easy. Simply call: 1-

888-695-5299 and give  
**Tracking Code:12250**

### Alexis A. Moore

Technology giveth, and technology taketh away. Technology provides many wonderful and useful tools, but when abused, it can destroy a person's privacy. Just ask Alexis A. Moore, newly elected member of the WJ board and president and founder of [Survivors in Action](#) - an advocacy and support group for survivors of domestic abuse and cybercrimes. A victim of domestic violence, "high-tech spousal abuse," and identity theft, Alexis spent "three long, scary, and frustrating years" trying to "extricate" herself.

Since technology took away her privacy, Alexis has established herself as an authority in the field of high-tech crimes. The creator of "High-Tech Self Defense for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," an educational program about high-tech crimes and how to avoid becoming the victim of them, she has become a sought-after speaker and a passionate advocate and educator for victims of cyberstalking, domestic violence, and related issues. As a "high-tech" investigator, Alexis has also helped countless identify-theft victims regain their privacy and recover restitution.



As the President of Survivors In Action, Alexis provides victim assistance to both national and international cybercrime victims. She develops and implements public awareness campaigns, gives expert testimony at Senate and Assembly Public Safety Hearings on the issue of identity theft, and is currently collaborating with local politicians to create new federal legislation that will force data furnishers to inform consumers whenever their private records are sold to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party.

Alexis stays connected with the world on her blog <http://alexisamoore.blogspot.com>, which receives over a thousand hits per month. With her blog, she combines two of her passions-helping survivors and writing-into one effort. When she is not blogging, uniting crime victims, or advocating for new legislation, Ms. Moore spends time in Napa Valley and Lake Tahoe, where she enjoys what she describes as "some of the best sunsets in the world."

As an adult survivor of domestic violence and cyberstalking, Alexis recently qualified for a scholarship that she says changed her life forever. After several years of searching for scholarships that benefit adult survivors, she found [The Sunshine Lady Foundation](#) which pointed her to [W.I.S.P.](#); the Women's Independence Scholarship Program. In hopes that the scholarship is as helpful to others as it has been to her, she

invites survivors needing assistance with the application process to contact her through her organization, [Survivors in Action](#).

As a board member of WJ, Alexis lends her compassion as a victim and her expertise in domestic violence and stalking to those who look to Witness Justice for help and healing.

Each day, she receives dozens of emails from victims and service providers who are learning that technology giveth, but technology can taketh away. With the help of Alexis A. Moore, survivors can reclaim what technology, in the wrong hands, has taken.

### **Giving Voice to the Voiceless: "27 Million Dirty Secrets" Revealed**

He looks like any other ten-year-old. Except for the grimace he wears on his face throughout the day. His job at an Indian brick factory consists of transporting bricks, which he carries on his head in two stacks of five--ten at a time. Each brick weighs from two to four pounds, and over the course of a day, he may carry a thousand of them. The weight on his neck and shoulders has led to severe back and neck problems, and he has developed silicosis, or scarring on the lungs, from inhaling the dust fumes. His is just one of the twenty-seven million dirty secrets revealed in [Call + Response](#) - a groundbreaking feature-length documentary about the horrors of slave trafficking. The film made its debut in theaters on October 10, with all of the proceeds going to front-line efforts that combat slave trafficking.

The documentary provides an insider's view of slave trafficking, with the viewer *seeing* the horrors experienced by modern slaves. But what, you ask, do these experiences *sound* like?

What sets this film apart from its predecessors is the soundtrack employed to give a sound to the movement, to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. The music of *Call + Response* represents the cries of "27 million dirty secrets" and the outrage of the modern abolitionists who have pledged to reveal them. Dr. Cornel West, a Princeton Professor of Religion and one of the guiding forces behind this project, notes that music and the struggle for freedom share a bond. The soundtrack of their struggle for freedom unites slaves of the Antebellum South with their twenty-first century counterparts toiling in brick factories and brothels.

To give voice to the voiceless, *Call + Response* assembled a collection of Grammy Award-winning recording artists who came together to produce a unique soundtrack, adding their voices in the effort to raise awareness

and funds to combat slave trafficking. Natasha Bedingfield, Rocco DeLuca, Justin Dillon, Imogen Heap, Moby, and others create what *Call + Response* calls "the sound of the 21st century abolitionist movement."

The promotional [trailer](#) for *Call + Response* offers some shocking, jaw-dropping statistics about human bondage in the twenty-first century. The trailer begins with several young men who visit a massage parlor / brothel only to discover a child, head bowed and hands coupled in her lap, sitting on a bed. She is also one of the "27 million dirty secrets" revealed in the film. The boys-and the audience-face the stark reality of the 2.2 million children "sold into" the \$32 billion per year sex trade.

Celebrity activists such as Daryl Hannah, play significant roles in the documentary by providing commentary based on their experiences. Hannah has fought against the use of children in the sex industry in Southeast Asia, even going undercover to bring to light the horrors endured by sex slaves in Cambodia. She is joined by fellow celebrities and activists such as Ashley Judd, Julia Ormond, Princeton Professor Dr. Cornel West, and former Secretary of State Madeline Albright.

As Cornel West notes, "justice is what love looks like in public."

And what it *sounds* like, too.

## Survivors and Advocates Run to Heal Trauma

On Sunday, October 26th, members of [Team Heal Trauma](#) - Witness Justice's charity running team - will be ready for the [33rd Annual Marine Corps Marathon](#). Not just



ready to run the race (either the full 26.2 mile marathon or the 10K), but also ready to raise awareness about the impact of psychological trauma caused by violence, abuse, neglect, disaster, terrorism, and war; ready to offer support to survivors of trauma; and ready to advocate for trauma-informed change.

Offering his support to Team Heal Trauma for the second consecutive year, the founder and co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional Victims's Rights Caucus, Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX), has made it his "mission to bring justice to victims of crime and to improve the support network that affects all trauma survivors." In a letter to the team applauding its

commitment and dedication to raising awareness and promoting trauma-informed care, Rep. Poe acknowledged that the team's effort is "fostering the kind of change that has a direct and positive impact on the welfare of millions of Americans."

It's not too late for you to support survivors of trauma!! Be a part of the MCM with Team Heal Trauma and make a difference in the lives of survivors today! [Click here](#) to make a contribution to the team.

## Useful Resources

### **Domestic Violence Awareness Month**

Initiated by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and first observed in 1987, October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

[http://www.ncadv.org/takeaction/DomesticViolenceAwarenessMonth\\_134.html](http://www.ncadv.org/takeaction/DomesticViolenceAwarenessMonth_134.html)

### **Responding to People Who Have Been Victimized by Individuals with Mental Illness**

Released last month by the Council of State Governments Justice Center, and supported by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime, this informational guide on victims' rights can be downloaded at:

<http://consensusproject.org/downloads/responding.pdf>

### **A Guide to the Role of Crime Victims in Mental Health Courts**

Released last month by the Council of State Governments Justice Center, and supported by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime, this informational guide on victims' rights can be downloaded at:

<http://consensusproject.org/downloads/guidetocvnmhc.pdf>

### **After the Crisis Peer Support Training Curriculum**

Now Available! After the Crisis has developed peer support curriculum specific to disaster survivors.

[http://gainscenter.samhsa.gov/atc/text/peer\\_support\\_training.html](http://gainscenter.samhsa.gov/atc/text/peer_support_training.html)

## Where We've Been...

**September 16** - *[No Longer in Sniper's Shadow](#)* - WJ Board Member Mildred Muhammad, featured in *[The Washington Post](#)*.

**September 17&18** - *Center for Mental Health Services' Building Bridges Veterans Dialogue Meeting* - Bethesda, MD.

**September 23** - *National Symposium on the Health Needs of Human Trafficking Victims* - Washington, D.C.

**September 30** - *The Department of Health and Human Services' National Human Trafficking Resource Center* will utilize WJ's summary on Human Trafficking and Trauma, based on Helga West's training presentation on this issue, as resource material for the center.

## Calendar of Events

**October 17** - v-Training session on "Journaling: The Benefits," presented by Mildred Muhammad.

<http://www.witnessjustice.org/news/hwtraining.pdf>

**October 21** - California Guitar Trio concert to benefit Witness Justice in Frederick, MD. Come early for an informational reception and silent auction to benefit Witness Justice. Doors open at 6:30 pm!

<http://www.allsaintsmd.org/cgt/index.php>

**October 24** - WJ will host a federal issue briefing on Capitol Hill on Combat Stress and the Family.

[http://www.witnessjustice.org/advocacysta/briefing\\_veterans.cfm](http://www.witnessjustice.org/advocacysta/briefing_veterans.cfm)

**October 26** - Team Heal Trauma runs the 33rd Annual Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C.

<http://www.witnessjustice.org/THT/index.cfm>

**November 13-15** - International Study for Traumatic Stress Studies meeting on "Terror in the Aftermath" meeting at The Palmer House Hilton - Chicago, IL.

<http://www.istss.org/meetings/index.cfm>

**November 18** - v-Training session on "Identifying the Needs and Interventions for Substance Abusing Individuals with a History of Overwhelming Experiences," presented by David Washington, LGSW, LCADC, AD/PC Sup

<http://www.witnessjustice.org/news/hwtraining.pdf>

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*Witness Justice is a national nonprofit organization created by survivors for survivors. Our mission is to advocate for and support victims of violence and trauma. For more information, visit [www.WitnessJustice.org](http://www.WitnessJustice.org).*

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