

June 12, 2019

Hello,

My name is Dr. Shawnee Tucker and I am a domestic violence survivor. Oftentimes, people wonder why does the victim of violence stay in such an abusive environment? Well there is not cut and dry answer. Domestic violence is like individual fingerprints, each one has its own unique print. Some victims may stay out of physical fear, low self-esteem and/or self-worth, financial need, family unity, feel deserving of the abuse, feeling trapped, chemical dependency, class status, family dynamics, illiteracy, familiarity, looking for love or acceptance ... and its uniqueness goes on. Whatever the case, domestic violence is a devastating act that affects families, communities and individuals ... it knows no race, religion, gender, economic or educational status.

Given this, I would like to share my experience and knowledge, that domestic violence had on my life as a domestic violence survivor and in memory of my sister that is no longer with us:

Divorced with three children, I started dating a childhood friend (Mr. T) due to peer pressure and having a financial deficit. I was living in an economically deprived neighborhood, riddled with gangs. So though seeking and wanting a better life for my children, I conformed to the promises of Mr. T., while listening to my friends telling me to ignore my "gut" feelings of apprehension. Mr. T. won the hearts of my children, friends, family, and then finally me after he made good his promise to move me to a better neighborhood. But that promise did not come without consequences and years of torment and fear. After 6 months, into the relationship (Christmas Eve), Mr. T. had been heavily drinking. We had been out Christmas shopping, which he offered to pay for all my children's gifts. Not having much money, myself, I remember thinking "How generous of him." I allowed him to do so. Later that night we had visited some friends and family of Mr. T. and while there, I refused to allow Mr. T. to intimately disrespect me in the presents of his friends and family. Being angered by me saying, "No ... stop." Mr. T. slapped me so hard I fall to the floor and hit my head. Dazed and in disbelief (no man had ever hit me before), I became confused as to what I had done to deserve such abuse. Mr. T. told me to get up and apologize to him because I should not have

embarrassed him in front of his friends. He told me to never tell him no again, and that it was my fault that he hit me. He told me if I shut my mouth and do what I was told, he would never hit me again. I started home hurt with feelings of fear and humiliation but before leaving his presence, I asked for the children's Christmas gifts. Mr. T. told me to go home without them and when he wanted me to have them, I would get them. In order to get the gifts so my children would have a Christmas (my thinking back then), I endured a night of verbal and physical abuse from Mr. T. as he threatens to wake the children up if I didn't comply with his erotic demands. Not wanting my children to see him drunk, and my lip bleeding from his hits, I complied. Nevertheless, this abuse went on for four years and the abuse became worst. And through those years, my children and family witness me being hit, degraded and devalued, my personal property vandalized and/or sold for drugs, college books ripped up, clothing cut-up and the list goes on. Then one day, having enough of the abuse, I tried to physically fight back only for him to pull a gun on me and threaten to kill me; that's when I knew I had to get away from him out of fear for my life and my children's life. I left one day, while he was at work and never look back.

Nevertheless, my sister was not as fortunate as I. She and I was going through domestic violence at the same time and we would tell each other we were going to get out of it one day. Into my sister's 8th year of marriage to Mr. C., he beat her over the head with a wooden table until it broke in half. He had busted open her head and hindered her from calling the ambulance, so she passed out on the floor. My (9-year-old) niece called me on the phone terrified and ask me what to do, I told her to call the police. As she tempted to follow my instructions, Mr. C. chased her and her sister (13 years old at the time) through the house, with a gun, threatening to kill them both. The youngest niece ran out of the house and called the police at a nearby pay phone. After hours of waiting for help to arrive, the youngest niece snuck back into the house only to see her mother had awoken, picked up Mr. C. gun from off the table and shoot and killed him as he laid in the bed. When my sister was asked by the police why did she kill him, she said she was afraid he would wake up and kill her and the kids. My sister was acquitted due to years of domestic violence documentation but her and the children lives was never the same. My sister became a heavy drinker to mask the pain and years of domestic violence that lead to the killing of someone she loved,

with hopes of him changing ... she stayed. She died in 2008. I even married my abuser and stayed married for 5 years because I felt financial trapped with no where to go with three children and did not want to go back to a gang infiltrated neighborhood.

The heinous crime of domestic violence that my sister and I endured, have to date, emotional and mentally scared our children (ages 30-44). So you see, whatever the reason for the victim to stay with the abuser, domestic violence is real and is an ugly evil that preys on the needs of its victims. Therefore, the bill H.B.3, Alisha's Law is a necessity to protect those for whatever unique reason are unable to mentally or physically protect themselves.

"We are our brother's keeper."