

My name is Julie Beckers and I am a Shaker Heights resident. I have lived in Ohio all of my life, and I came here today to talk about how Aisha's Law could have helped me when I became a victim of domestic violence.

I grew up in a small city and had a typical middle-class upbringing. I came to Cleveland in order to attend Case Western Reserve University on scholarship. When I graduated, I was a smart and attractive young woman, but I could not find a job right away and was not self-sufficient. Desperately wanting to stay in Cleveland, I moved in together with one of my suiters, and it was not long after that the abuse began. At first it was emotional and verbal abuse, but after a certain point, he became physically and sexually abusive towards me. I won't go into the gory details, but eventually it was quite evident that change was not forthcoming and I needed to leave him even if I ended up homeless or loveless.

I was too afraid that if I went to the Cleveland police, I would not be protected. I also did not want to go live in a shelter and did not know of any other domestic violence resources. But one night, I ran away with \$40 to my name, my laptop, and a backpack of clothes. I called a good friend – he is now my husband – and he and a couple of other friends let me stay on their couches while I was homeless for two months. In the meantime, my now-ex started stalking me at work, and anywhere else he could find me, begging me to come back and threatening to kill several of our once-mutual guy friends who he thought were sleeping with me. He was a frequent guest of various local jails already, and I did not really think that a protection order would stop him. When I finally found a room that I could afford to rent, he showed up there every day. One day, he got physical with me in my new home, and a friend of a friend of mine beat him so badly that he never wanted to come back. But not all women can find somebody willing to enact vigilante justice to take care of a stalker problem, and suffer for years or until they give in.

Nowadays, I am not just a survivor, I am a thriver. I still have PTSD symptoms at times – flashbacks of his hands around my neck if I zip a jacket too tight, nightmares, anxiety attacks – but they hit me less frequently than in the past. I paint, write, climb walls, have a dream job at a top Indie bookstore, and have been happily married for over a decade. But it took me nearly fifteen years to get to this point – that's the reality of recovery from abuse. That's if we survive to recover at all.

I did not know Aisha Frazier, but I felt terror in my heart when I learned about her death, especially since it happened down the street from me. I felt even more terror when I learned about the lethality assessment, saw the quote from a relative in the media saying Aisha would have gotten a certain score, and then taking the test with that relationship in mind and getting the same score. Had Aisha's Law been implemented fifteen years ago, I would have received instant access to services and protection if I had called the police on my abuser, as my ex had choked me in a rage several times. Perhaps I would have felt safer calling the police if I would have known I would have automatically been protected under the law. I also would have had access to badly needed and never received social services, like help with finding housing. The protection order would have been in effect, which is certainly an important component to many people leaving threatening relationships.

This is not an issue of poor people; I have met women with very rich men who were in even more abusive situations. This is not just a woman's issue. For one thing, men are also abused. Also, while I was a childless woman, many women with children want to leave an abusive relationship, but face additional complications because of these children, who are then forced to witness abuse – which makes it an issue for the community as a whole. This is a human issue and as long as we consider

a  
b  
u  
s  
e