

DV – two simple letters that can't begin to describe the profound pain, suffering, and injury a family experiences when domestic violence invades its sanctity. Those two letters and the words "Domestic Violence" make my stomach churn when I hear or even think them. Often when I speak I feel anger rising within and express it. I never really know how I will respond as I relive our ordeal. Please keep in mind, during the time we gather here today, thousands of more lives will have changed - inalterably - forever.

Our family's descent into the hellish darkness of domestic violence began 14 years ago, almost to the day. My wife and I were jarred awake by the telephone in the wee hours of the morning: "This can't be good" I told my wife – little did we know how bad things were and how much worse they would become. Our daughter was calling from a local hospital ED.

"Dad, he beat me real bad..." she said.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"No" she said, "he beat me real bad."

What my wife and I didn't know at that moment was the profound rage beaten into our daughter's life several hours before. Her attacker kidnapped, raped, beat, and strangled her for over three hours in her apartment. He all but choked her to death three different times within those three hours, repeatedly raped her, and beat her senseless. He forced her to eat glass Christmas tree ornaments.

Over the next three days, our daughter was in the ER suffering from difficulty breathing. Fortunately, we encountered Ruth Downing, RN and a forensic specialist in strangulation. Not being a medical person, I had no idea of how serious our daughter's injuries were due to strangulation. We learned a person can die days, weeks after being strangled to the extent our daughter suffered. As this man strangled her we realize his hands were as lethal as any weapon.

This is not the full extent of the violence that occurred that night; the emotions and feelings, the sights, the sounds, the smells, are beyond my ability to describe. My wife, an experienced operating room nurse, nearly passed out when she saw our daughter. Our daughter's expression and words were of absolute and total bewilderment: "If he loved me, how could he do this to me?"

These are my wife's words from her Victim Statement: *My daughter was physically, sexually, psychologically abused on November 30, 2003. She was brutally beaten o within moments of losing her life. She endured pain, submission, humiliation, and the ultimate terror, she feared for her life. She told me she truly thought she was going to die.*

*Our daughter was forced to eat a glass Christmas tree ornament; all the while he called her vile names - "slut" and "Bitch". She suffered three hours of pounding her face, kicking her, and **three times strangled her to unconsciousness.** She was so terrified she lost control of her bowels and bladder (something we now know meant she was within seconds of dying). If you can imagine, there was more torture.*

I will not feel safe and will live in fear that he might hurt our daughter, me, our other daughter and granddaughters or another innocent woman if he is released too soon and without psychological treatment. I now know I will never feel safe again. How can anyone get back the feeling of trust in humankind when you have seen your daughter beaten to the point of being unrecognizable to her own mother?

Domestic violence involving strangulation is personal, up close, horrifically face to face, evil staring into the victim's eyes as he tightens his hold closing off her ability to breathe . She, as her life ebbs, is willing to painfully gouge her own flesh trying to break his grip. And then - nothing, blackness.

Until you have seen deep, bleeding injuries on your daughters neck that she inflicted, can you truly understand the demonic, demeaning, violent character of strangulation and what victims endure as it is happening.

Please keep in mind everything I've described occurred in the first eight hours of our daughter's ordeal.

Then, within a matter of days, we were introduced to the criminal court system and the stress associated with lengthy and uncertain criminal proceedings. Our lives were being pulled by conflicting emotions, anguish, hurt for our daughter, numbness, anger, fear, all overlaid with a deep sense of dread – “What if he gets off!”

The next six months were filled with mind numbing uncertainty, which ended with his conviction on all but the two most egregious charges: Attempted Murder and Aggravated Attempted Murder. He was sentenced to 13 years plus parole time from his previous conviction. Had there been a criminal statute against strangulation at that time, I'm certain he would have been found guilty on that charge and received an even longer sentence. The evidence was irrefutable.

The phrase “from his previous conviction” is apropos to today's hearing. As you craft this law, please think of the harshest penalties for repeat offenders. From what I have learned of Domestic Violence, the first time an offender is arrested, charged, tried, and found guilty he has left a long trail of previous victims. This was true in our situation. What I learned from the trial:

1. His own mother wrote to our daughter: “He's gotten out of so many things in his life easily. The brutality of it all, what he did to you, is what scares me the most. It seems each incident is getting worse.” Can you imagine someone knowing about this behavior yet not warning a woman she knows will be attacked?
2. His daughter (12 years old at the time) and witnessed the entirety of the attack, stated she knew he was going to beat our daughter because: “he had beaten all his other girlfriends.”
3. His ex-wife stated their son (3 years old at the time) had a Christmas picture of her with black eyes and says: “My daddy gives mommy boo boo eyes.”

4. And from the thug himself in a letter to his brother trying to pressure our daughter into lying in court about what happened: “I can’t believe this county (Delaware County, OH)...It’s ridiculous. It wasn’t any different from any other time but the charges are crazy....If I get out of this I’ll never let her go.”

To you, our Representatives, vengeance is not what I seek; rather, justice and protection of our greater society from on-going Domestic Violence, particularly strangulation. These men are predators with wanton disregard for the safety and well-being of those who come into contact with them, a danger and threat to all. They are cruel, sadistic repeat abusers who, left unchecked, will strike again and again. Because of the vicious nature of their attacks on women, thinking they have the capability of killing a woman with their own hands, is reasonable.

Because of their propensity for extreme violence toward women, failure to accept responsibility for their behavior, the anguish they bring upon innocent victims and families, and because the emotional and physical scars born by their victims will be life long, I respectfully ask you to draft and pass the most stringent law possible with painful penalties for offenders and repeat offenders who use their hands to injure, maim, and kill.. Let it stand alone and not subject to concurrent sentences. Make it run consecutively to other felony sentences in the same case.

Please remember, the hands of these men are weapons as lethal as any weapon.

Thank you.