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Misogyny, the Hatred of Women, Is Pervasive in U.S.

By David Whitfield

OPINION

“How do we explain the oppression and brutalization of half the world’s population by the other half, throughout history?” – Jack Holland in “Misogyny: The World’s Oldest Prejudice.”

The first time I witnessed violence against a woman, I was 17, living next door to a stock yard butcher, his wife and baby, on the South Side of Chicago.

“I hate you!” followed by the B-word, then flesh hitting flesh — the butcher was at it again. After entering their apartment, I managed to wrestle the meat cleaver from him.

When the cops arrived, I was accused of molesting his wife. And had she not spoken up, I would have gone to the notorious Cook County jail, for attempted rape — black teenager in a white couple’s apartment.

Loretta Francis’ study found that a woman is beaten every nine seconds in this country; more than three women are killed by their husbands or boyfriends daily. And then there’s trafficking.

Of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked yearly across international borders, 80 percent are women, used primarily for prostitution and forced labor, according to the State Department’s “2006 Trafficking In Persons Report.”

According to Kevork Djansezian’s report, some 12,000 to 18,000 persons are trafficked into the United States yearly, from some 50 countries; most are women used for sex and slave labor.

Imagine your 11-year-old daughter trapped in a brothel, six to eight men force themselves on her daily; and if she gets to the police, the police take her back to the brothel because the perpetrator and the police are complicit — a finding in the State Department’s report.

Though sex cases are the priority for prosecutors, many women are put in sweatshops in almost every state in the union, making bridal dresses by hand, without compensation.

Women are also abused in the regular workplace, economically. The Coalition of Labor Union Women said in 2005, women were paid 77 cents for every dollar men received. That's \$23 less to spend on groceries, housing, child care and other expenses for every \$100 worth of work women do. The average 25-year-old working woman is denied more than \$523,000 through unequal pay during her working life. Nationwide, working families lose \$200 billion in income annually to the wage gap.

These figures are even worse for women who are non-white. And because women are paid less, they have less for their future and will earn smaller pensions than men — not my definition of social justice or economic justice.

What makes this so vile is that most of us behave, as Jerry Harvey says, like “little Eichmanns in the corporation,” perpetuating it by remaining silent, keeping our hands clean, and committing “little murders.”

So, how do you respond when faced with misogyny? Would you have entered the butcher's apartment? I challenge you to list just two actions you are taking against the subtle and not-so-subtle acts of hatred against women — all women. If you cannot, then think about the meaning of being a “little Eichmann in the corporation.”

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