

Defending our lives

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Defending Our Lives ' Defending Our Lives,' which I must admit was an excellent choice of film to write this paper on, is an academy award winning miniature documentary that puts into perspective the struggles that battered women go through, based on the accounts of four women. These women relive graphic and emotional accounts of the violent experiences they were subjected to by the same people that promised to love and cherish them, their husbands. These women, who all come from the greater Boston region, kill their husbands in their quest for liberation from domestic violence, and all end up in prison as a result of their actions. It is while in prison that they formed ' Battered Women Fighting Back,' a support group for battered women who killed their abusers, that later graduated to a grass root organization focused on showcasing domestic violence as a wide spread human rights violation in the country.

Watching this documentary and listening to the testimonies of the women, I was shocked at the extremities of the violence that the women went through, and amazed by their strength to stand up for themselves and to break the cycle by speaking out. Though killing their batterers is not to be advocated for, I fall short of saying that their husbands sure deserved it. Domestic violence is rampant in America with lots of women suffering in silence. It has been identified as the single most cause of bodily harm and injury to women in the United States. So rampant is wife battery that a woman in America is more at risk of dying in the hands of her spouse than by anyone else. Hearing this shocked me and made me come to terms with the extent of this vice.

Solutions to domestic violence involve creating awareness to the public of

the extent at which wife battery is becoming increasingly acceptable in society. The first step in my opinion is to expose domestic violence for what it truly is, rape, torture and physical assault. The word domestic violence should be replaced by the words rape, torture and assault, to capture the gravity of the situation. Our criminal Justice System must mount renewed effort to stomp out domestic violence from society. Restraining orders should be enforced because in most instances TROs are the only defense systems at the disposal of the abused women. It is absurd that perpetrators who have been found culpable are let loose due to technicalities or inadmissibility of crucial evidence in court. These same perpetrators often come back to harm their spouses.

There is need to reform law enforcement machinery in the country, spark public debate on domestic violence, overhaul the criminal justice system's approach on domestic violence, and provide psychological support to battered women.

Reference

Margaret Lazarus, R. W. (Director). (1993). *Defending Our Lives* [Motion Picture].