I Am, You Are, We Are Enough

Art by Cristina Rodriguez

Zine Credit: The Network's Youth Advisory Board
My name is Yenessa and I am 24 years old. I’m not a victim or survivor of domestic violence, but I have a handful of family members who are survivors. During my sophomore year of college, one of my younger cousins was a victim of domestic violence and it was really, really scary for a really, really long time. I spent many nights lying awake, sobbing until my eyes dried out thinking, what if he murders her? I was heartbroken, angry, devastated, and terrified at what else he would do to her. But even more, I was filled with so much anger towards her because she would not leave him.

This, paired with a lack of education on domestic violence, led me to blame my cousin. I thought, it’s simple: if she doesn’t leave, he is going to keep hurting her. When I felt like I couldn’t witness the abuse any longer, I would go through periods of ignoring my cousin. A part of me thought, maybe if she loses me, she will realize she values our relationship more than theirs and finally leave him. But that was never the case. I think as outsiders looking in, (in any situation, really) we try to make problems seem as simple as possible. The reality is, no situation involving humans is ever simple—so, it’s not our place to judge a situation we are not personally involved in. I didn’t realize this until later, though.

It wasn’t until one day, my mother—a survivor—called me out and told me I was being judgmental and insensitive. She was the one who gave me the idea that maybe if I became educated, I wouldn’t be so narrow-minded on such a prevalent issue in our society. And that’s where it all began. I started by completing the standard 40 hour domestic violence training and after that, I began to volunteer at a shelter. A few months later, I joined the Youth Advisory Board at The Network.

I’ve learned that with many complex issues, people looking from the outside tend to think the issue is simple and can be easily fixed. But if this were the case, there wouldn’t be more than 20,000 phone calls placed to domestic violence hotlines nationwide on a typical day. There wouldn’t be 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men who have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner.1 With that, I challenge you to try to keep an open mind and try your hardest to support your loved ones when they are going through something you don’t understand. Don’t tell them what they should do—give them resources, options, and just be there for them. They need your love and support.

[1]https://ncadv.org/STATISTICS

Words by Yenessa Meneses
no one WANTS to feel judged
The Ideal Latina Daughter

The women in my family know all too well their roles. They have been the same for as long as anyone can remember. From a young age we are taught how to be the ideal Latina daughter. At birth were predisposed to these roles that we follow and pass on. Generations raised on the machismo mentality. An expectation created by man years ago. Carried by the women in our family. Our mothers who have already been shaped by their own mothers and the mothers before them are the blueprints for our own training. As children we watch as our mothers praise and serve the men of the family. Slowly and without notice we are molded into these roles. As we grow older, we learn that machismo is deeply rooted in our culture. And generation after generation has lived through this. Our history built on masculine pride is masked by tradition and habit. And the conversations that surround it are torn down by the same women initiating them decades ago. Those same women who years ago questioned these roles are now the same ones passing them on. You would think that by now we would've overcome this but the women in my family refuse change and time and time again the cycle continues. The abuelas, tias and mothers of the family accustomed to way things are. Become clueless to the treatment of their daughters. And once again the cycle begins. Unless.

Words by Melina Cerero
una
mujer
Luchando

Art by Cristina Rodriguez
Perspective

Bruises covered her body,
    I was in pain.
Cuts lined their arms.
    But I deserved it.
They said they were happy,
    I had made him mad.
But I could hear alarms.

They didn’t smile as often,
    I didn’t have any friends.
Or go out as much.
    I wasn’t good enough.
I knew I needed to take caution,
    Only he cared about me.
But I didn’t want to misjudge.

Soon they went quiet,
    I made him mad again.
And fear began to set in.
    Tonight was the worst.
I caused a riot,
    Alone I laid on the hospital bed.
When they came back with a busted chin.

I called their parents,
    I have no one.
I called our friends.
    I have no one.
They needed reassurance,
    I don’t deserve anyone.
To see past his rose colored lens.

He used nice words to tear her down,
    He was always so sweet.
And they couldn’t help but believe.
    He never wanted to hurt me.
He made her feel like they were about to drown.
    It was always my fault.
We had to show them she was being deceived.

It took a while,
    My family says he’s no good.
He fought like hell.
    And soon I saw what they saw.
We didn’t want her to feel like she was on trial,
    He wasn’t what he seemed.
All he did was yell.

They didn’t deserve what he had put her through.
    I didn’t deserve what he put me through.

Words by Elena Cerero
when I first saw the power and control wheel, it shook me. I was surprised to see that I could relate with some topics on it. Peer pressure, being blamed, and isolation were all things I relate to. -K.S.
#ReachOutToGetOut

Everyone deserves a healthy relationship.

#ReachOutToGetOut

Fear is not part of a healthy relationship.
Unsafe relationships are not the norm.
STOP DV

DATING VIOLENCE HAPPENS MORE OFTEN THAN YOU THINK