



Education for Critical Thinking

Mr. President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, distinguished members of parliament and distinguished guests...

I want to talk to you about some solutions for ending gender violence. The Duluth Model (which I am proud to be involved with) was created 30 years ago in a small town in the State of Minnesota in the United States. The Duluth Model has been adapted throughout my country and internationally.

The Duluth Model (as it is frequently called) has several core principles, including centralizing victim safety into every step of the intervention process. From the perspective of a legislator, this model employs all of the right strategies.

- 1) First, adequate resources are provided to support survivors of domestic violence;
- 2) Secondly, the model uses pro-arrest and pro-prosecution policies to create community deterrence;
- 3) Third, the court provides meaningful sentences for offenders that include an opportunity for rehabilitation and change;
- 4) And finally, the model provides a monitoring role for NGO's to ensure that intervening agencies follow their policies.

The model works because it coordinates all interveners (law enforcement and the criminal justice system) and insists on accountability. It saves lives.

As legislators, we should celebrate our successes, but there is more that needs to be done.

Too often, laws are passed, but aren't implemented, so perpetrators continue to rape and batter without consequences. As an international trainer (both in my country and around the world) I have seen places where there is virtually no services for victims of domestic and sexual violence, where calling the police is an exercise in futility, and where rape victims are still blamed and ostracized.

Gender violence is about gender. It's about the power differentiation between men and women. This is not to say that women never use violence, they do, but the numbers pale in comparison and frankly it is simply not a social problem like men's violence against women.

Equally disturbing is the silence from community institutions that could make a difference—places of worship, schools, businesses, athletic programs, and our families. From the early stages of male development, boys and young men are inundated with expectations about their entitlement in intimate relationships. Boys and men are flooded with messages about sexual conquest from violent pornography, video games and the media.

Community leaders must break their silence and begin to engage boys and men about gender equality, the ethics of buying women, non-violent methods to settle conflicts, and healthy sexual relationships.

We are in the business of making laws. But in our quest for good legislation, we can't lose sight that our cultures create men who batter, create men who rape and create the demand in trafficked women and children.

Sexual violence in my state costs \$8B a year in lost wages, medical and mental health treatment, criminal justice costs and prisons; not to mention the physical, emotional and psychological toll on survivors. But with these staggering human and financial costs, an insignificant amount is allocated on prevention.

Prevention strategies are in their infancy. But we do know that social norms change when harmful behaviors are challenged by the community.

Prevention is about leadership, especially us, who are in positions of power and influence. We can make prevention of domestic and sexual violence a priority with resources and laws. It is about you and me speaking out as leaders in our countries, and not just when a horrific incident occurs. We can prioritize gender violence in our legislative agendas, with our votes, in our speeches, and in our campaigns.

Our voices and our actions are needed now!

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