

# All need to be aware of violence against women

Rev. Joe Ehrmann, a former Baltimore Colt Football Player, was at Yeardley Love's funeral at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Baltimore. Joe noted: "Sadly, Yeardley Love was only one of four women murdered by intimate partners that day. Who knows how many others were raped, battered, sexually abused, harassed or exploited by men that day and every day in America?"

Here is Joe's summary of what is going on in our society: "At an early age, boys are fitted with emotional straightjackets tailored by a restricted code of behavior that falsely defines masculinity. In the context of "stop crying," "stop those emotions" and "don't be a sissy," we define what it means to "be a man." Adherence to this "boy code" leaves many men dissociated from their feelings and incapable of accessing, naming, sharing, or accepting many of their emotions. When men don't understand their own emotions it becomes impossible to understand the feelings of another. This creates an "empathy-deficit disorder" that is foundational to America's epidemic of bullying, dating abuse and gender violence. Boys are taught to be tough, independent, distrusting of other males and at all cost to avoid anything considered feminine for fear of being associated with women. This leads many men to renounce their common humanity with women so as to experience an emotional disconnect from them. Women often become objects, used to either validate masculine insecurity or satisfy physical needs. When the validation and satisfaction ends, or is infused with anger, control, or alcohol, gender violence is often the result. Violence against women is often thought of as a woman's issue; but it is a mistake to call men's violence a woman's issue. Since men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of this violence, this men's issue calls us to question the cultural values that produce men who hurt women."

Joe and his wife, Paula, have co-founded Coach for America to initiate societal change through sports and coaching.

While I applaud and encourage this movement for coaches to be more aware, I believe we need to expand this effort. All of us need to be aware and involved.

While “the media” likes to hold others accountable, who holds the media accountable for its exploitation of women in advertising, in plays and movies, in video games and so on? With the incessant bombardment of our young people with violent and sexual images, how can we expect our young people not to be influenced and conditioned in their behavior?

Could this not be an issue that pro-life and pro-choice groups could work together on? Countless thousands of unwanted pregnancies, resulting in abortions, are the result of this exploitation. I would think that “radical feminists” and “traditional religious groups” could both join together in developing some kind of “rating system” of advertisements, videos and movies, such as: “Some Exploitation of Women,” or “Extreme Exploitation of Women.” If half the human race stopped buying from certain retailers, or going to certain movies, I have a hunch we could begin to change our culture. Could not all of our parish social justice committees and pro-life committees focus on the root causes of so much violence and so many abortions?

The media loves to focus on what divides us. Perhaps we could unite to focus on images that our advertising and entertainment moguls are foisting on us in general and on our young people in particular.

Young women lie in graves. Their “boyfriends” sit in jail cells. Everybody loses.

Billions of dollars are made by pornographers every day. Billions more are made by the mainstream media in sexually explicit advertising and entertainment. It’s an issue that needs the involvement of parents, teachers and coaches. It’s an issue that needs the attention of all of us. Girls and women are used and abused every day. Half the human race loses. And when that half loses, the other half of the human race loses as well!