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MISSING PERSONS FOUND **161**

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Domestic Violence Awareness Month

JUSTICE COALITION'S VICTIMS' ADVOCATE

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The Once and Present Homicide Capital



Know Your Rights

by Atty. Jay C. Howell

In a particular year, Chicago had the doubtful distinction of having the most homicides - New York City, with almost twice the population of Chicago, had fewer murders than did the windy city. A commentator wrote in a New York City insurance journal, "Our murder record...each year is a most serious indictment of American civilization, and evidence of lawlessness which has no counterpart in any other country in the world."

Detroit ranked in 13th place that year. Its paper, *The Detroit News*, offered its own observation that, "There are far too many murders in the United States every year, and this disagreeable prominence among the nations of the earth is pretty sure to continue until some drastic readjustment is effected in our administration of criminal justice."

Birmingham, Alabama, ranked near the top of the homicide charts and its local paper, *The Birmingham News*, reported, "The announcement that Birmingham ranks 4th among American cities in proportion of homicides to population is a summons to serious thinking and sound action which this community should not fail to heed."

In an article written that same year in the *Providence Journal*, the Rhode Island newspaper exposed a bitter and surprising truth about the murder rate in America, "It will probably astonish most readers to learn that, in the matter of homicides, Jacksonville, Florida, headed the list of American cities, having a rate of 75.9 per 100,000 population."

During the year in question, Jacksonville had more homicides per 100,000 residents than did Detroit, Houston, Kansas City, St. Louis, and Dallas. The research results that were tabulated concerned 118 American cities. The combined homicide death rate of those cities was 10.1 per 100,000, as compared with 10.5 for the previous year.

Jacksonville's homicide death rate was 76.9 per 100,000 population. Some cities, including Hoboken, New Jersey; Gloucester, Massachusetts; Lansing, Michigan; Newport, Rhode Island; and Pasadena, California, had no homicides during that year.

The New York World paper commented, "Just why there should be 104 homicides in Jacksonville, a city of 137,000, and but two in Grand Rapids, a much larger city, is a question worth a good deal of study."

These published homicide rates shocked many readers and forced local papers around the country to defend their violent communities.

In response to the "homicide capital" distinction, the *Florida Times Union* offered its own

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'No woman deserves to be beaten'

By Shirley Shaw

The very attractive young woman I'll call Jennifer sat across from me at the restaurant where we agreed to meet. She was composed, her emotions not evident in her face, as she related a classic story of domestic abuse. Although she has a degree in psychology, knowledge gained from years of study in that field didn't help her recognize the signs of impending abuse early in her new relationship.

He was charming, seemingly enjoyed activities she liked, and it wasn't long before they moved in together. Jennifer became pregnant almost immediately and from then on, her life has been one round after another of verbal and physical abuse, dealing with police, court injunctions, and indecision about what to do as she struggles to care for her child and herself. Because of considerations about her child, she feels she cannot completely cut off communication from her abuser, although she no longer lives with him.

Like so many victims of domestic violence, Jennifer witnessed her father beating her mother and remembers, when she was five years old, the two



of them fleeing for their lives. She grew up living with her mother who was "mean" to her. She got a job at age 15 so she could buy things for herself, such as a cell phone, which her mother then destroyed. She left home when she was 17 and eventually came to Jacksonville where she worked her way through college.

Her story is heartbreaking, but only one of many played out in our community every day. Thanks to facilities such as Hubbard House (Duval County), Micah's Place

(Nassau County) and Quigley House (Clay County), there is help for every victim of domestic battery - and there is hope.

Millions affected by Domestic Violence

More than 4 million women each year in the United States are physically harmed by their husband, boyfriend, or other intimate partner. **Domestic violence**, also known as intimate partner violence, not only

'NO WOMAN'... CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Men are also victims of Domestic Violence

By Shirley Shaw

According to a Centers for Disease Control fact sheet, nearly 5 million women experience intimate partner related physical assaults each year, while men are the victims of nearly 3 million such assaults. IPV resulted in 1,544 deaths in 2004; of these, 25 percent were males.¹

In all statistics of domestic violence the numbers are not exact because so many victims are embarrassed or ashamed to reveal their situation. This is especially true of men because they don't want to be perceived as weak, and often police, when called, automatically assume the male is at fault.

One victim the Justice Coalition has been assisting for the past several years shares his story:

My first wife would take her work frustrations out on me by beating on

me and laughing about it since I did not bruise and could not say anything. I could not grab her arms to stop, because she was anemic and would easily bruise. She would bump into desk corners at work and get bruises on her legs. She told me she could call JSO and tell them I hit her and they would have no choice but to take me to jail.

She knew what buttons to push to make me angry, and when I walked out into our backyard [to cool off], she would follow me around trying to get me to do something. She got her Master's degree and no longer needed me, so we divorced. I hired a young woman to look after my daughter, who loved her and wanted her for a mother.

My daughter was murdered at age 16, shot in the face execution style by a 20-year-old male she had a crush on. After her death the young

woman [who had looked after her] ended up on very hard times and, knowing my daughter would have wanted me to look after her and protect her, I married her.

Everything went well at first, yet slowly she became miserable and started to verbally, physically and mentally abuse me. I found a nicer place to move and life was better for a while, then the abuse returned. One day she came out of the house with a butcher knife in each hand trying to stab me. I took both knives and threw both of them away in the yard.

Some nights when I told her I was going to bed, she would tell me that when I went to sleep she was going to come in and stab me to death. She would be angry, and I would turn my back and she would shove me head first into a hardwood oak floor. It

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