

Stop the Violence, Stop the Silence

A 2-Week festival fights violence against women

By Kim Thomas

"I think it's when you take things personally that you become very active."

—Robert Redford

In the remaining days of August, "Until the Violence Stops: Kentucky" will take over the state, putting women and girls, and their empowerment and safety directly center stage. This Festival issues a call to action to all Kentuckians through theater, art, spoken word, performance and community events: Demand an end to violence against women and girls and become an active partner in ending it.

There are over 60 events happening across the state in 18 cities. In Lexington, The *Until the Violence Stops: KY Festival* will host four marquee events during the two-week Festival to end violence against women and girls. The purpose of each marquee event is to educate and engage the community through compelling theater and performance art. All of the performances serve as catalysts for soul searching, discussion, and social change.

The first of these events was presented this past Sunday, the production of *A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant & A Prayer* was held at the Singletary Center. The event included monologues addressing violence against women and girls written by world renowned authors such as Maya Angelou. Kentucky native, actress and author Robin Givens was in the cast (she also has a book recounting her marriage to boxer Mike Tyson).

Judi Jennings, Executive Director of Kentucky Foundation

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for Women, says, "The fact that women in so many cities and towns across Kentucky are using the arts to address violence against women is a major success story. Jorena Faulkner, whose play was performed for the Lexington marquee event, 'A Memory, a Monologue, a Rant, and a Prayer,' has overcome many challenges through her art. LeTonia Jones, not only coordinated the statewide events for the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association but contributed a performance, too. Lexington video artist and KFW grantee Joan Brannon has long used her art to speak out against all forms of violence."

The remaining events in Lexington include an Art Exhibit (August 24, see page 7); music (August 30 at the Dame); a film festival (1pm to 9pm, August 29 at the downtown Library), and those listed below:

Necessary Targets

Thursday, August 23

7pm

Black Box Theater, Downtown Arts Center

Eve Ensler's play about women and war—about the violence of dark memories and the enduring resilience of the

human spirit.

Tickets, 859.225.0370 or

www.lexarts.org

General admission:

\$25.00; \$15.00 for students and

senior citizens

UTVS Gypsy Slam

Saturday, August 25

Open Mic: 6pm - 7pm

Event: 7pm - 10pm

Victorian Square; Admission is free;

\$5.00 donation is encouraged

The Gypsy Slam is a poetry competition featuring regional women poets who compete for a cash prize of \$500 for the first place winner and a \$250 cash prize for the runner up. The poets perform their original work in consecutive rounds for under three minutes and are scored by judges randomly selected from the audience. In the spirit of the UTVS: KY festival, nationally ranked poet, Christa Bell will also be present to feature her one-woman show. This event is dedicated to the memory of Sophia Danielle Arnold from Paducah, Kentucky.

Formerly Incarcerated Women's Discussion Panel

Friday, August 31

Panel Discussion: 1pm to 2:30pm

Downtown Lexington Public Library

This panel will focus on the issue of violence against women as it relates to incarceration of women. The panel will consist of formerly incarcerated women from Kentucky's correctional institutions as well as advocates, activists, and attorneys who are working to support them. Former Lexington Mayor, Teresa Isaac, will moderate the panel.

Any One of Us: Word From Prison

Friday, August 31

Reception & Silent Auction: 6pm

Curtain: 7pm

Singletary Center Concert Hall

For tickets, visit www.singletarytickets.com. The Festival is running a ticket special for *Any One of Us: Words from Prison* on August 31st at 7pm at Singletary Center. If you purchase your tickets in advance, the cost is \$20 and \$12.50 for students and seniors. Tickets are \$25 at the door and \$15 for students and seniors.

This production reveals the connection between women in prison and the violence that often puts them there.



For other events, including an August 26th Golf Tournament at Kearney Hills, the film festival, and more, visit www.utvsky.org or call 502.209.5382

Go to the Red Tent

A petition is available asking Governor Ernie Fletcher to grant full pardons to women who were convicted, but granted early release, by the justice system that failed "to consider whether they had acted in self-defense against their abusers, as the law allows. The Parole Board's thorough review determined that they had been abused and were owed their freedom."

You may download the petition at www.utvsky.org; sign the petition at Farmers Market on Saturday, located at the Red Tent at Phoenix Park; or at the Red Tent set up at the Courthouse Plaza during the week, weather permitting.

Festival Organizer, Sara Clancy, says, "The Red Tent is an information center for the Festival where people can come and find out about events and projects we are working on, such as our efforts with women in prison. We also have information from our local service providers (Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center, Bluegrass Domestic Violence Program, and UK's Violence Prevention and Intervention Center) to assist victims with finding appropriate help in our area."

Clancy says you can also support the Festival by pur-

chasing its merchandise at the Red Tent, such as water bottles, frisbees, bracelets or peace-sign necklaces.

Violence against women is under-reported and crosses all race, class, socioeconomic and religious lines. According to Safe Horizon, Domestic Violence is the leading cause of injury to women; homicide is the leading cause of death for women on the job; and nearly one third of American women report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some time. (www.safehorizon.com).

If you have been the victim of violence and/or abuse, reporting the crime and telling your story is a powerful tool in the fight to end violence against women and girls. There are resources available.

Clancy advises that there is a 75 percent greater risk of women being killed when they do escape an abusive relationship and cautions women to call the Bluegrass Domestic Violence Hotline first at 800.544.2022 to put together a plan, consider all aspects of safety, and talk with a trained counselor. ■

UTVS: Pieces of Me

Eight Women, Armed with Cameras
By Jonathan Rodgers & Marcie Crim

For the past month, eight women from Lexington's Chrysalis House have explored their lives in a new way. The women, all survivors of violence, were taking part in the state-wide festival, Until the Violence Stops Kentucky, which is designed to bring the issue of violence against women into the public forum.

As part of the festival UTVS: Pieces of Me was created to give these women a crash course in photographic principles and set them loose on the city to share their lives and their struggle to piece those lives back together.

The class met every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for three weeks. It began with a rudimentary explanation of photography skills—composition, negative space, the rule of



Photo courtesy Jonathan Rodgers



Photo courtesy Jonathan Rodgers

began to turn into real photographers, seeking out inventive subject matter and finding artistically bold ways to tell their stories. One woman wanted to shoot photos of herself underwater in an effort to express rebirth so she purchased an underwater camera and created haunting images.

Another woman in the class kept seeking out bricks to photograph because she has spent, "A lifetime hitting brick walls."

A photograph of a nameless woman resting on a toilet, smoking a cigarette grabs you—but it is the pattern of large purple bruises traveling up and down her legs that won't let you go.

All of the photographs clearly allow you to see pieces of the women that are working towards a life free of abuse and addiction. The ages of the women range from very early twenties to mid-fifties. They come from all walks of life and have

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thirds. Next, we gave each of the participants a camera and told them to shoot an entire roll on just one object. Some of the class participants chose a nearby playground to photograph; other's focused on neighborhood children.

With the basics out of the way, we turned to lessons on portraiture and then we began to request that the women show the more intimate parts of their lives. At each turn, the class critiqued the photographs for quality, style and content, and the women were given instruction on how to improve their picture-taking skills.

The women grew more confident with each camera and

shared incredibly intimate moments so the rest of us can bear witness to a life on the inside of chaos fighting to get out. ■

Photographs from UTVS: Pieces of Me will be on display at the Carnegie Center beginning Friday August 24th, opening reception at 6pm.

Jonathan Rodgers and Marcie Crim are founders of The Lexicon Project.

Bluegrass Women's Political Caucus Celebrating National Women's Equality Day

The Bluegrass Women's Political Caucus will host a program at the Lexington History Museum on Sunday August 26, in celebration of National Women's Equality Day.

The date commemorates the 1920 passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution which granted women the right to vote.

Mayor Newberry has issued a proclamation in recognition of National Women's Equality Day encouraging "all citizens to remain united to assure that legally, institutionally, publicly and privately all rights and privileges are available to all citizens equally, regardless of sex."

Judi Jennings, Executive Director of the Kentucky Foundation for Women, says, "Women's political roles have greatly expanded in Kentucky since Martha Layne Collins became the first female Governor. Kentucky now has many talented women leaders at the state level, like State Auditor Crit Luallen and state representative Kathy Stein from Lexington. We also have local women all over the state working on issues like healthcare, housing and fair pay. However, Kentucky still ranks very low in the nation in the number of women elected representatives, so we have keep working to get more good women elected."

Guest speaker for the celebration will be community activist Ann Ross, who'll discuss "Changes for Women in Lexington's Political Scene." Ross has been involved in politics and public life in Lexington for over 25 years. In 1977 she was elected to a council-at-large position, becoming the first woman in the city elected to a county wide office. ■

The Sunday program is free and open to the public, 2:30 to 4:30pm at the Lexington History Museum at 215 W. Main Street.