

# EDITORIAL



Up until 9/11 America viewed itself as a confident nation basking in the freedoms of the world. It is now a frightened nation where its people are restricting their international travel and thinking twice before leaving the shores of their homeland. Western values of freedom and democracy are facing the greatest threat since 1939. Yet the people who engage in such activity are determined

that their cause is justified and such people are willing to pay the price with their lives.

However, rigid control is not only confined to the terrorist. America at last has achieved its ultimate aim. With the break up of the former Soviet Union, the US now has complete supremacy and will never compromise its military and technological strength. Just as Chechens want to be free from the Russian Federation, so does America want to be free from its reliance on the Saudis for Oil. Saudi Arabia has closer links with Al Quaida than Iraq. Most of the highjackers were Saudi nationals and it is reported that the Saudi Government was paying protection money to Bin Laden. However, the U.S. needs Saudi Arabia for the moment. With a regime change in Iraq, America would be able to take control of the oilfields. Even now, in the American press, there is talk about a U.S. military government based on what happened in Japan from 1945-51.

It is not only an individual who can be labelled a terrorist; a nation can do the same through military oppression to further its aims.

# Brazil

I have returned from Brazil where I visited projects working with drug users. In the summer I hope to launch an international arm of THOMAS to help support drug projects in the developing world.



# No to War

I am pleased to be working with Edges Magazine. I have come to the UK from Indonesia. I am here on a UK/Indonesia exchange. I'm with THOMAS for three months. War destroys our human family. Let us use words and dialogue to solve the problems. The Iraqi regime needs to be replaced but it is innocent people who will pay the price.



# PEACE

Let all people from all faiths and traditions pray for Peace.

Indonesian visitors to the U.K.



# THOMAS Staff Sleep Out

Some of our staff raised money for THOMAS by staging a sleep-out. They raised over £500.



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## At the age of 15 I lived with a drug dealer

**Wes is in our Rehabilitation Unit. He came to us directly from Prison.**

I found out about THOMAS during my last sentence that was at Lancaster Castle. Pam came in to see me and within a week or two she had the ball rolling to get me a place at THOMAS. I never thought about rehab before because I'd never had a chance, the length of time you had to spend doing it and the funding, getting a place and everything just made it an unrealistic option. But THOMAS has given me a place and I'm grateful for everything they've done for me already. I've gained things being here, like optimism that I haven't felt in ten or eleven years.

I first started taking drugs when I was fourteen. I came across a big drug stash with some local drug dealers. I stole a lot of it. I had to pay money back to the dealers so I had to go out burgling and that started my life of crime and drug use. My Mum tried to get me help, taking me to CDT's and Drug line for help, but nothing seemed to work for me. I don't know if I was just in the wrong frame of mind at the time, I was having fun. But I was lying to her, being stupid and negative. I've been in that cycle now for 10/11 years and the lies begin to get unmanageable and too much. I've wanted to change for a long time but just didn't know the way to go about it. They are times I've thought of ending my life but I wouldn't like to put my parents and my family through that. I want to be there for them. Everything's going right for me now. I know the things I can do. I know what I'm capable of and I know where my life's gone wrong. There are things I've realised in here that I haven't picked up on before. I've done drug courses before and they just didn't work for me.

The worst period of my life was leaving home for the first time when I was about 15. I went to live with a drug dealer in a flat. All it had was a settee, no other furniture. I was selling drugs for him, I was paid in drugs and raising a habit. I was doing four, five, six or seven bags a day I had the same clothes on for about six weeks. Everyone was telling me I looked a mess. At that age I just wanted to be with my family but I was too ignorant and I didn't want to show them I couldn't cope. That was the lowest stage of my life really. Going out and having to feed my drug habit, pinching off the wrong people, dangerous people. They'd come after me with knives blades and axes. I had a number of situations where I thought, "there's no way out of this, I'm dead." There were times when I just wanted to end it. I had a time when I cracked up on crack cocaine, I got locked in a police station for three days, they couldn't interview me because I didn't know where I was, I was in a bad state. When I came out of it I realised what I'd done and how stupid I'd been. It comes to something when you want to end your life doesn't it.

I had to pay back the dealer who's stash I'd pinched when I was 15. I owed him £5000. I'd never even seen £100 before so I didn't know how to begin paying him back. He got someone following me round while I was having to go round doing house burglaries to pay him back. There was no way out of it. In a way, because of my age there wasn't much he could do, so he was giving me a bit of leeway. He was just scaring me really. But my mum and dad found out about me burgling. I had to leave home because they were trying to lock me in the house for six weeks at a time, grounding me, trying to stop me thieving. I couldn't stay in the house though because I had to raise the money to pay the dealer back. I had to leave home, and that's when the drug dealer took me in. I stayed with him for about three months. Then I got arrested by the police for a burglary and my dad had to come to court because of my age. He told social services to take me away because I was uncontrollable. Then the drug dealer and his girlfriend came two weeks later because I had another appearance at juvenile court and he acted as my legal guardian. I got sent to a young offenders institution for three months. I was in 100 man dormitories where at that age everyone just wants to fight and prove themselves. I was getting my head smashed in, dead legs, everything. That was another scary experience.

The things I've been through have made me a stronger person. I started off with nothing, and I've got nothing now, but I know what I can get if I work for it. I'm not scared to work and I've learned that there's a lot more out there than this. I've wasted 11 years of my life, the people who've grown up around me have achieved all sorts of different things and I was doing a lot better than some of them at school. They've got a lot more now than I have, they've got jobs and they're stable. I have nothing, I'm still living out of penny in my pocket and I have no security. That's not the way I wanted it to be.

The pattern for me over the last few years has been getting out of prison, spending the last days of the sentence thinking what job I can do. Mainly thinking of raising money through thieving and going back into drugs because I don't know any other path. I was institutionalised and scared of the outside world. If I had to be out there I just wanted to do what I knew best which was drugs, I'd let them block my feelings out. I couldn't relate to normal working people and I was scared of being released. I was paranoid and frightened; I'd break out in cold sweats in prison. You're supposed to look forward to getting out of prison but I felt like I might as well kill myself. I didn't want to be released; I knew I'd put my family through the pain caused by my lifestyle all over again. My life was like a yo-yo. I knew where I was going wrong and what I was doing, I just didn't know where to get help, and I didn't have the will power to change. Then Pam came into the prison and interviewed me, she put me in the right direction and told me that THOMAS was here and that I could get help.

For people still out there using drugs, there is help, just try it. Good things can happen, I've been in your shoes and I think I've been in worse states at times. I never used to think I'd be able to change, I thought I was a step above everyone else and I never thought I'd get off drugs. I've been in the THOMAS reconcile project now for six weeks and the change is phenomenal. I'm so much more positive now, I know in what direction my life wants to go, and I know there is help out there for us. We've all been good lads in the past; the drugs have just brought us down. I've missed out on a lot of good parts of my life. I'm 25 now and I just want to start rebuilding my life, get some security and stability around me, a good working job. I don't want much; just to settle down.

# Prison and Drugs *I've had enough.*

## **Bobby is going through our Rehabilitation Programme – He shares his story**

I started using drugs from an early age at school; alcohol was the first one, then Cannabis. It was like they were socially acceptable for people like me from a council estate. There was a group of us and we just kept trying new things, while we were still at school we were trying trips, magic mushrooms and sniffing solvents. All the older lads in the crowd I was in at the time were using. It was what was acceptable, it was what everyone else was doing, you wanted to be accepted and not left out. But I guess my background before that didn't help. My mum left when I was ten, I was left on my own, passed from pillar to post and ended up living with my dad when I was 13. I moved into his house but was left to my own devices to do my own thing. Crime became a big part of it.

But I had a lot of good times as well. I did normal things like going on holiday and stuff. I was the youngest son in a family of four, I had three older sisters and before my mum left, everything was OK. But I remember the bad news—it's the furthest back I can remember, when my mum left. I don't blame her for leaving, she had to. But I was left on my own, I was ten and it was scary. It made life hard.

I was OK while I was at school though. When everything was sort of normal I did really well. Even at high school I passed every one of my mock exams, but because I'd started to truant a lot, I wasn't allowed to sit the GCSE's.

I'd become really unruly and I just couldn't be bothered to go. I was expelled a couple of times too but that was mainly because of my lack of attendance. When I was expelled from one high school, no other school would accept me. I used to play truant so much that a woman from the school board would come and pick me up, to make sure that I went to school. But then I'd just walk in and walk back out. I don't know what it was, if I was insecure or what, but I just couldn't take discipline at that time. I liked to do my own things and that, and have a laugh. No one could make me do otherwise.

At this time, using drugs was helping me fit in with other people. I didn't class myself as a criminal at the time; I was a druggie, yeah. But I was committing crimes.

I first went to prison when I was sixteen. I should have gone to a detention centre like a children's home but I was classed unruly. I was sent to a young offenders institution. It was for 17-21 year olds and I was only 16. That was for chargeable and equipped. There were four of us. We were burgling pubs everywhere around Preston town centre at the time. They got us on a charge of going equipped because we had a 2 inch screwdriver in the car, a tin of freeze foam for security alarm bells and a pair of socks that were meant to be used for gloves.

I did four weeks on remand at that time. Then I got my judging chamber after four weeks. So I was released. But it just progressed from there, car crimes and burglaries.

I was doing it to make money. I was buying drugs, going out drinking, buying ecstasy tablets, and buying nice clothes. When I turned 18 I ended up in Whetherby institution. I did a seven-month sentence in there, then got released. At 19 I went to Lancaster farms prison. It was a brand new prison so it wasn't really like doing time. All my friends were there too. The jail itself was clean, the structure, everything, it was a good jail as jail goes, you make the most of what you've got. I went back to Preston as an ex-con after my 21st birthday and that was a big shock to the system.

I've been in and out of Preston, Avery, Lancaster Castle and Kirkham. I've done long and short sentences. I had my eighteenth birthday inside, and my 21st. I missed Christmases, New years and holidays. I've missed out on a lot.

I started on heroin when I was 19. I'd just been released out of Whetherby; it was my second day out of jail. The girl I was with then was 8 months pregnant. I'd never even seen heroin before; I didn't even know what it was. It was brown and I thought it was another form of cannabis. It was nine months before we realised what we were taking, because we were smoking it, I never thought it was heroin. Heroin was a drug you saw on the big billboards, you'd drive passed in the car and see grim images of needles stuck in flesh. That was the only heroin I was aware of. I didn't realise what we were taking.

I started doing it with five other lads. Now four of them are dead. One of them hung himself in Preston prison. Three have overdosed. The first overdosed after taking heroin for only two years. Then one lad went into rehab after leaving



prison, he couldn't stick it and he quit and overdosed at home. My brother-in-law overdosed in 1998. He had two kids with my sister before he died, now she has to bring them up without him. The fourth is in jail now doing a six and a half-year sentence for supplying.

I decided to come to THOMAS because I tried every other option to change in the past but somewhere down the line I've always relapsed. I tried getting clean myself but I wasn't aware until I came here that being a heroin addict, I wasn't just addicted to heroin, it was every drug. I'd be clean off drugs done my rattle, not have a problem, but I'd go out every weekend and get drunk. It might be two months or four months down the line then bang, I'd come to outside a dealers, drunk, tenner in my pocket so I'd score a bag. I'd think I wouldn't wake up rattling and no body would know. That's how it starts again.

I've never asked for help before. I always thought I could do it off my own back. But this time, I've just had enough of the lifestyle, going in and out of jail. Missing out on a lot of things, seeing my daughter grow up.

But I was man enough to ask for help this time. There's not a lot of help out there for people like me, but I met Pam in Preston. She interviewed me twice, the second occasion she offered me a place at THOMAS.

I was released from Preston on Friday the thirteenth of December and I came here on the 6th January. I'd never met anybody else who'd been in my predicament with my problems and sorted them out and kept that way. Out there, there are people who've never taken drugs and there are people who are still taking drugs. There's no one in the middle, I've got no one to relate to. Since coming into the THOMAS rehab I've seen that there are people out there who I can relate to and are willing to help me. People who understand the problem with drugs, all drugs, but mainly heroin.

As I look ahead to the future there's a lot I'd like to do. Like the things so many people out there take for granted. Just to be normal, be happy. Have my own little flat, not be on bail, no worries, not having to go grafting. I want to break the cycle and have a normal life.



# Why go to War

Helen Harris

As our TV screens, radio reports and newspapers are being flooded with information about preparations for the "possible" war in Iraq, it's all too clear that everyone is only telling us what they want to. Tony Blair is suddenly pointing out that an attack on Britain is pretty much inevitable, while others are saying it's only a war over who controls our oil supplies. Thousands flocked to London to demonstrate against the war but what really are the facts supporting war and what are the realistic alternatives?

We are all aware that Iraq is very likely to be in the process of creating if not already possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). The threat of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons being in control of a human rights violator as severe as Saddam Hussein is something that the world cannot risk. Iraq has been leading technological advances in the Arab world for many years, the concern is with who is at risk when the arms force is strong. Prior to the threatened war there did not appear to be any immediate threat from Iraq to use its WMDs yet the risk of target crosses Iraq's own diverse populations, the country's Arab and Israeli neighbours and the entire world. A war on Iraq may be able to destroy the capability of Iraq to create these weapons and destroy existing stores.

Al Qaeda and Iraq have not previously been linked as they represent opposing sects of Islam. Yet now that both groups are "enemies" of the West there appears to be some evidence that the two are compromising their beliefs to work against us. Coupling Iraq's WMDs with Al Qaeda's severe anti Americanism could result in dangerous effects. There are strong arguments that the war on terror cannot be won without changes to leadership in the Arab world. Some even argue that whether or not WMDs are found in Iraq the war would serve as a useful entry in beginning to change the Arab world. Furthermore, the Western world would have some influence on decisions made in constructing a new government.

Saddam Hussein and his regime are severe violators of human rights. They have committed unimaginable crimes against humanity. He operates a superficial democracy with oppressive dictatorship and the international community has an obligation to free innocent citizens from his tyranny.

There are many groups which believe that the proposed war in Iraq is only stemmed from the hold that the country has on the world's oil reserves. Iraq is currently an unstable country to trade with, and a new western friendly Iraqi regime would likely result in cheaper oil. Yet it is feared that Saddam is not likely to fall without leaving a mass of destroyed oil reserves behind him.

As we're currently sitting on the brink of war, and it seems that getting this far and then not going to war would leave a perception by the world that the US and UK are weak and indecisive. If we do not project our power it will alter the way that other Arab regimes relate to us. If they view us as weak, they may continue to make decisions which support Al Qaeda and threaten the economic and social security of the US and UK.

If we do not carry out war now, it will only be more difficult in the future. Waiting to go to war will mean that we will not have access to an important military base in Saudi Arabia, and this may affect our strength. Furthermore, if France and Russia begin to trade with Iraq as is expected it will strengthen Saddam's leadership and make him far more difficult to overthrow later. This indicates that France and Russia are avoiding the war due to their own economic interests.

So what are the alternatives? To address the WMD in Iraq we could continue to monitor any developments, leaving weapons inspectors to gather intelligence and report back to the UN. The UN could be put in charge of Iraqi oil until WMDs are confirmed destroyed.

To address Saddam Hussein's regime we could offer an alternative "retirement package" which involves him saving face and coercing him to step down. We could deliver aid to the people of Iraq, improving our relationship with them and support internal democratic movements in the country, i.e. freedom for individuals to voice their opinion and freedom to vote.

To ensure security in the Western world and good trade links with Iraq, we could provide education and training in the people of Iraq. Lack of access to free education leads many children to go to schools sponsored by religious fundamentalists. By making human rights and democracy the guiding principals of foreign policy with the Arab world we can build relations and improve links.

So there it is. A brief outline of the supporting factors for a second gulf war and some of the best alternatives. In my opinion war should always be avoided where possible but in this case leaving Saddam in power is leaving innocent people to suffer under his control.



# My First Drug was Coke

Pete speaks to Edges

**I started doing drugs when I was 18, in Switzerland. Mum had just left and gone back to England. That was the second divorce in my life with my parents. I was pretty clean up until then even though I was into the punk scene. I didn't drink or smoke or anything.**

With drugs I started right from the top. The first drug I ever took was coke. The good stuff. The second drug I took was heroin and the second time I took that I injected it. I got badly into it and I've been doing it 20 years now. I came back to England and got into speed and amphetamines. My family was still all over the place, my brother and dad were still in Switzerland, and I was just left really, I just crumbled. Drugs were covering up my feelings.

I was born in a council estate in Blackburn and lived there until I was nine before moving to Switzerland. I just survived. I went back to England when I was 21 I met a local girl and she got pregnant. We had a daughter who's 15 now, our families wanted us to get married so we did. I was still using speed, staying mostly off the heroin. But my use of speed increased as my relationship got worse. I turned to drugs more and more. And my wife started to use drugs when she was away at the weekends and she wanted me to score it for her. So then she had to feel that it was ok for me to use since she was too. But when she stopped using she wanted me to. But I was a different situation because I was an addict.

In 95 we split up. I met the mother of my second daughter. She was using heroin maybe once a month. We weren't letting heroin users in the house and I was trying to stay away from those circles. I got on a methadone script which I was on 11 years. The doctor was just throwing everything at me, wanted me to inject amps, but I didn't want that I wanted to stop. When I was young heroin got snorted but I've always injected, I've got bad sinuses but I haven't damaged my veins that much. It didn't show on me, I carried it and hid it well. I've messed up some things in life.

But things got bad, we'd had my second daughter Katie and my wife was getting aggressive. She was on a methadone script too. She was drinking and taking a baseball bat to me, across my head. She didn't want my other daughter to come and stay, the drugs got worse, I was taking everything. Trying to keep my family together, but she ran off with someone and I broke down. I was doing a lot of speed. Trying to keep off heroin and keep on my methadone script.

Eventually I went back to Switzerland, I was taking 80-90mg of methadone a day and taking coke, I've always wanted to go back to Switzerland, my kids are there. But when I went back trying to keep my job up and the drugs, I couldn't do it. I was falling asleep at work and stuff. I was just lost. I wanted to get a stable life but everything was against me. I kept injecting crack. I never used to smoke or snort or swallow drugs.

One of my friends suggested I make some money, "How about taking some cannabis to England?" My mate was top of the pyramid. I thought he was talking about a few ounces. But no, I was bringing fifty or sixty kilos in a month. A year later one of my friends had sixty kilos which went missing. Then someone stole it off me over here because they thought I was on my own. So I had two Russian big blokes on my back in Switzerland which was very intimidating. But I was that crazy on drugs I just didn't care. I just thought that they've stitched me up, they knew I was vulnerable and they didn't help me out. I made £1000 on every kilo though. I did make a lot of money.

Then one time I was in England, I overdosed pretty badly, I started to think I wanted to stop. So I went to Romania because I couldn't get hold of heroin. But I still did valium and I was still doing speed. I was up for days speeding, then taking heroin and then one day I overdosed and woke up with all the monitors on me. I had some brain damage after that, I was blacking out and taking rubbish. One time I had my feet up on an old woman's wheelchair in a café.

Then another time I overdosed on coke, my head was pounding and my lips went black. I was walking around the room praying, "not now, don't take me now." I had been injecting 25ml of coke every ten minutes. I developed a bit of a mental illness. My friends were worried about me and said I was losing it. I was rattling and trying to stay off but I couldn't. I started again, I was using it every half hour or couple of hours.

But I came into the new year clean, I was seven days clean when I came to THOMAS and I'm here now, my brain's waking up again slowly and I'm feeling good. This is the first time I've asked for help I always thought I could get clean myself but I never could. I've come too close to dying too many times. I saw someone last week who I knew from the early days and they couldn't believe I was still alive. I want my daughters to have a dad.

# As a male victim of domestic violence you certainly feel alone

I was an investment banker who had worked on several continents around the world, when my violent ex-wife brought things to a head when we were living in New York.

I went from a happy and successful 'high-flying banker' to a broken man living in a motel not knowing where to turn, in the space of 18 months. To the extent that one day I had to go and see my boss and tell him, 'Look, this is what is happening, and I have to tell you, that I might have to get on a plane and leave the country, tomorrow'. Such was the veracity of my ex-wife's aggression and unpredictability.

I was a victim of my ex-wife who suffers from Borderline Personality Disorder. Few people in England seem to recognise the label, but most people seem to recognise the behaviour patterns.

At the start of our relationship my ex-wife held me up as perfect. Towards the end, I could do no right, it came to the point that I feared for my life.

She serially abused me, and when she threw me out of my home, under the threat of the police coming and arresting me on false allegations of me committing domestic violence against her, she tried to sue me for personal injury.

Her allegations were false and outlandish, so she could not make a case, but still she tried. Trouble is when a society denies that men can be victims, the chips are positively stacked against you.

In fact she was trying to rely on events where there were up to ten witnesses at a time, and these people uniformly responded with disbelief when they heard what was going on. Most of them offered to represent me as character witnesses, if it came to it. My ex-wife was turning night into day, and the culture that exists allowed her to do so and positively supported her.

My point is, that as a male victim you are alone. There is essentially no one there to help you. As a man you dare not admit that you are a victim. In fact I'd suggest that most men do not understand what being a male victim of DV means.

When I was faced with a female abuser making false accusations to the police, I spent several days barricaded in my bedroom. When I talked to the police, I was met with a withering response (unspoken: 'who are you trying to kid?'). When I called a local DV helpline, I felt uncertain that they were there to listen to men, in fact my opening line was 'I'm sorry I'm a male victim, I don't know whether you might be able to help me'. They were sympathetic, but couldn't. The feeling was, it was assumed that you are lying, claiming female on male violence.

When I managed to separate from my ex-wife, I spent several months with the blinds/curtains permanently drawn in my home, worrying when she would next show up on my doorstep, which she did unannounced quite regularly. This was just one amongst the many ironies. Whilst claiming to the police that I was violent towards her when we had been together, but refusing the police's offer of a restraining order, she would later turn up at my home.

You are not alone, plenty of other men have been abused by women, but few will be too open to talk about it. Trust in your friends. You will be surprised how many men will understand your experience and be able to help you.

Don't just look at the perpetrator, look at yourself. Seek to understand what it might be in your personality that enabled your victimiser to make you a victim.

Courtesy of [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

# Care in the Community

## *Does it work?*

**By a member of the community care team.**

As someone who works in the community and has the responsibility of ensuring care is put in place for the vulnerable and elderly, I feel that at this moment in time it has not proved to be a workable system, especially in the case of elderly men and women.

The present senior citizens are of a generation of people who have been brought up to accept 'their lot' and not ask for help. Many of us would call this stubborn pride.

Unfortunately, our society has become ignorant to the needs of others. The community spirit that existed 30-40 years ago is now gone and people live in an isolated state most of the time too frightened to ask for help from others.

When care is needed by the elderly it is usually the immediate family who take on the responsibility of the shopping, cleaning, laundry, personal care and sometimes feeding. This can be 24hrs a day 7 days a week putting more strain on an already stressful situation. The situation eventually becomes too much for the family and they are unable to continue, help and advice is sought. This is usually in the form of a request from the family doctor or a family member asking for an assessment of the needs of the elderly person. Whether there is physical illness or mental illness this assessment is made by a lay person with no medical background. The assessment normally takes place in the elderly person's home and consists of a 20-30 min visit, by a complete stranger, asking a series of questions.

As someone who has been present at many of these so called assessments and case conferences, I often wonder if the decision is made without taking into account the input from all who are involved. 'We need to take into account what Mrs/Mr A has to say' seems to be a standard line. This is obviously of great importance provided that he/she is capable of making a reasoned decision, and all the options have been explained. How can this be done however when Mrs/Mr A cannot tell you what he /she had to eat \_ an hour ago let alone remember who did their cleaning, washing or who helped them to dress that morning?

A typical scenario took place recently. An elderly member of my community had a bad fall which resulted in a nasty head wound and eventual admission to hospital. On admittance to hospital she was asked how she had sustained the injury. Her short term memory was so bad that she told the nurse she had fallen in her previous home, which she left 7 years ago, and that I was her next door neighbour. (Was this lady capable of making a decision about her future care?) During her stay in hospital she was assessed by a professional person, who had spoken to her for no more than 20 minutes. The person then took their findings to a panel, which consisted of hospital nurses, the daily carers, members of the lady's family and other agencies involved with the case. Prior to this meeting it had been strongly suggested that the lady involved was able to return home. It was only when much concern was expressed and statements given by the other agencies especially her daily carers as to the lady's mental state, her inability to make a meal or keep herself clean or even know what day it was that the decision was reversed. This lady's situation had been causing concern for over 12 months and the many requests for residential care had been ignored. It was only when she sustained a serious injury that notice was taken of the problem. I wonder, if all who cared for this lady had been listened to whether she would have been spared the injury and the family much stress and worry.

**It is instances like this that care in the community fails the very people it is meant to help.**





# Why do we marginalise people?

**Elaine Kennedy is a member of the THOMAS Team**

**‘We must not make a beggar an obstacle to our generosity’ – Dalai Lama.**

Do we ever stop to consider how much we marginalise even more the already marginalised?

For the past five years, I have given talks on homelessness, both physical and spiritual, here there and everywhere – each time without fail, someone asks me afterwards when we have a general discussion, how they should cope with the problem of giving money to beggars. Every single time I hear the remark: ‘I don’t want them spending my money on drink.’ I have also heard this from many other quarters too. It’s an issue I mull over a great deal.

The truth is that I never answer what I really want to answer for fear of coming over as sanctimonious. I generally get round it somehow, but I always stress the importance of actually having an intelligent conversation with the person who is begging, and not just throw a few coins at him as if he were an inanimate object. People who throw coins in fountains in Italy stop to admire the beauty of the flowing water. There is considerably more beauty in a human being, even if he is filthy and smelly – Christ is there too, every time.

Recently, I came across this quotation by the Dalai Lama and I felt guilty that I had not, so far, said what I deeply feel for fear of losing face. Basically my feelings on the subject fall into two categories, the first being this: Christ gave himself totally and unquestioningly for us. He did not have reservations nor did He say ‘I’ll do this for some people but not for those who decide to follow another path.’ He became Man; He suffered and died in order to give each and every one of us a chance. He never marginalised anyone by His words or actions – on the contrary He gave His all in order to bring everyone in from the edges towards a central unit of inclusion. His ideal is that no one should be excluded and that we should never exclude one another.

In His total and unquestioning giving of self to us He is showing us the true Christian spirit: that true giving is unconditional and unquestioning – If giving has strings attached, it is not in keeping with the teachings of Christ. He said ‘love one another as I have loved you.’ He did not say: ‘pick and choose whom to love, then do your best for those select few.’ We are commanded to love everyone – No one said we have to like everyone; but to give Christian love is on another level to daily petty likes and dislikes. Christ gives of Himself in the mess of life – the paralytic for whom the roof was battered in order to get him near the Lord, would not have been combed and scented as Tony Blair was when meeting the Pope. They would all, the Lord included, have been covered in plaster, dust and dirt – probably coughing and spluttering! So if you are going to give to someone dirty and coughing, look into his eyes and feel the Lord saying to you ‘who do you see when you’re looking at me?’ and consider all your inner brokenness you have the choice to hide, and feel the Lord within you asking the beggar the same question: ‘who do you see when you’re looking at me?’ The Lord produced His most sacred and moving moments in the worst mess of life.

The second point I mull over in all this is: why should affluence give you the right to drink and being marginalised deny you any such right? When my husband worked in industry, it was considered perfectly normal for the companies to treat their employees at Christmas etc to parties where alcohol flowed freely. Rooms at the hotel were booked for people who would be over the limit and need to stay until fit to drive. Such practices happen all the time and thousands of pounds are spent on alcohol for people who can afford to buy their own! Yet a lonely, cold, unhappy person whose life is a visible mess must not be allowed the same comforts as the person who is walking past him? In the words of many a client ‘I can’t get my head around that!’

Generosity is demanded of us as Christians – making obstacles to that generosity is not. Picking and choosing is not. Marginalising the already marginalised is not just unchristian; it is turning the teachings of Christ upside down because it is saying that affluence reigns, that those who have are the important ones, materialism is God, receiving is not for giving.

Afterthought: If you are in town on a Saturday night, who are the truly drunk and rowdy, the affluent young folk or the people you gave a quid to earlier? Have you ever glanced at how much money there is in the beggar’s hat? When did you last pay for a drink?!!

“So where He is, God is active, pouring out His gift, inviting our response. And this means we can’t fully know who God is and what God gives unless we are willing to stand in the same place as Jesus, in the full flood of the divine life poured out in mercy and renewal.” – Archbishop Rowan Williams, - part of his enthronement sermon.





# Domestic Violence - *are you a Victim?*

Jill Curtis

**Violence in the home is a crime we are all becoming more aware of each year. In the UK a quarter of all reported violent crimes are domestic. In the US the estimate of the number ranges from 960,000 incidents of violence against a current or former partner to four million each year. But domestic violence is also a world-wide problem.**

What is violence - or abuse? It is about power, and this can be about controlling a partner by either physical or emotional abuse. It is rarely a one-off event. There are also many different forms of abuse, and physical attack is only one of them. Perhaps most of us think of a black eye or broken arm, but sex can be used as a way of dominating a partner. So can ridicule. So can control of family finance. So, too, can shouting and screaming.

Does your partner accuse you of all manner of 'crimes'? These may even be everyday events, such as looking out of the car window to look at other men or talking for too long to friends and family on the telephone! Jealousy is a formidable spur for many attacks.

Do you feel under threat of violence? Have you been on the receiving end of a violent attack? Do you have to 'account' for time spent away from home? Does emotional or verbal abuse play a part in your relationship?

Psychological abuse can at times be even more damaging than physical abuse. It can be something which whittles away at your self-esteem until you may even begin to believe that you are 'stupid', 'useless' or that you 'deserve it'. Attempts at retaliating may bring further violence; tears of frustration and helplessness are ridiculed and mocked. If this is happening to you it may make it even more difficult to break away and do something about your situation. Loss of self-esteem, and being made to believe you are 'worthless' make it difficult to think about getting help. Does this sound familiar? You may also be on the receiving end of blackmail, for that is what it is, if your partner threatens to kill himself - or herself - if you leave. Or to harm the children.

Sometimes there is a warning that violence is imminent, and this may be triggered by alcohol or drug abuse. Other times an attack can come out of the blue.

Violence against women is only part of the problem. It is sometimes the woman who is violent towards her man. This is known as the hidden side of domestic violence. For a man to be on the receiving end of abuse is often seen as a comic situation, and sadly this adds to the reluctance men have to come forward and speak about it. But it happens all the same. The humiliation which accompanies this abuse makes it just as hard for men to break free and seek help. Erin Pizzey who founded the first refuge for battered women and children in London, England, now speaks of her concerns for men as well.

On the Internet there are several different support groups for women on the receiving end of violence. And in the US, Australia and New Zealand I could find help for men, but it was virtually impossible to find help for men in the UK. I wonder why this should be so?

One survey in the US discovered that where women have been accused of violence towards men it was not as one might suppose from self-defence, but as a reaction to men not paying attention or listening to them. I am not the judge, but these must have been very desperate women.

The Department of Justice reports that every 37.8 seconds somewhere a man is battered in the US. Every 20.9 seconds a woman is battered. Frightening figures. The Home Office in the UK reported in their survey into domestic violence that women are more likely to be badly injured and to suffer repeated attacks than men. But domestic violence is a two-way street not to be tolerated whichever way it goes. No one should live their day-to-day life in fear of another.

The question often asked is why do people stay in an abusive relationship? The most common reason is because of financial restraints or fear of losing the children. It is easy from the outside to say 'get out' but often there is hope that 'things will get better' or shame at saying to an outsider 'I am being beaten'. There is sometimes a mistaken belief that love will conquer all. This usually covers up a reluctance to bring things to a head and face all the changes that a challenge might bring about.

If there are children in a relationship this brings with it added worries. All research shows that if children witness their parents' marital discord and fighting, this will affect them deeply and their emotional well-being will be harmed. They will be scared by what they see and hear. Don't trick yourself into believing that they do not notice, or will not be affected by it.

The sites I found most helpful on the Internet were where addresses or telephone numbers of refuges were listed and where it was indicated that although in the main these were for women and children, they were also sympathetic towards men who needed help. There is help 'out there' so don't be afraid of looking for it. There are people who will listen, and help you to decide upon the best course. They will also provide some guidelines to assist you with your own safety, and that of your children. Be on guard, too, even if you have left your abusive partner, since you need to keep alert.

If any or all of this rings a bell with you, or you know of someone who is being abused, don't hesitate, get help and protection now. Some men and women have delayed, and tragically they are no longer alive. For further information, visit [www.familyonwards.com](http://www.familyonwards.com)

## A Male Victim

**The writer would like to remain anonymous.**

I have always been a shy man, especially with women and when I got my first serious girlfriend at 25. I fell totally for her. She was quite physical and would occasionally punch me, not really hard, well not to me, on the shoulder or back, on the shoulder. I don't know when it started going wrong but gradually the punches got harder and aimed more for the softer parts.

There was verbal abuse as well, I was not good in bed, not earning enough, I couldn't cook, or tidy properly... Then one day I came in to the kitchen, I said 'Hello', she mumbled something and I went to put my arms around her. She spun round and smashed the edge of a cast iron skillet into my ribs, breaking three of them.

She was terribly apologetic and I forgave her, but after a pause the insults and blows came back. I called The Samaritans and they gave me the number for an organisation, I called them and one of their staff asked me what I had done to provoke her. I don't really know what I thought or felt, I only know I woke up the next morning eight miles away from the phone box.

I went back to our shared flat and found her sitting in the kitchen. She turned and smiled, I thought it was OK then she went berserk, she started to slash at me with a kitchen knife. If I had not been a martial artist I have little doubt I would be dead now. I stopped or blocked all of her blows but four, I still have the scars on hand, wrist and chest where she scored on me. I turned and fled.

After a trip to hospital where I said I was a victim of a gang attack (I still did not dare say that a woman half my size was beating me up). I returned to the flat when she was out and packed my bags.

I called for a taxi and found there was no refuge for me - no demand for one - women don't attack men, what had I done? In desperation I went to my old landlady - she had a room to spare - and I was an old friend. Three days later she tracked me down and created a scene outside - eventually the police came and after an interview I was advised that it was not worth my while to bring charges - nothing would be done and she was bringing counter-charges and would use that as a defence.

It was made clear to me that if I dropped my charges she would drop hers and even my own lawyer made it plain that this was my best option. I left town and came down to London, that was twenty years ago, I am still single, I do not dare get close to another woman. I wish I had pressed charges maybe it would bring closure or maybe I would be branded as a dangerous thug, I wish I had never met her, I wish I could have my life back.

Courtesy of [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)



# no more silence

George Rolph Vice Chairman of Men's Aid.

*I am a 49 year old, white male, born in London.*

As a child I was brought up in an abusive home. My stepmother was a gambler and when she lost money she would tell my father that myself or my sister had stolen money from her purse. Dad would beat us until we screamed and then beat us until we stopped. My stepmother would join in the beatings hitting us with pokers, sticks, a belt, shoes or anything that came to hand. She would rub my face in the urine soaked sheets in the mornings and call me a dirty little b\*\*\*\*\* for wetting the bed. Punishment for being suspected of telling lies was a tablespoon full of English Mustard rammed into the mouth. We were then locked in our bedrooms so we could not drink any water and cool our burning throats. For my sister and I, this was everyday life. There was no such thing as "Child Line" in those days and child abuse was called discipline.

Out of control by the time I was 13 years old, I started a long criminal career. I was a very angry young man that hated adults. Approved schools were followed by borstals and prison. In the time when I was out of an institution I managed to get addicted to drugs and nearly died. I just wanted to block out the pain. In reality, the drugs just added another kind of pain.

During my final stay in prison I became a Christian and my life radically altered. Crime, drugs, fighting, hating, fear and the feeling that I did not belong, all slowly dissolved away.

I met my first adult female abuser after appealing for a partner on a radio dating show. She hit me with a piece of wood and split my head open, punched me between the legs while driving down the motorway at 70 miles an hour, threatened me with a knife on two occasions, destroyed my property and finally took my new born son out of the country to New Zealand without my knowledge. When I called the police the desk sergeant said, "What did you do to her to make her behave like that?" I was stunned and just put the phone down. I searched everywhere for help trying to get justice and get my son back, but I soon found that no-one cared. Had a man took a baby out of the country Interpol would have hunted him down. A female abuser, it seemed, could do whatever she wished.

By sheer chance I met my next partner one bright sunny day and was stricken almost straight away. She opened the front door to my knock and I saw what I thought was a vision of beauty. She invited me in for tea and a chat and slowly we got closer and closer. Within four months we were going steady. She was always kind, gentle, warm, and loving. Then she asked me to marry her. I was deeply in love by now and saying yes was easy.

*Then the abuse began.*

I remember sitting on the couch in the living room. She was leaning over me, her face inches from mine. Her spit was slamming into my face as she screamed a tirade of insults, threats, put downs and filthy language into my face. With every move of her hands I flinched, expecting a punch at any moment. My mind was reeling with confusion. This scene was repeated at least twice a week for months. By the time I had been through a



year of it my mind was mush. Every aspect of my life was trashed in those furious bouts of anger that poured from her mouth. Every part of me was criticised, ridiculed, humiliated and crushed. Her daughter would join in the abuse but, at fourteen she lacked the verbal skills of her mother so she substituted it with violence. She kicked me between the legs on three separate occasions and leapt off a sofa and dropped with both knees onto my back as I played with her young sister on the floor. Then she and my abusers brother told everyone I was a paedophile and old friends stopped talking to me until I was able to prove that it was a lie.

Desperate to try and win back by partners respect I tried hard to be a perfect man. I hoovered, cooked, washed, cleaned, shopped, helped with the children, became a volunteer substitute teacher in the local school, built furniture and bought my partner flowers, clothes, presents and saved up for a paid holiday for her in Bali. Nothing I did was good enough. I was rubbish. I was scum. I was useless. I was a bad Christian. I was a stupid fool. I was everything you can think of that is bad news and evil. Then, suddenly, she would change back into the kind, gentle and loving woman I had first met. It was like the sun coming out after months of storms. Suddenly she loved me again and it was as if she had never gone away. I would be delirious with joy until the next time the other side of her reappeared.

After three years of abuse from my partner, her daughter, brother and father I was finally told to get out and not come back. She had thrown me out frequently in the past but she would always ask me back again. This time I couldn't take anymore and I stayed away. I was plunged into a depression it took three years to even begin to recover from. Also suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, I felt isolated and afraid. The church had refused to help me when the abuse was at its height choosing to believe that the sweet lady they saw in their congregation was incapable of doing what I was describing. Friends laughed at me and some even told me to, "go home and slap the bitch." I was so angry at the lack of support for men from any official sources that I started my own web site and offered the support myself. Soon pleas for help started coming in the form of e-mail's, from all over the world. I realised that there was a massive problem around female abuse and male victims who had no help.

Research showed that men were suffering equal amounts of Domestic Violence in the home yet Governments everywhere were refusing to acknowledge it. Instead they relied on unscientific "pop" surveys done by special interest women's groups and on false or inflated statistics. Because the same thing had happened in America with devastating results on families and a huge suicide rate among fathers denied access to their children on the flimsiest of evidence, I decided to act. The Internet was filled with hundreds of sites from all over the world crying out against the injustices being perpetrated on men by authorities deaf to their pleas for help.

When I finally came across the charity "ManKind" I joined and began the fight to get men who suffer domestic violence justice that was equal to that which women get. Little by little the full picture of the horror that men are facing every day and the terrible bias built into the system against them became clear. I began to write hundreds of e-mail's to anyone I thought may listen trying to draw attention to what was going on. Along the way I had a film made about my work by the BBC and that caused a huge amount of interest from other BBC broadcasting services. Gradually people are waking up to the terrible reality of male victims and the terrible costs in terms of ruined children's lives by abusive mothers. To aid this process I am planning a walk from John-O-Groats to Lands End in the summer of 2003. This walk is to raise the profile of the need to help men and to appeal for funds from the public to help ALL victims, regardless of their gender. We want to raise at least 100 thousand pounds so that we can fund a shelter for men and advertise it nation wide. We will be campaigning under the slogan of, NO MORE SILENCE. Half of all we raise will go to female victims of domestic violence. After this walk is over I will target the politicians until they listen and give parity of services and resources to male victims. At the moment all the politicians will do is pump out dry Public Relations statements about how "aware" they are of male victims but how they feel they are a small minority compared to female victims. No amount of real evidence collected from all over the world seems to touch them. The message is always the same; never spoken but always implied: Go away. You will get no help from us. I have news for them though; we are NOT going to go away! We are determined that men will get the same provisions as everyone else. That they will be taken seriously. They will be treated sympathetically. They will not see their children left with their abusers and they will not be silent any more.

**More information can be obtained from:**

**<http://www.man2man.themenscenter.com>**





I've seen this piece of art before, when I was a boy, in my teens and now in middle age. But it was this last time that it actually spoke to my inner spirit.

The piece of art I am referring to is Michaelangelo's *Pieta*, in St Peter's Rome. As I looked at the *Pieta* this time it was after 34 years in religious life and 27 years as a priest, with quite a bit of struggle along the way. Looking at it after well over half of one's life is quite different from seeing it aged 12, more interested in Italian ice cream than Italian religious art.

The first thing I was drawn to was the face of Mary as she held her dead son. Her eyes were not looking up to heaven for answers or meaning. Maybe the words of the Psalmist were in her mind. "My eyes are weary from looking upwards" She is looking at the dead body of him who was flesh of her flesh, whom she gave the milk of her breast to.

Michaelangelo has carved the body of Christ as the perfect male body but very much dead. Rigor mortis has set in, one of the legs of Christ is in an awkward position, the foot of the other leg rests on a severely pruned tree trunk, symbolising youth cut off in its prime. But the pruning though severe in the extreme, has not killed the tree, new and stronger growth will come from it.

Last year and already this year, no matter how optimistic we may be on New Year's Eve, brings the same mix of profound sadness and glimpses of hope. But always the same mix.

Here at T.H.O.M.A.S., we see young people getting well in our rehab, whilst at the same time we see young people dying from an inner pain, from an illness of meaning, that almost seems intractable and there are no easy answers either from above or below. Death and dying is always on the menu here but so is the bread and wine of love and compassion, and also in our house where so much hope and pain is, the Eucharist is celebrated daily, bread broken for a better world.

The Easter experience coming up begins by looking into an empty grave. A grave of course that we are destined for ourselves. This is not morbid thinking, but a reality that keeps us humble before God and each other.

Every life and every death has meaning, no life however short is a waste. All this is summed up for me in the poem, "Death of an Irish woman," it might at first seem that she was a woman of no importance, but for me I found her moving and real.

"Ignorant, in the sense  
 She eat monotonous food  
 And thought the world was flat,  
 And pagan.....  
 I loved her from the day she died.  
 She was a summer dance at the crossroads,  
 She was a card game where a nose was broken.  
 She was a song that nobody sings,  
 She was a language seldom spoken,  
 She was a child's purse, full of useless things"

Michael Hartnett.

I guess we need to stay with our pain, our disintegrations, our deaths, like Mary holding her crucified son, rather than losing ourselves in religious certainties, or in togetherness. The privilege of our Christian faith is that we will be forever running to catch up with the spirit of God, always trying to make sense of our reality, no matter how futile it often feels.

# Every life has meaning

A Reflection for Lent.

Father John Michael Hanvey

# I started taking drugs at the age of 11

Wayne speaks to Edges. He is in our Rehab Unit.



I started taking drugs when I was about 11 years old. I'd just lost my Grandad. I actually witnessed him die. It was the day before Christmas Eve when he died and I couldn't cope with what I'd seen. I couldn't cope with the feelings that I had. I went away with my Nana for a while to help me get over the death, and while I was away was the first time I'd ever had any kind of drug.

I was 11 at the time and I had been watching my cousins smoking cannabis, I tried it out of curiosity, I enjoyed the feeling it gave me. It was like it made me comfortable with myself. I wanted more. I had two older brothers who were also into drugs and that made it easier for me to get hold of them. Things progressed from there, I had this drug and I wanted it, I wanted it all the time. I used to go to work to get money. If I didn't go to work then I'd go out doing crime, burglaries, breaking into cars.

When I was young my dad was away a lot. I was always left to my own devices; my mum tried to make up for it by spoiling me rotten. Then when my dad did come back he tried to have authority over me, he tried to discipline me, smacking me and stuff. But I was already strong minded by then, I always wanted to do whatever I wanted not what any one else wanted so that's what I did.

I drank every other night, getting into trouble because we were drinking and fighting, committing crime. I was kicked out of school because I was doing drugs, but I hated it any way. I couldn't stand being there and I couldn't do the work, so I thought it was a good thing when I got kicked out.

I started stealing cars and motorbikes and things like that. I got too much for my mum and dad, so I moved in with my Nana, I lived with her because she was the only one that could control me. I started working when I was about 15, I did alright for a few years. I was working then going out at weekends and that went on for about four years, then I started drinking heavily, taking tablets, taking LSD, ecstasy, taking anything I could get, even cocktailing them.

I got into serious trouble when I was 19 because of the drink. I got done for attempted murder on a copper, throwing him under a car. That was a big reality check for me. I stopped drinking, stopped taking drugs got myself a job and I was doing alright. Then my Nana died. Things just went seriously wrong then, the only person I loved in my life had gone. I had no support, if something went wrong she was always the one I'd turn to. I was looking for the love she gave me from everyone else, but there was no one. I started drinking again, started taking drugs.

I went to a friend's flat and there were people in there that were smoking heroin and it was curiosity again. I took it, and it was like that was the feeling I'd been chasing all my life. It took control of me from the first moment I had it. The next day I was in Manchester scoring. At first I had the money to pay for it, but once the drug had got hold of me, everything had gone. All I could do was pinch money and that wasn't enough money to pay for the habit I had.

I ended up selling the drugs because that gave me the ability to pay for the habit. It gave me my own kind of security; I built my world around drugs, taking drugs and selling them. The feelings I had just began to grow every time I didn't take the gear, so I took more and more just to suppress my emotions.

I did this for about five years. I had been in and out of the police station. My parents house was busted so was mine and my friends when the police were looking for the drugs I was selling. Somehow I managed to keep one step ahead of them all the time though. Things came to an abrupt end in 1996 when the lads I was selling for ended up going to prison. I was left with an enormous habit, a family to look after and the pain of the habit. That was when I ended up getting into burglaries in a big way. By the time I first got arrested in January '97 I had committed something like 450 burglaries. I actually got remanded for that but I got out about four weeks later because my girlfriend was diagnosed with cancer. They took pity on that and released me. I started selling drugs again straight away. Two months later I got caught, I was selling some gear to some people and got arrested for it. I found out undercover police had been surveilling me for months. From that moment on I knew that I wasn't getting released. I'd never been done

before, but I got four and a half years.

I was released in August '99. I did ok at first. I wasn't doing heroin though I was still drinking and doing cannabis. I got a job and worked for the first nine months after being out. My brother moved in a few doors away from me and he was selling gear. I had a girlfriend, I had a house a job and a car but I still felt there was something missing. The pressure of seeing the gear every day but going out working, I felt there was still something missing. I ended up using again and within four months of using I was caught doing burglaries again, I'd lost my job and everything. I was burgling to fund my habit. I got arrested for a burglary because someone identified me. I got four years.

I was using for fifteen months of the sentence. I woke up one morning in my cell in bits. I'd been threatening my family screaming and shouting at them, verbally abusing them just to get money off them to fund my habit while I was inside. My mum and dad were on the verge of disowning me, my girlfriend was on the verge of leaving me. That was a turning point. I volunteered to go to Lancaster into the twelve step program because I'd heard good things about it. I completed the program there and got clean, I thought I was going to be a success, but five minutes after getting off the train I was using again. I'd got a problem with coping with society and the pressures that it puts on you out there. I was feeling more secure inside than out and I couldn't cope.

I met up with Pam and she explained about the THOMAS program, that it's a place where I could go to get clean and learn about myself. The program lets you integrate slowly back into society without all the pressures out there. Learning to cope with myself first, without having to deal with budgeting and all that. That will all come in time. The THOMAS program is helping me a lot more than I thought it would. I thought I'd come here and just see it though. But I'm actually enjoying it. I've learned a lot about my feelings and about myself. The staff are warm and welcoming. They're here to support me and I feel like part of the family, which is great for me.

physical  
sexual  
mental  
economic  
abuse

## Women and Domestic Violence

**Edges Magazine is grateful to the BBC for these articles.**

Domestic violence includes physical, mental, sexual and economic abuse within the family. This often involves a power relationship where the abuser uses their position of power to control the more vulnerable and powerless person.

The prevalence of domestic violence is similar in all communities, and it is largely women and children who face the brunt of violence and abuse within the home, often from a violent and more powerful male abuser, such as husband, father, brother or uncle. However, sometimes women can also be abusive, often in collusion with a male abuser. In Asian households, the extended family and the wider community, including community leaders, may be involved in or collude with domestic violence.

Asian women, from all religious backgrounds, have similar experiences of domestic violence to that of white, English women and to women in other communities. However, Asian women's experience of domestic violence can take culturally specific forms, such as forced marriage. The following are some issues relevant to the experiences of Asian women:

### Shame and honour

Within the community, women are subject to powerful traditional practices such as izzat (honour) and sharam (shame). Women are expected to uphold the honour of the family by conforming to certain prescribed roles, as the dutiful and obedient wife and daughter, who accepts or tolerates domestic violence rather than leave home. Failure to do so results in being treated as a social outcast by their extended family and wider community. They are accused of having brought shame on their family honour and are ostracised, harassed and even subject to acts of violence.

In "honour killings" for instance, minority women may be killed by family or community members. These killings or other honour crimes such as assaults and abuse are justified as punishment for having brought shame on the honour of the family and that of the wider community.

### Forced marriage and restrictions on lifestyle

Many young Asian women and girls may experience forced marriage, which is different from an arranged marriage. An arranged marriage is

# The ugly truth of prison

Edges Magazine thanks the contributor for this article.

## New project at Wellingborough Prison shows teenagers the ugly truth about being in jail

A ground-breaking project by inmates at Wellingborough Prison is giving teenagers a shocking look at life behind bars.

Reporter Hillary Scott and photographer Hannah Dennis were allowed exclusive access to the Youth and Community Project...

An amazing project is under way at Wellingborough Prison and aims to show teenagers what can happen if they get involved in crime.

The scheme, which took six months to get off the ground, sees a group of schoolchildren aged between 13 and 18 going to the prison to watch a play performed by a group of 25 inmates.

Prisoners, some serving life for murder, tell the children their life stories, explaining why wrong choices led to them losing their families, job, and liberty.

Many have been involved in drugs and have found themselves repeatedly behind bars. The stories pull no punches.

The scheme, co-ordinated by probation officer Glenn Banks, was put together after father and son bank robbers, serving their sentences at Wellingborough, asked Glenn if they would come up with a play to show children the truth about crime.

They were given the green light by deputy governor Eric Rowett while he was acting governor. New governor Peter Bennett watched the play for the first time alongside us and was keen to give the scheme his backing too.

The main story, re-enacted by the prisoners, tells of the ten years old friends, Steve and Matt. Steve gets involved in crime, starting with shoplifting and escalating as he gets older into drug taking, dealing, handling stolen goods, theft, joyriding and even violent assault. Matt, meanwhile, is tempted by easy picking of crime but chooses to say no to pressure from Steve and stays straight.

When Steve is released from prison, he finds it impossible to get work because of his criminal record, and it is Matt who gives his friend the employment he needs to start anew.

Throughout the play, Alex of Corby, serving eight and a half years for dealing cocaine, and Jimmy from Lancashire, who has been in and out prison since 1968 for burglary, give a running commentary. They ask the teenagers how the characters could behave differently. All the prisoners tell the children how making the right choices can keep them away from prison.

The children are also shown a shocking video about what life is really like behind a bars. They see photos of horrific injuries inflicted on inmates by fellow prisoners.

Alex tells them : "There's nowhere to run and hide in here. Weapons are made from things such as combs, toothbrushes, and broom handles. I've seen faces slashed open, burns from boiling water thrown to someone's face. Some end up being raped. A friend of mine cut his own throat at Christmas.

"Another prisoner broke up his mattress and stuffed it inside his clothes and set himself alight. You could hear his screams as he burned to death. Don't kid yourself that it's cool to be in prison. It's a terrible, terrible place."



# Don't end up in here like us, say killers

The prisoners involved in the youth and community project are disarmingly honest about their lives, especially in a question and answer session at the end of the play. The main actors, Jason and Steve are serving seven years for manslaughter and life for murder respectively.

Steve went out on a drink and drugs binge when he was aged 19 and killed a taxi driver by stabbing him 58 times.

Steve said: "I deserve to be here. But I made my family victims too. They've had their windows smashed and been threatened. My sisters have had to change their names, their whole lives have been wrecked because of me. The man I killed had five daughters. Their lives have been wrecked too, by a moment of madness."

Jason, 21, was involved in the recent killing of a Milton Keynes student kidnapped and dropped from a bridge and left to drown.

Jason was the driver of the car. He told the whole story how a night out and a lift home for a friend turned into a nightmare and led to death of an 18-year-old.

During the play many others gave their testimonies, including Sean, of Northampton, serving three-and-a-half years for handling stolen goods after a raid of a county post office. He said: "I got £2,500 for driving a car. But I can definitely say that if the clocks were turned back it wouldn't be worth it. I worked out every day of my sentence would have been £4.50 of that money."

Frazer, of Milton Keynes, is serving ten years for intent and conspiracy to supply heroin. He said: "I started stealing sweets at ten years old, egged on by my friends. And 20 years later I wished I'd stood up to them and said no. "By the age of 14 my parents threw me out. I'd stolen everything they'd worked hard for. I slept where I could, smoked puff because I thought it made me look cool. I was 16 when I took heroin for the first time. "By 22 I'd been to prison and I cared for nothing and no-one. I stole anything I could and ended up selling drugs which is why I'm here today. I've had 17 years in prison after stealing sweets, I'm living proof that small crime lead to big ones."

Burglar Jimmy, 44, who has spent little time out of prison since 1968 said: "When you leave prison you get £50 if you have somewhere to go and £100 if homeless. I've been unemployed since I was 18. Who is going to want to give me a job? "I've lost my family, my kids, everything which makes life worth-while. It isn't easy to be accepted on the outside and that's why people go back to crime and drink and drugs. We thought we were Jack the Lad but look at us. Why does it take us so long to work out that crime has cost us our lives?"

Former Army captain Tony, 49, a well-spoken man serving a long time for manslaughter after shooting someone over a relationship. He said: "It doesn't matter where you come from, you are all the same in here. I deserve to be here. There's no getting away from bad choices. I have four grown-up children and nine grandchildren who were 174 miles away. Prison is not fun."

Frank, of Corby, convicted of drug offences and violence, told the audience: Don't any of you leave here and forget what you've seen today.

"The 20 guys sitting here won't see their families tonight, or go home for Christmas. If you feel pressure from friends to get into trouble then they're not your friends. It's cooler to stand up to them than follow the herd. Don't feel ashamed to talk to someone about your troubles either. We've done rotten things and no-one wants to know us. "We may have thought we were great at that time but we know now that we weren't. Do anything you can to avoid ending up here like us."

## SMALL CRIMES TO BIG CRIMES

Hi! I got done for Conspiracy to supply a Class A Drug, heroin. And with Intent to Supply a Class A Drug, heroin. I got sentenced to 10 years in total. When the judge sentenced me, he gave me 5 years for the Conspiracy to supply and 5 years for Intent to Supply to run concurrently.

I've learned HOW SMALL CRIMES LEAD TO BIGGER ONES. I started stealing sweets from a shop; I wasn't even ten years old. Why? I did it because my friends would say, "Come on - go and get some Yorkie Bars mate", and I did.

Only 20 years later I wish I had just turned round and said NO! But that was only the start of things. By the time I was 14 and my mum and dad had enough of me I was stealing things out of the house, things which they had worked hard to get, and in the end they threw me out, they'd just had enough. I got arrested by the police for TWOC - known to the likes of me and maybe some of you, as joyriding. I had to go to the court for that, it was my first time in court. I was only 14 at the time and the Judge, he sentenced me to 1 year in an Attendance Centre and 2 years on a Probation Order. Thinking back on it, I'm lucky to be alive! I lost control of that car, and ended up in a bad car crash. After that I got thrown out of school, my mum and dad couldn't cope with me. I had nowhere to live and I had to sleep wherever I could - that's when I got involved in Drugs.

I started to smoke Puff (Cannabis) because I thought it made me look cool, and fit in better. But as time passed I moved onto harder drugs! I was 16 years old when I tried Heroin for the first time. Since that day my life hasn't been the same. Within weeks I had my first addiction to drugs, and to have addiction, you need money to feed an addiction. Within months, shoplifting wasn't bringing enough money to feed my habit. So I turned to credit card fraud which ended with me being arrested and put into prison for a short spell. By the time I was 22 years old, Heroin had completely taken over my life, I cared for nothing and no one, I lost all respect, I started burgling houses, sometimes 3 a day. I'd go out dipping (which is pick pocketing), I'd steal purses out of hand bags - people like your mum, I'd take it not even thinking how they would be able to feed their children.

Then I found a new way to feed my drug addiction - by selling drugs, and that's why I'm in prison today. Sometimes I look at the other prisoners and think to myself - they're lucky!

Now I bet you're thinking how can you say they're lucky? Well I'll tell you why. Because some of them have only just started to walk down that path, I ran down it. And believe me the only thing you'll get out of drugs and crime is a lot of pain. So if someone should ask you to steal something, no matter how small it is, just say NO and think for the moment where those Yorkie Bars have got me.

I've had a 17 years prison sentence, that's half of my life since I started stealing.

**From Yorkie Bars to shoplifting, to Fraud, Burglary, and Ram raiding and finally to Drugs. I'm living proof that small crimes lead to bigger ones.**



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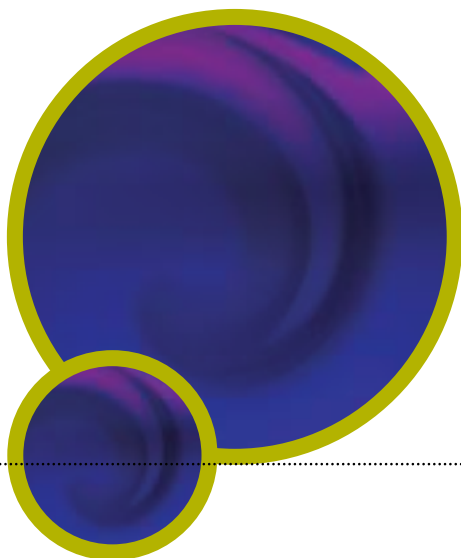
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