ACCOUNTABILITY

In discussion about messaging's impact on accountability, Jackson Katz (TED Talk - Violence Against Women: It's a Men's Issue): "*We talk about how many women were raped last year, not about how many men raped women. We talk about how many girls is a school district were harassed last year, not about how many boys harassed girls. We talk about how many teenaged girls got pregnant in the state of Vermont last year, rather than how many men and teenaged boys got girls pregnant. So you can see how the use of this passive voice has a political effect. It shifts the focus off men and boys and onto girls and women. Even the term "violence against women" is problematic. It's a passive construct. There's no active agent in the sentence. It's a bad thing that happens to women. It's a bad thing that happens to women, but when you look at that term "violence against women," nobody is doing it to them. It just happens. Men aren't even part of it*."

Accountability is an integral step in making change. Accurately naming who is being violent and providing clear text for the violence is integral to accountability. It's not unusual to see headlines like "woman killed in fit of jealous rage." Advocates know that 99% of the time it's a male intimate partner who murdered her in his last act of battering/IPV – not a love story gone wrong, or jealousy as "cause." Similarly, language like "violent home," "abusive relationship" is extremely common, though, vague and inaccurate, i.e., lacks "accountability." Homes and relationships aren't violent – individuals are. This language obfuscates criminal behavior, equalizes the violence amongst all involved and essentially engenders victim-blaming. When language or the story is not clear about accountability for the violence, it can unintentionally enable collusion with the batterer/abuser.

Batterers' accountability means owning responsibility for their violence in all its forms. This requires honest self-examination, and directly, openly naming their violent behaviors. It includes acknowledging the impact his violence has on his partner, children and other relatives. True accountability requires accepting the consequences of his behavior and making significant changes in his belief system and behaviors based upon non-violence and respect for women.

As relatives of women who are battered, and of batterers, we are responsible and accountable to women who are battered/survivors for ending the violence. Holding the batterer accountable for his violence and providing safety to women and their children/survivors is part of our role as relatives.

Systems accountability means creating and enforcing laws, policy, procedure and protocol that provides safety and resources to women who are battered and upholding batterer accountability. Law, policy, procedure and protocol are a means to justice, safety and upholding the sovereignty of women. If utilized instead as an end in themselves or to support the batterer's agenda, this amounts to collusion resulting in the revictimization of women and their children. Collusion is the opposite of accountability.

Excerpt Roots Up booklet