

This Rhode Island exhibit is part of a national initiative. There is a Silent Witness project in every state in the United States and in several other countries. We who are associated with the Silent Witness exhibit have come to experience it reverentially. The murdered women, men and children have become real to us. When we carry them from our cars to the exhibit spaces, we feel we are carrying their stories. When we “hug” them in order to fit them into their stands, we are reminded of how much love each of them needed.

They have come alive for us as Beth, Maria, JennyLee, Barton, Victoria and Lindsay.

But they are all *dead*...



...and that is the reason for this project.



Honoring and remembering
the women, men and children
murdered each year
in acts of domestic violence



We remember their names.

The creation of Rhode Island Silent Witnesses



Local college students lend a hand



North Kingstown Police officers and their families volunteer to create the first male Silent Witnesses in Rhode Island



Exeter/West Greenwich Middle School students touch up the paint on several Silent Witnesses

Who gets involved with The Silent Witnesses of Rhode Island?



Police Officers



Family members



College students



Mothers & daughters



Community members

Want to get involved and work to end domestic violence murders in Rhode Island? Join us.

Together we can create a more peaceful future.

Miledas Hilario

Age 41

May 18, 2007

After being held at knife point by her ex-boyfriend two days earlier,

Miledas fled to her sister's home, but returned to her

Providence apartment the next day. Later that day, worried,

her daughter called police, met them at the apartment,

and found Miledas' body. Hamlet Lopes allegedly murdered her

earlier in the day. Miledas ran a day care facility at her home and

was a mother of three.

The Unknown Witness

All genders, all ages, all races and religions

For those whose bodies or killers were never found.

For those whose murders were never considered a domestic violence homicide because there was too little information gathered about their life and death. For any woman, man or child who has been killed by someone who once claimed to love them. These were our sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, schoolmates, friends and neighbors.

They were a part of our community and we must end the violence in their memories.

THE SILENT WITNESS STORY

The Silent Witnesses of Rhode Island was formed in 1997 in response to a call for every state in the US to create a Silent Witness project, honoring and remembering the victims of domestic violence murders in each state, in order to gather in Washington, DC for the first national March to End the Silence on October 18, 1997. Every state in the US already had a project, except RI.

Eight Rhode Island women met once a month, beginning in August 1997, and by October had created the first Silent Witness exhibit, with figures for each of the five women murdered in Rhode Island in 1992. A sixth figure was created to represent the Unknown Woman, for all those victims who were unidentified. On October 18th, 23 RI women gathered in Washington, DC with the more than 2500 other citizens, carrying more than 1500 Silent Witness figures from every state in the US and four countries, to honor and remember domestic violence homicide victims around the world.

Since then, Silent Witnesses of Rhode Island has gone on to create seven separate projects around the state. There are now a total of 104 Silent Witness figures, representing all documented domestic violence homicide victims in Rhode Island from 1980 through 2006. These projects are created and maintained by volunteers throughout the state of Rhode Island. We are, and will continue to be, a completely volunteer run organization. In addition, SWRI is active in educating service providers and the public on the sometimes fatal consequences of domestic violence. We have stepped forward out of the darkness, and with respect and reverence for our Silent Witnesses, we tell their stories - because now we must be their voices.

SWRI BELIEVES...

- in a world free from violence and abuse
- in empowerment for women and the equal worth of all persons
- in the strength of numbers working together for a common mission – all are welcome to participate
- that the issues of violence and abuse are the responsibilities of the legal, community, social and political structures
- that together we can end domestic violence murders by 2020

THE SILENT WITNESSES OF RHODE ISLAND PROJECT CRITERIA

The silhouettes in the exhibit represent women, men and children who are victims of domestic violence, killed in Rhode Island in acts of domestic violence. The determination that particular homicides were acts of domestic violence was based on thorough research in relation to the criteria below.

Criteria used are:

Who? Women, men and children killed in Rhode Island by their partners, ex-partners, fathers, mothers, siblings, or acquaintances in acts of domestic violence where the perpetrator was charged and convicted, or the victims were killed in documented cases of domestic murder/suicide. This includes victims of triangulation (see *definition below*).

Family Violence Definitions:

Family violence, sometimes called domestic violence, wife abuse or domestic abuse, is the abuse and mistreatment of an individual in an intimate or family relationship. The abuser is typically the partner or ex-partner, or an acquaintance that was trying to have a relationship. The abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, cultural, spiritual or financial in nature. It happens everywhere and to people from all backgrounds. In its most extreme form, domestic violence can result in severe injury and even homicide.

Partners include a husband, wife, ex-husband, ex-wife, common-law partner or boyfriend/girlfriend, ex-common-law partner, ex-boyfriend/girlfriend, or same sex partner.

Acquaintances might include co-workers, friends, or neighbors in circumstances where there has been an attempt to forcibly create an intimate relationship with the victim. This may involve stalking behavior. The key is that the person who commits the murder is not a stranger to the victim and has attempted to exert control over them.

Victims of triangulation are third party homicide victims whose deaths have been caused indirectly by a domestic dispute. These may include a new boyfriend/girlfriend, a friend, a child, or a neighbor or bystander.

Jennifer Duarte
Age 24
November 21, 2006

Early in the morning, police found Jennifer's body lying in the road near the Woodlawn neighborhood in Providence. Detectives stated that she apparently knew her killer, and 28 year-old Deaven Tucker has been indicted for her murder and bank robbery, and is currently awaiting trial.

Dawn Alves
Age 24
December 16, 2006

The night before she died, Dawn said she wanted to end her friendship with Jeremy Pontbiant. She called a friend and said he had touched her inappropriately in her car and she was upset. Dawn's mother found her daughter unconscious in the bathroom at their home after returning from work, and she later died from the blunt trauma to her head.