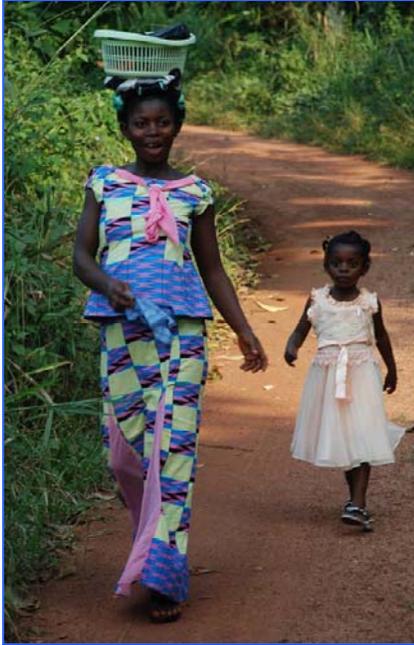


*January 2009*

*Faith and Violence Against Women*



*(Ghana 2008, photo by Mitch Bartee)*

“My spiritual journey thus far has led me from the church to the mosque to meditation to now a simple prayer table. The path taken has allowed me to see the universality and connectedness of religions and spiritual systems, and helped me understand why all people have a right to worship God in their own unique way. Respecting universal truths that bind most religions gives me a low tolerance for religious chauvinism. And all the while I have found myself becoming more focused on the fact that the external expression of worship is not as valuable as one’s internal commitment to living a life reflecting self-love, self-respect, and a commitment to service.”--**Lasana Omar Hotep, “Creating A Spiritual Foundation” from the Black Male Handbook**

It is estimated that over 80% of the world’s population belongs to a major religion. Many people look to their spiritual leaders for guidance. In religious traditions the topic of intimate violence is often avoided. But it is a problem too prevalent to ignore. Religious leaders are in the right place to address violence against women and children, counsel families, and affect moral attitudes. Religious leaders are beginning to prioritize the issue and get trained in appropriate response to men’s violence against women; to understand the risks associated with intimate violence, the negative affects on children and their development, and the promising work in engaging men and faith

communities in ending the problem. In this issue we explore the intersection of religion and violence against women through a sermon, film, book, and featured faith-based programs.

This special extended issue is brought to you in partnership with the Center for Partnership Studies, Spiritual Alliance to Stop Intimate Violence (SAIV). [www.partnershipway.org](http://www.partnershipway.org)

**Shining Lights:  
Creating Faith  
Communities of  
Healing—**  
By Nicole Sotelo



In the winter holiday season, it is common to see Menorah lights, Solstice trees or Christmas stars ablaze. Unfortunately, Christmas 2008 will be remembered by those attentive to abuse for another blaze: a recently divorced husband who dressed up as Santa and sprayed bullets and fuel at a holiday party of

his wife’s family, killing nine people as the family home went up in flames.

The article I read about this tragic Christmas story had quotes from a member of the of the husband’s Roman Catholic community who seemed unaware that anything was wrong in this man’s life. This is not uncommon. Most people of faith, no matter the religious affiliation, do not know that one in three women in their congregations are or will be domestic violence survivors in their lifetimes or that one in six men were sexually abused as boys. Most believers also do not know that they can make a significant difference in whether or not their fellow believers receive help and healing.

Imagine if someone in this man's Catholic Church had known of the problems facing the family mentioned above and had provided the resources for help? It may have saved nine people's lives and the suffering of an entire community who knew them. [Read More](#)

Nicole Sotelo is author of "Women Healing from Abuse: Meditations for Finding Peace." She

coordinates [www.WomenHealing.com](http://www.WomenHealing.com) and leads retreats for abuse survivors. A graduate of Harvard Divinity School, she currently works for Call To Action, a Catholic justice organization.



## Memorial Charms



**Arlington Heights, IL, USA:** This month we honor **Dana Mangi**, age 25, murdered by a male acquaintance on August 18, 2007. She died a month before entering the college of veterinary medicine at the University of Minnesota.

When you wear a **One in Three Women™** product you identify yourself as someone who is working against violence against women.

When you purchase a **One in Three Women™** product you help support our work. [See More Images](#)

## Women Make Movies

**One in Three Women™** recently began talking with Liza Brice of **Women Make Movies** (WMM) about their films by and about women. Now throughout the year we will be featuring WMM films focusing on violence against women.

Our first selection is **3 Times Divorced**. How does a Palestinian woman in Israel survive an abusive husband? When Gaza-born Khitam's abusive Arab Israeli husband divorces her and gains custody of her six children, she suddenly finds herself fighting two heart-breaking battles: against the Sharia Muslim court to get her children back, and against the state of Israel, which considers her an illegal resident and denies her protection in a shelter for battered women **3 Times Divorced** is a newly released film by **Ibtisam Salh Mara'ana**, with a fascinating and disturbing look at a civil and religious legal system that denies women the right to get a divorce independent of their husbands. It highlights the bind that abused women find themselves in when their immigration status is contingent upon marriage. With remarkable access and an unflinching lens that never sensationalizes, award-winning filmmaker Ibtisam Salh Mara'ana captures Khitam's astonishing courage as she faces an impossible situation with no country or court to protect her. *3 Times Divorced* won an award for, *Best Israeli Documentary at the Doc Aviv Film Festival and FIPA-Biarritz, FIPA D'ARGENT Special Prize. Israel/ Palestine, 2007, 74 minutes, Color, VHS/DVD, Arabic, Hebrew*



## Toward Healing: A struggle to survive sexual abuse and hope for a better future

by Jackie Shaw

Many people ask me how I ended up going seminary with some of the thoughts I express about God. I am often very angry with God and refuse to believe the easy platitudes I have heard in church. My experience has shown me that very little is ever easy. And yet, I have known God's grace and I want to share that experience.

To get to my experience of grace, I have to recount my experience of brokenness

and God. I started going to church when I was seven years old. My mother decided I needed to go. So, I would be dropped off at church for Sunday school and picked up when it was over. Things went smoothly with me going to Sunday school for about two years. Then my experience of church and life in general changed drastically. My mother got a job at a local grocery store to pay for my sister's preschool. This meant that my father had to watch my sister and me before it was time to go to church.

Shortly after mom started her job, the three of us remaining at home started a new ritual. Dad would tell my sister to go downstairs to watch cartoons and when she was gone, he would call me into his room. Then he would molest me until it was time to get ready for church. Every week when he was done, he'd say, "You better go get ready for church." Sometimes he would threaten me with what would happen if I said anything to anyone about what he did. He made threats, but never really had to because the way life was in that household was like walking a tightrope over a field of land mines. The slightest slip or turn would have been a catastrophe. [Read More](#)

Jackie Shaw is a graduate of Eden Theological Seminary. She and her husband Andy live in St. Louis. The following was originally written as a sermon preached at Eden, but has been revised to be more time sensitive and present a broader horizon for survivors and church leaders who wish to better serve survivors in their congregations



**Women, Faith and Development Alliance (WFDA)** brings women's organizations, faith communities and the international development community together to tackle the issue of women in poverty, creating one of the most powerful and far-reaching, anti-poverty coalitions in history. WFDA's goal is to launch a campaign that will increase financial and other investment in women and girls by governments, multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations, corporations, and individuals. WFDA combines the power of faith and

secular communities to increase the political will and action to end global poverty through the advancement of women and girls. With the help of supporting faith communities, women's groups, and development organizations, the mission of WFDA rests on the conviction that empowered women are agents for development, and that promoting the equality of women and girls helps to reduce poverty and to benefit entire societies.

## The Black Church and Domestic Violence Institute

Under Founding Executive Director, **Reverend Aubra Love**, and her leadership The Black Church and Domestic Violence Institute has trained, assembled and organized thousands of corporations and congregations whose mission's include serving women of faith who have experienced gender based violence. Rev. Love describes the Institute as "a diverse group of people who are concerned about the issues of domestic violence in families and in all human relationships and the response of the Black Church. We believe in the Church's mission to improve the quality of life and recognize the linkages of violence to all social problems in the history of Black communities. In this movement to end violence against women, we have noticed the trend toward admonishing religious women--warning them to check their faiths at the door. This, while requiring them to offer their whole hearts in service, ingenuity, volunteerism, intelligence and financial resources within our congregations and the public sector."





(Author, Azar Majedi)

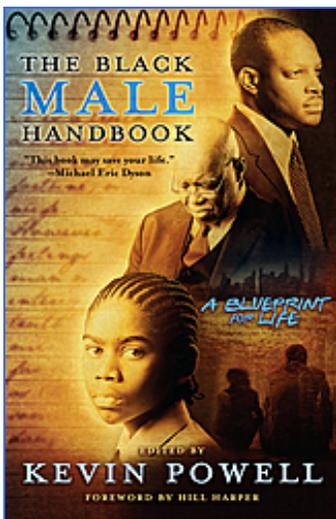
## A Communist Women’s Rights Activist Beheaded in Iraqi Kurdistan

*By Azar Majedi*

Nahla Hussain, a women’s rights activist and the leader of the women's league of the Kurdish Communist Party and mother of two children, was beheaded at her house in Kirkuk, in north of Iraq. She was alone in the house at the time of her death. According to the police some unidentified men have entered her house on Thursday night, but the circumstances that led to the attack are unknown. However, violence against women who do

not observe Islamic laws and dress code has become a common phenomenon in Iraq. Women’s rights activists, secularists and communists are under constant threats by different reactionary factions, including the Islamists.

In the context of Iraqi society, “the circumstances that led to her death” are quite well known. Under the rule of nationalist parties in Kurdistan the violence against women has risen dramatically. Just recently the Sharia law became the governing law in Kurdistan. Moreover, since American led attacks on Iraq, which unleashed Islamic and tribal terrorism, women have become victims of brutal violence. Nahla Hussain was brutally murdered because of her convictions and political activities; this is a well-known fact. She was the victim of misogyny and reactionary forces. [Read more](#) Contributing writer Azar Majedi was born in Iran, she has finished her university education abroad and returned to Iran at the time of the revolution against the monarchy in 1978. She became active both politically and in defense of women’s rights while a university student. She founded the Organization for Women’s Liberation - Iran in 2002.



*The Black Male Handbook* is a collection of essays for Black males on surviving, living, and winning. Kevin Powell taps into the social and political climate rising in the Black community, particularly as it relates to Black males. This is a must-have book, not only for Black male readers, but the women who befriend, parent, partner, and love them.

*The Black Male Handbook* answers a collective hunger for new direction, fresh solutions to old problems, and a different kind of conversation—man-to-man and with Black male voices, all of the hip hop generation. The book tackles issues related to political, practical, cultural, and spiritual matters, and ending violence against women and girls.

*The Black Male Handbook* is a blueprint for those aspiring to thrive against the odds in America today.



**Strong Girls, Healthy Relationships: A Conversation on Dating, Friendship & Self-Esteem** is Jewish Women International’s (JWI) new healthy relationship program for young teen girls. This dynamic 12-hour, 6-session curriculum engages girls in structured discussions and activities to help them interactively explore empowerment and self-esteem in the context of relationships they build, the way they perceive themselves, and how they envision their futures.