

Women's Project Commemorates Women's Lives

PRESS STATEMENT Memorial Day MAY 30, 1990

Since January 1, 1990, at least one woman in Arkansas has been murdered every week—not because she was targeted for robbery but because she was a woman. Twenty-six women were murdered by men. Some

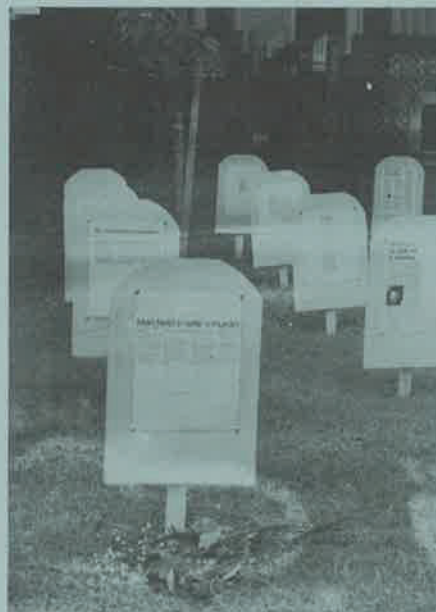


were killed by husbands, some by boyfriends, some by acquaintances, some by strangers. The murders had common elements: they were brutal and torturous—women were stabbed repeatedly, shot in the face with .12 gauge shotguns, strangled, abducted; and they contained sexual violence—women were found nude or partly clothed and sodomized or raped.

We are gathered here today to mourn the deaths of these twenty-six women and also the countless women and girls who have been damaged by rape, beatings, incest, terrorization. We are acknowledging the on-going war against women and we are honoring both the survivors and the dead.

We have placed a tombstone for each dead woman on the lawn of our office to heighten the public awareness of the brutality toward women that leads to death. We call this violence bigoted hate violence—not domestic violence, not family violence, not cultural violence—because of the extreme brutality, the use of hate language and name-calling, the terrorization, the lack of motive other than the victim's gender, her presence, and her status in a society that does not consider women to be the equal of men or their lives to be as valuable.

One might ask why this killing of women is



considered bigoted hate violence when the murderer is often a person they know or are related to through marriage or a love

relationship. We ask, what difference does it make? Both strangers and loved ones kill from a sense of societal permission. In fact, isn't it all the more hideous, more atrocious when a woman is killed by someone who is in a relationship with her? Isn't it worse when the murder occurs in a context where love and respect



should be the norm?

We are here today because we know that violence against women is minimized because women's lives are not valued highly. We are here because women are not considered valuable enough to be legally granted equal rights, pay equity, and control over our own bodies. We are here because both men and women have become desensitized to the to the onslaught of violence that women of every race, age, and class experience through beatings, disfigurement, incest, rape, sexual harrassment, pornography, and murder. Too many people have come to believe that violence is simply to be expected in the lives of women. It is seen as an

unavoidable way of life.

We are here today because we believe that violence should not be a fact of life for women, because we believe that society can be changed to a place where women do not have to live in fear for their lives. What do we want?

1) We want violence against women to be considered as critically important as all other violence against persons and against property. We want police, prosecutors, courts to begin acting toward women without bias. We want violence between men and women in relationships not to be seen as "domestic violence" and thereby something private because of an accepted definition of



family that includes the belief that men own women.

2) We want the laws currently on the books to be rigorously enforced, restraining orders to have true enforcement, and batterers, rapists and murderers to receive the full force of the law.

3) We want the violence against black women to be treated with the same seriousness as the violence against white women.

4) We want guns to be banned by law, and the law vigorously enforced.

Finally, we are here today to say that we cannot afford such human loss. In a country that purports to cherish motherhood and apple pie—so much so that women must be "protected" from military combat, equal opportunity in the workplace, and control over our bodies—our people are standing by while mothers, sisters, daughters, the women behind the sentimental notion of motherhood and apple pie, are being destroyed. This destruction must stop—for the survival of our society, for all of us.

—The Women's Project



1990 WOMEN'S WATCHCARE NETWORK LOG

1. Dumas, 1/21, AG. Cheryl Franklin, 28, mother of two, was found partly clothed along a country road, "apparently beaten with a slab of concrete during an attempted sexual encounter." Three men were charged. Prosecutor said it "appeared" that crack was involved.

2. Blytheville, 1/12-19, AG. June Larrimore, 24, found partially clothed in bedroom. The police chief said the scene was "one of the most brutal" he'd seen during his 18 year law enforcement career. The state medical examiner's office said Larrimore was "stabbed approximately 130 times in the breasts, vagina, buttocks, both eyes and forehead." The murder occurred two days after the couple had celebrated their first wedding anniversary. The husband, Gregory Larrimore, 27, was charged.

3. Greenbrier, 2/4-9, AG. Pamela Faye Felkins, 32, a video store clerk, was abducted, raped, beaten to death, dumped on a muddy hillside. Police first reported the body had been

mutilated and then denied the report. The Sheriff Chief Investigator said, "This was overkill. It was kind of like he had a vengeance against women or something."

4. *Pine Bluff, 2/4-5, AG. Hortense Jones, 85, Black civic leader, was found in her home with her throat cut. In a similar case, Mandy Brown, 88, Jones' blind neighbor, was found suffocated 12/89.
5. North Little Rock, 2/11, AG. Charlotte Irene Harrison Rhoden, 42, was found dead in the kitchen with a 12 gauge shotgun wound in the face. Her husband, Ted Rhodes, 50, was charged with 1st degree murder.
6. Benton, 2/12-16, AG. Laurie Ann Brown, 28, 5 1/2 months pregnant, was found with her throat slashed, next to the China Grove Cemetery. She had struggled for about 60 feet. Brothers Darrell Wayne Sheridan of Little Rock and Robert Sheridan, 28, of Benton, have been charged with capital murder. Authorities have said the killing was tied to drugs—that the men thought she might "squeal on them."
7. Luxora, 2/22, AG. Bertha Killian, 39, was shot at least once in the head and may have suffered other wounds during a domestic violence argument with her husband.
8. Newark, 2/28, AG. Sheila Gregory, mid-twenties, was found dead, lying face down on her bed. Prior to the autopsy, there were no apparent signs of foul play.
9. *West Memphis, 3/12. Cleopatra Morris, 84, was found stabbed to death in her bedroom. Tommy Lee Hall, 31, was charged

with capital murder.

10. Des Arc, 3/15, DeValls Bluff Times. Shirley Robinson, 36, was fatally shot by her estranged husband, James Robinson, 41. The Sheriff reported that he had been called because the husband had been harassing her at work and she wanted the sheriff to meet her at home. A deadbolt lock had been installed that morning and was still in place, locked, after the door was kicked in. She and her 16 yr. old son and his 21 yr. old male friend locked themselves in the bathroom but Robinson entered the room through the window. "She was trying to crawl under the bed when he shot her," the Sheriff said. Robinson then shot and wounded himself.
11. Fayetteville, 3/15-16, AG. Katherine Deason, 32, and her children, Julieann, 3, and Sean Weylin, 1, were killed with a .30 caliber semi-automatic weapon by Jimmy Earl Deason, 29.
12. Ashdown, 3/22, Ashdown Little River News. Deborah Kay Jackson was shot by her husband, Asberry Fortson, Jr., 42, who was charged with 1st degree murder.
13. Helena, 3/20, Helena-West Helena World. Victoria Phillips, 44, was shot in the eye with a .357 magnum pistol by her husband, Danny Phillips, 46, who has been charged with 1st degree murder.
14. Fort Smith, 3/21-24, SW Times Record. Ramona Gregory, 15, missing since Feb.; body was found naked & badly decomposed. Police initially thought the remains might be those of Lucy Hassler, 34.
15. Helena, 3/23, AG. Demetrius Young, 9, was shot by her
- stepfather, Essix Brown, 67, tried to shoot his wife.
16. Benton, 4/4, AG. Kiva M. Corwin died from a blow to the back of her head when she fell from the back of Larry McDonald's pickup truck. He is charged with manslaughter.
17. Sherwood, 4/4-4/26, AG. Bonnie Fleitas, 37, was found strangled in her apartment. After a weeklong hunt, her husband, a former police officer, was arrested and placed in a drug treatment center. While an officer in R.I., he had been sued for beating a suspect, and he was fired from the NLR police department in 1988 for using excessive force against a handcuffed man. 5/17, AG. Fleitas was denied bond because he walked away from a drug treatment center earlier this month.
18. Monticello, 4/22-27, AD, AG, Courier Democrat. Teresa Mae Thomas, 36, a school librarian, was strangled to death on a deserted road by her estranged husband, former Wilmot Police Chief, A.C. Thomas, 47, who later jumped out of a fourth story jail window, sustaining multiple fractures. The murder occurred on their 11th anniversary. Thomas was charged with felony murder.
19. *Pine Bluff, 4/24-26, AG. Nettie Walker, 81, found in her bed, stabbed and beaten to death. Mrs. Walker was the grandmother of State Rep. Bill Walker. Esaw Eatmon, 27, was charged with capital murder. He is also a suspect in the killings of Mandie Brown, 88, found 12/15/89, and Hortense Jones, 85, found 2/3/90.
20. Jonesboro, 3/24, AG.

Barbara Lou Easton, 32, was found on the kitchen floor, shot in the face with a 12 gauge shotgun. Her boyfriend, Jerry C. Minton, 46, was held on a first degree murder charge.

21. West Memphis, 5/1-5/9, AD, AG. Beverly Diane Hawkins, 30, was found stabbed in her home after neighbors (her inlaws) heard a strange sound coming from the house, and found the sound to be from Hawkins' children, age 2 and 3. Jerry West Green was arraigned on a capital murder charge.

22. Little Rock, 5/4, AD. Evone Pettus, 33, died from being shot in the back of the head with a .38 caliber pistol. Her boyfriend, Rickey Earnest, 30, who had been released on a \$25,000 bond for first degree battery, was charged with first degree murder.

23. Little Rock, 5/4, AG. Onesa Williams, 82, was killed with one shot in her chest during an argument over the way \$5 was spent. Her husband, Luther Williams, 93, killed her.

24. Little Rock, 5/23, AD. Valerie Mitchell, 30, was found lying facedown along the road on West 16th Street. She had been shot at least once in the chest with a large-caliber. Perry Thurman, who had dated Mitchell, was charged with the shooting.

25. Camden, 5/23, AG. Marie Shaw, 59, was found shot in a gravel pit in Ouachita County where she and her husband had been fishing. Her husband is wanted in connection with the death.

26. Bentonville, 5/27/90, AD; Benton County Daily Demoncrat. Erma M. Sims, 42, was found shot in her home east of Lowell. She

had been shot four times in the back. She lay dead 4-12 hours before being found by her 4 year old daughter. Her common-law husband is wanted for questioning.

Unless otherwise noted, all reports are from the Arkansas Gazette (AG) or the Arkansas Democrat (AD). Under sexist violence, we did not include the hundred accounts of rapes, abductions, incest, battering, and terroristic threatening of women. However, these accounts are on file in our office, if needed.

*An asterisk indicates that robbery could have been a

possible motive.

With many thanks to our many volunteer monitors,

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METRO/STATE

Rights group battling violence against women

"In memory of those who died for being women" — sign on the Women's Project lawn, 2224 Main St., Little Rock

By Carla Johnson Kimbrough
Gazette Staff

Kathy Logan of Little Rock didn't get a chance to pay her last respects to a high school friend until Wednesday, when she placed a half-dozen red roses by a commemorative tombstone for June Larrimore.

Larrimore, of Blytheville, was stabbed 130 times in January — two days after celebrating her first wedding anniversary. She was 24.

Her husband, Gregory Larrimore, was charged with the crime, but is out on a \$150,000 bond. A late August trial is scheduled in Craighead County, Police Chief Larry Christie said.

"I didn't get to go to the funeral because of work," Logan said Wednesday. "I had to pay my respects to my friend."

The Women's Project, a commu-

nity-based women's rights organization, made that possible with its lawn display of tombstones of 26 women killed in Arkansas so far this year. That's more than one woman killed each week. Most were killed by husbands or boyfriends, the Women's Project said.

"It's dangerous to be a wife and mother," Brenda Hampton, a staff member for Advocates for Battered Women, said. "It's time for the people of Arkansas to react with outrage."

Suzanne Pharr, Women's Project director, said people have become desensitized to violence against women. The Women's Project supports weapon bans and enforcement of current laws, she said.

It also wants police, prosecutors and the courts to treat women without bias and to consider violence against black women with the same seriousness as violence against white women, Pharr said.

"We are here today because we believe that violence should not be a fact of life for women," Pharr

said.

Attached to the tombstones were news articles of how the women were killed. The headlines told their stories: "Dumas woman found beaten to death in ditch outside town," "Man held after death of girlfriend," "Babies, mother slain," "Boyfriend kills estranged wife," "Boyfriend faces murder charge," "Wilmot police chief arrested in estranged wife's death."

Schatzi Riley, who works in Little Rock and lives in Perry County, said she was shocked by the number of deaths of women.

"I really can't believe it," Riley, who was among about 50 people attending the ceremony, said. "To see 26 in five months and Arkansas is a small state. ... It's not like it's New York City."

The other shocking aspect was that most of the women were killed by people who knew them, Riley said.

Kelly Mitchell-Clark, who directs the project's Women's Watchcare Network, said about 100 volunteers statewide documented hate violence against women and other minorities.

"We call them our eyes and ears," Mitchell-Clark said.

Most Arkansans are "decent people of good will," she said, and reading this data on hate crimes may bring them into the fight against violence.