

NARRATIVES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS IN GHANA AND THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract

The exponential increase in domestic violence is a global crisis that is pertinent to the struggle to protect women's rights. This problem does not only affect women (and children) in the global south but also in the global north. Interestingly, the United States, often referred to as a global super power is not immune to the epidemic of domestic violence. Academic discourses have historically tended to emphasize the presentation of statistics or discussions of international interventions and humanitarian responses. An area that seems to have been neglected, particularly in political science writing, is that of the personal narratives of domestic violence survivors. This article therefore presents a documentation and analysis of selected narratives of survivors, and their experiences of domestic violence in both Ghana and the United States. By unpackaging some critical commonalities in these experiences, the paper will thus investigate the extent to which the escalation of violence at the household level continues to be driven and affected by cultural and patriarchal norms. It also examines the extent to which these norms negate the effectiveness of international regimes that seek to address domestic violence. The paper adopts radical feminist theory as a framework. It argues that despite a range of efforts to address the problem, diverse cultural and patriarchal norms appear to intensify the tendency to view domestic violence as a private matter that could bring about stigmatization for the women if disclosed to the public. In resistance to that trend, the paper draws on the use of narrative analysis as a powerful tool of highlighting the importance of women's voices in their struggle against silencing, marginalization and abuse. It contends that the struggle to educate women on their rights can only begin when women begin to see themselves not as recipients but as creators and owners of culture.

Keywords: Culture, Domestic Violence, Patriarchy, Survivors, Ghana, United States

CITATION: Ajayi, L.A & Soyinka-Airewele, P., (2018). *Abstracts & Proceedings of ADVED 2018 - 4th International Conference on Advances in Education and Social Sciences, 15-17 October 2018- Istanbul, Turkey*