

*"From this day forward, I promise to be part of the solution in ending violence against women."*



## **Massachusetts White Ribbon Day 2009**

*A Men's Initiative Project of Jane Doe Inc.*

### **Press Conference Remarks by Mary R. Lauby, Executive Director, Jane Doe Inc.**

Welcome! This year's JDI White Ribbon Campaign has been focused on violence against women...because it continues to be a cultural phenomenon not just here in MASS or in the US, but in the Western hemisphere and the world. From stoning women to death for being a victim of sexual assault in Africa, to Russia where more than 1/2 of adult women are battered. From the all too common use of rape of women and girls as a tactic of war to the lack of concern generated for the frequently reported murders of female sex workers along our own southern border. The ways in which women and girls continue to be battered, raped, killed, trafficked and marginalized tells us that the political, cultural and religious and other societal structures continue to support and promote violence against women throughout the world...and we are both a part of that world and affected by it.

For us, back in the United States and in MASS, the ways we continue to experience its prevalence are the places in which we easily find the remnants this structural violence and oppression and inequality. All of this informs our understanding of other forms of oppression as well. Just consider the tactics used to humiliate men...we emasculate them. Gendered violence is deeply rooted in our unconscious and in our daily interactions. The most degrading of women-hating, gay-man hating, and 'other'-hating terms have become normalized in the vernacular of popular cultural.

This sets up, supports and continues cultural norms that sustain male over female, power over vulnerability, youth over aging, heterosexual over gay, white over black, brown, red and yellow, wealth over poverty...and perpetrator over victim.

It is played out here each day in probate courts where battered women, straight and lesbian fight to save their children from a future of violence in courts that unwittingly sustain the 'rights' of the more powerful parent over their children...as though they were property to be divided. And in the us military where women, straight and lesbian, continue to find themselves faced with some of the worst examples of collusion...the silencing and punishment of military women who are victims of sexual violence in the military.

We have much work to do. We need to return to the work of movements and of, yes, community organizers.

In that context today is a celebration and recognition of men's power... to do good, not to wage war. Of men's power to love, not hate. Of male attributes that we embrace and honor, not fear. And we thank you for all of the ways that you lead and share. The ways that you open doors, not just to the car, but the halls of power and thru laws that make it possible for all of us who are not male, white, straight, religious, fully able-bodied or less youthful to have a life of freedom with dignity.

Each of these men here with us is an extraordinary example of this power to embrace and share and lead through positive forms of masculinity instead of bullying. We recognize their leadership and thank them for it.