

The Letters Page

Saturday, June 25, 1994

■ The editorial "The Other Story" (June 21) and the political cartoon by Scott Willis show the disparity in the public's reaction to these events.

In the public's mind, this story has more thrills and excitement than the movie "Bullet," without the need for car wrecks or gunfire. Why did so many citizens wave, follow the pursuit in their cars and want to become involved?

There was a total loss of perspective by the public and the media to focus on the victims and the underlying violent crimes.

The true story was about two deaths and about two children who have lost their mother. It is a national tragedy because it epitomizes the fact that domestic violence is increasing in its frequency and in its level of violence. Its victims are from all classes, nationalities, cultures, from every walk of life.

If domestic violence was shown on daily television as the Vietnam War was, it would be stopped. We would not tolerate the carnage. The average citizen would find the courage to become involved.

The root cause of domestic violence is a culture that tolerates men hitting women and makes excuses for it that shift responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim.

Congress has proposed federalizing domestic violence. Will this really help women or will it just provide another opportunity for a candidate for office to show how tough he or she is on crime? The problem is not the availability or unavailability of laws civil and criminal to address this serious problem. The problem is a lack of a significant commitment by the public to create change.

What is most lacking is resources: treatment shelters and supervision of criminal defendants convicted of domestic violence.

Domestic issues, such as divorce, child custody, dependency, restraining orders and domestic violence, should be heard by teams of specially assigned and trained judges to ensure consistency of treatment of the parties and to avoid conflicting court orders. Under our present system of a separate municipal and superior court, this coordination would be difficult to accomplish.

— Eugene Hyman
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