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# The Issues of Domestic Violence and Stalking in the United States

Domestic violence is an all too prevalent issue not only on the US, but also worldwide. In addition, stalking is a massive issue across the globe. Most stalking victims, like those of domestic violence, know the perpetrator. Many victims of domestic violence don't even realize they're in an abusive relationship. They simply rationalize the actions of their abuser. Majority of stalking victims know that they are being stalked, and they know by whom they are being stalked. But some stalkers do so secretly and their victims have no idea. Someone needs to speak out for both the victims of stalking and domestic violence.

One of the premier organizations in the world that is dedicated to protecting victims of domestic violence and stalking is Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service. While they do protect people from domestic violence, they also do much more. The organization was founded by Laura Richards who herself, was a victim of stalking by a coworker. Because she went through this horrific experience herself, she knows just how important it is to give a voice to the victims. Paladin's mission is to be an advocate for anyone that is or has been a victim of stalking and/or domestic violence. They want to aid anyone at risk, not just women. They aim to give the victims a voice within the criminal justice system, a place in which they previously had no voice at all. They start their support efforts for individuals by giving initial advice and then offering an assessment to anyone who calls or visits them. They work to provide the right kind of support for everyone, they specialize in personalized advocacy for each and every person that needs help. To them, the most important aspect to helping the victims is to keep them feeling as safe as possible. The fear of their abuser or stalker is one of the scariest parts of the whole thing, and Paladin seeks to minimize that fear as much as they possibly can.

One of the single most important things Paladin has done since its inception is that they made stalking a specific criminal offense in the UK. Many victims came to light in the wake of this crime being created. With the criminalization of stalking, it highlighted the need in that country (and worldwide) of a service to help with these pressing issues, namely aiding victims. It quickly became evident that people who have been victimized by stalking or domestic violence need an advocate, they need someone to speak up for them. Even though it's evident that this service is needed worldwide, Paladin continues to be the one and only stalking victim advocacy service in the world. There are numerous such organizations for domestic violence victims but none, other than Paladin, give notice to stalking victims. In addition to their advocacy efforts Laura Richards, founder and director of Paladin, created the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honor based Violence Risk Checklist. This checklist, also known as the DASH risk assessment, is presently used worldwide by professionals to help effectively deal with victims of domestic violence and stalking. While there aren't any organizations like Paladin in the rest of the world, the DASH being implemented worldwide is a step in that direction. Paladin also recently worked to increase the maximum sentence for stalking from six to ten years in the UK. This is a huge step forward, six years is nothing to many of these stalkers, they go do their time and then get right back out and return to stalking. They go back to it like nothing ever happened. Paladin has done so much for victims of domestic violence and stalking in the UK. We need more organizations like this one all across the globe

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In the US, we have many organizations for victims of domestic violence, one being the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Their aim is to create a culture wherein domestic violence is not tolerated, under any circumstances. They believe that we can create and nourish a society that empowers both victims and survivors, while holding abusers accountable for their actions. They give a voice to the thousands of victims of domestic violence across the United States. They are similar to Paladin in that way, only they neglect to give notice to victims of stalking, they focus solely on domestic violence. Their strategy to effect nationwide change begins with their attempts at affecting public policy, increasing understanding of the impact of domestic violence, as well as providing programs and education that work to drive change. The NCADV has enacted a lot of programs to help achieve their mission. They have created a program known as the Cosmetic & Reconstructive Support (CRS) Program. They work in connection with the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery to help survivors of domestic abuse. They help victims and survivors who cannot afford the cosmetic surgeries needed to repair the damage done to their head, face, or neck by their abuser. Plastic surgeons who specialize in the facial region volunteer their surgical services in order to assist in removing the physical scars their abusers bestowed upon them. NCADV has also built a project known as Remember My Name which memorializes the people killed by abusers. This includes men, women, and children all across the nation. It was instated in 1994 in a joint effort by NCADV and Ms. Magazine to bring awareness to these victims of domestic violence. It honors the victims every year by releasing a new memorial poster listing the names and ages of victims that died all too early, at the hands of an abuser. NCADV does so much to help the victims that are living, and they even give a voice to the ones who have passed as a result of domestic violence.

The issues of both domestic violence and stalking are a worldwide phenomenon. There are many organizations to help victims of domestic violence worldwide but it's still not enough. Most of these organizations do not give notice to stalking and how harmful it can be to victims. Paladin is an extremely important service to have. We need more organizations like it across the planet. Not only does it give a voice to the victims, but it also helps by affecting changes in law to help victims get away from their stalkers. I happen to listen to a true crime podcast called "Real Crime Profile" in which one of the hosts and producers of the podcasts is the one and only Laura Richards, founder of Paladin. In the podcast, they talk about both famous and unheard of criminal cases. They are very dedicated to giving a voice to the victims of these crimes. You can hear how much Laura has dedicated her life to being an advocate for victims. Hearing her talk about both the Nicole Brown Simpson case and the Meredith Kercher cases is a prime example of her dedication. She doesn't call the cases by their popular media driven names, the OJ Simpson case and the Amanda Knox case. She wants to make sure the victims are at the forefront of the case. And this is exactly what she does with paladin, and it's amazing to hear her passion for victim advocacy. Laura is currently working with Paladin to get similar organizations across the globe, not just in the UK. Everything about stalking and domestic violence shows that they are terrible, awful crimes. If they are terrible crimes, the perpetrators should be harshly punished. Additionally, the victims should be praised for their bravery and protected from those who initially came after them.