



# HOPE'S DOOR

Embracing Life Free From Domestic Abuse

## 17TH ANNUAL TEEN SYMPOSIUM PLANNED



Sharon Robinson

On Friday, October 23, 2015, our 17th Annual Teen Symposium will be held at Manhattanville College in Purchase, NY. This year's symposium will be a compelling three-part program offering a meaningful experience for the student attendees and special guests. First, our keynote speaker, Sharon Robinson, a cousin of Yeardeley Love who was killed by her ex-boyfriend, will

share her story of this tragic incident as well as information about the One Love Foundation, which was founded in memory of Yeardeley. We will then be showing "Escalation," a film created by the foundation. Small breakout group discussions will follow. Lastly, Deana's Educational Theater will perform an interactive original play based on dating abuse called *Remote Control*.

Sharon Robinson is now focused on what may be one of her most important endeavors to date—ending relationship violence. In 2010, The Yeardeley Reynolds Love Foundation was created to honor the memory of Yeardeley Love, a University of Virginia senior who was killed by her ex-boyfriend just weeks

short of graduation. Sharon Robinson has played a pivotal role since the One Love Foundation's inception and now serves as Vice Chairman of its Board of Directors. Sharon will be speaking on behalf of the foundation and Yeardeley's family.

The One Love Foundation's goal is to end relationship violence by engaging young people in a movement for change. One Love has developed compelling workshops that spark new discussions among participants. They will be bringing their workshop to our symposium, which consists of viewing a film about dating abuse called "Escalation," followed with guided discussion about the warning signs of relationship violence.

Deana's Educational Theater (DET) performs for students to prevent relationship violence. In 1995, DET launched a breakthrough dating violence prevention original play *The Yellow Dress. Remote Control* soon followed—providing a strong model for males to stand up against violence while focusing on the early warning signs of abuse.

If your school is interested in participating in this year's symposium, please contact Gina Donahue, Teen Program Coordinator, at 914-747-0828 x1015 or [GDonahue@HopesDoorNY.org](mailto:GDonahue@HopesDoorNY.org).

### WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR RECENT SUPPORT OF OUR MISSION:

EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

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WESTCHESTER WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION, INC.

STAR students sat outside Walgreens in Thornwood collecting summer toys and school supplies for families in our programs.

Top: Lindsay, Katie, Laura  
Bottom Left: Lindsay, Katie, Teen Educator Kristen Orlando  
Bottom Right: Selena, Laura



# AN INTERVIEW WITH RON HUMBERT



Gay and Ron

Over the years, many clients have asked why abusers act the way they do. Hope's Door Senior Counselor for Community Services Gay French-Ottaviani, LCSW-R, CP, recently interviewed expert Ron Humbert on the subject to get his insight.

Ron Humbert, LCSW, is a social worker in private practice in Pelham, NY. He works with children, adolescents, and adults

in individual psychotherapy, as well as domestic violence victims and their children. Ron spent 25 years as a co-leader of abuser groups at the Mental Health Association (MHA) of Westchester's WAVE program, a court-mandated program for domestic violence offenders.

Although both men and women are victims of domestic violence, it is not in equal numbers. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics' Crime Data Brief, in 2001 85% of reported physical intimate partner assaults were committed against women. Therefore, for the sake of this interview, our interviewer will use the male pronoun for the abuser and refer to the victims as "she."

**Gay:** In your experience, what do you think causes him to be abusive? Do love, hate, or anger have anything to do with his behavior?

**Ron:** Generally the man who abuses his partner begins with a notion that abusive, controlling, and disrespectful behavior is not unreasonable. A man who is mistreating his partner does not consider the effect of his abuse from his partner's point of view. Describing the cause as "love" or "hate" (although much of their behavior is hateful) doesn't get to the real cause. As far as "anger management," anger has nothing to do with intimate partner abuse. There are countless examples where men who supposedly "cannot control their anger" get angry and do not act abusively, like at work or in other situations where it's clear that abuse behavior would have an immediate and negative consequence.

**Gay:** Does the perpetrator ever change? Can he be "cured?" If not mental illness what is their problem?

**Ron:** This is the question I am most often asked. There is no "cure" for battering. If a man who has engaged in abusive behavior chooses to stop, which I believe is possible, then he will spend his entire life being faced with the decision to relate to women, including his intimate partner, in a respectful manner. Given the social conditioning men are subject to, which enables and excuses the mistreatment of women, this is true of all men all the time.

**Gay:** So you think it is the fault of society?

**Ron:** I rarely use the word "fault," but, it seems critical we recognize that violence against women, domestic violence being just one of many examples, is prompted in subtle and not so subtle ways. One of the elements in MHA's WAVE program was a unit on cultural messages that promote violence against women. Unfortunately it was very easy to find examples from every culture in art, music, and literature.

**Gay:** How do you explain when the abuser tells the victim he loves her and for her never to leave him, and in almost the next breath says she is worthless, unlovable and he wants to kill her? Is this just projection? Is there some awareness of these polar opposites he expresses?

**Ron:** The psychological reality of men who abuse their female partners is an area that warrants much more research. While I understand how a psychological understanding of battering behavior has been used as an excuse, there are credible reasons to explore this area. The nature of batterers' attachment behavior is conflict-ridden and those internal conflicts make the seeming irrational behavior possible. There's much more to be understood, perhaps a deeper extensive study would reveal more. On the issue of "does he know what he's doing?" I would say without question, yes. A man who's abusing his partner is aware of his behavior. Factors like social conditioning and impairment in empathic attachment promote his ability to engage in abusive behaviors. The empathic limitations of men who batter probably impairs their "emotional understanding" of the damage wrought by verbal or emotion abuse. Many men I've worked with will make the false distinction between physical abuse, which they claim is wrong, and emotional abuse which they do not consider abuse.

**Gay:** Can you give me an example of why you feel they know what they are doing?

**Ron:** In many instances, men who would describe their behavior as "out of control" would very quickly find control the moment the police arrived. On occasion, once a man begins to confront his abusive behavior, he will describe his behavior as purposeful and, at times, premeditated.

There are resources available with information on abuser behavior. To learn more, you may read *Why Does He Do That?* by Lundy Bancroft, visit our website at [HopesDoorNY.org](http://HopesDoorNY.org), or call our hotline: 888-438-8700. If you have a question, email Dear Hope at [DearHope@HopesDoorNY.org](mailto:DearHope@HopesDoorNY.org).





# HOPE'S DOOR

[www.HopesDoorNY.org](http://www.HopesDoorNY.org)

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CARLA HORTON

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I'd like to thank the domestic violence advocates and legislators across the state for their work during the last legislative session. They were successful in securing passage of a number of notable bills, which if signed by the governor, will lead to these changes:

- Prohibition of discrimination in housing based upon domestic violence status.
- Limits and/or waivers on the amount of information required for publication of judicial name changes when the petitioner demonstrates a risk to personal safety.
- Establishment of a pilot program for the filing of petitions for temporary orders of protection by electronic means and for issuance of such orders ex parte by audio-visual means.
- Requirements that police translate domestic incident reports if they are filled out in a language other than English and to also require that victims are notified of their rights in their native language.
- Clarification on adjusting child support automatically upon the termination of spousal maintenance.
- Establishment of new formulas for the amount of maintenance and spousal support and factors the court can use to deviate from that amount.

If you would like to help advocate for changes to support survivors of abuse in their struggle to achieve safety, independence, and healing from the trauma of abuse, please let me hear from you.



## ZUMBA CLASS ADDS TO WELLNESS PROGRAM

We would like to thank Danielle Valdes, licensed Zumba instructor, for donating her services and offering Zumba to our bilingual clients as part of our wellness program. Our clients arrive each week very excited, enthused, and ready to get class started. We've seen many spirits lifted throughout this fun experience. If you have a skill or service that you are interested in donating for our clients, please email Dianne DeFilippis, Director of Administration, at [DDeFilippis@HopesDoorNY.org](mailto:DDeFilippis@HopesDoorNY.org).

HOPE'S DOOR SEEKS TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND TO EMPOWER VICTIMS TO  
ACHIEVE SAFETY, INDEPENDENCE, AND HEALING FROM THE TRAUMA OF ABUSE.

## SURVIVOR'S STORY



Chef Jessica and her children, Ava and Sergio

*"Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible." —Anonymous*

One night, after too many nights of abuse, I thought to myself, "There has to be a way out." I was married with two children, and I looked online for where to go if you're being abused. The first organization I spoke to connected me to Hope's Door. With one bag each, my children and I made the trip to the safe house. It was very scary to leave everything we knew to go where we didn't know anything or anyone.

I'll never forget that first night. My daughter looked out the window and said to me, "Can daddy find us here? I love daddy, but, I don't want him to hurt you anymore. We're safe now, right?" At that moment I decided I would do whatever I needed to make it through this.

The Hope's Door shelter staff worked so hard with my children in the months we stayed with them, helping me take care of their physical and emotional needs. My daughter celebrated

her 4th birthday in the shelter residence — it was quite a party.

After leaving the shelter, I got a job working six days a week so that I could provide a good life for my children. My time at Hope's Door taught me that I deserved and could provide a happy, safe home in a good neighborhood surrounded by people who care about us. That drove me to fill out all of the paperwork to get our own housing. I got approved for a rental subsidy and we moved into a beautiful duplex in a neighborhood I enjoy.

I am a classically trained chef, and since leaving the shelter I have started my own business as a personal chef and caterer. I cook for many wonderful people and feel so privileged that they love my food. My daughter comes with me to some jobs; I am teaching her that if she works hard she can achieve her goals.

If someone had told me three years ago that I would be happily living in a safe, two bedroom duplex with my two beautiful children and my own business, I wouldn't have believed it. Now I know the sky is the limit if I work hard.

Hope's Door participates in outreach events throughout Westchester County. If you have an event you would like us to speak at, or are having an event you would like us to set up a table at, please contact Tami Shimkin, Office Manager, at 914-747-0828 x1000 or [TShimkin@HopesDoorNY.org](mailto:TShimkin@HopesDoorNY.org).

## SUMMER OUTREACH

Residential Children's Counselor Brittany H. and Development Associate Lindsay Amoroso at the African American Heritage Festival



*"Sometimes I would unlock my car and find a rose on the seat — no note, just the flower... It was all he needed to do to terrorize me."*

**S**afety is the cornerstone of our work at Hope's Door, and in our efforts to help victims be safe, we conduct a Danger Assessment with each person we serve. The Danger Assessment was developed at Johns Hopkins University and is a validated instrument for risk factors associated with domestic violence homicide. While no assessment can predict with 100% certainty, the Danger Assessment is an eye-opening strategy that helps victims to more clearly see the risk factors they face, and with our help, the steps they can take to maximize their safety.

One very disturbing risk factor associated with domestic violence is stalking—what we would describe as the relentless, unwanted pursuit of another person that leaves the victim

with the sense of being hunted. Stalking is a crime that can cause tremendous fear without the slightest physical injury, and it is a very effective tactic of control for domestic violence abusers.

As reported by the U.S. Department of Justice, there is a strong correlation between stalking and other intimate partner violence.

- Stalkers are four times more likely to physically assault their partners.
- Stalkers are six times more likely to sexually assault their partners.
- 81% of women stalked by a current or former partner are physically assaulted by that partner.

If your spouse, partner or ex-partner follows you, spies on you, waits outside your home or place of business or makes an unrelenting number of phone calls, texts, or emails, which may include threats of harm to you or other family members, you are in danger.

Call 911 or the Hope's Door hotline at 888-438-8700.

## HOPE'S DOOR HISTORY: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SHELTER & PROGRAMS

In 1997, when the Hope's Door Board of Directors hired CarlLa Horton as executive director, her first task was to facilitate the move from a dilapidated rented shelter to our new state-licensed residence. "I remember how exciting it was," stated CarlLa recently. "Board member Barbara Fellows organized an "Adopt-a-Room" initiative that had interfaith and community groups competing in the most wonderful way to decorate the rooms, everything from murals on the walls to comforters on the beds. The result was a beautiful refuge that has provided hope and safety to more than 1,800 survivors of abuse over the last 18 years."

Over the next few years, we focused on our service delivery program. With the help of the Frog Rock Foundation, among others, we enhanced our services to children, now supported by MBIA, Sexauer and the St. Faith's House Foundation. We secured seed money from the Westchester Community Foundation and the Klingenstein Fund to establish the Domestic Violence Law Project, which was later supported by our first federal grant.

As the immigrant community surged in Westchester, we established *Esperanza Para La Victima Latina de Abuso* (Hope for Latina Victims of Abuse), which was followed by culturally attuned services for Asian survivors and other special needs populations.

1999 found us working with the Junior League of Northern Westchester to raise awareness of dating abuse at the county's first teen dating abuse symposium. This led us to establish *Love Shouldn't Hurt* and our award-winning STAR peer leadership program. Program Coordinator Gina Donahue reflected on the program recently. "We work hard every day to change the cultural norms that allow abuse to flourish, and we could never have accomplished all that we have if not for the visionary leadership of those who began this work in 1999. Thanks to them, we have empowered more than 190,000 young people with potentially life-saving information about abuse and how to help yourself or a friend. I can think of no better legacy."

*Save the Date*

**2016 ANNUAL SPRING GALA**

**70's Theme**

Friday, May 6, 2016

Surf Club on the Sound

6:30 pm - 11:00 pm

[HopesDoorNY.org/events/2016-annual-spring-gala/](http://HopesDoorNY.org/events/2016-annual-spring-gala/)

*Dear Hope,*

During playdates for our children, my other divorced friends and I talk about their children's birthdays, vacations, and holidays. None of them have been in an abusive relationship like me. Co-parenting for them seems so much easier. My former husband refuses to fairly compromise on: visitations, vacations, who chooses after-school activities, which therapist they can see, or anything else when we have a difference in opinion. Instead of working with me to find a reasonable solution, he just creates conflict and misery. The court sent us to a "parenting coordinator" when a decision couldn't be reached. The coordinator thinks I'm not trying, and usually backs my ex-husband, not because she agrees with him but to get to a decision faster. Now I feel like I'm being abused by two people! Do you have any thoughts that might help?

Disillusioned Parent



*Dear Disillusioned,*

I understand your frustration. People think when a victim leaves, the abuse ends. But elements of abuse continue through their children. The abuser continues to find ways to control the victim through visitation and decisions which must be made together. Abusers must always be in control; they want the decision to be theirs, even if the consequences are illogical or potentially bad for their children. Most "parenting coordinators" work from an assumption that parents have equal power in decision-making. However, for victims of domestic violence there is an added problem. With any collaborative effort they try, mediation, collaborative divorce, or couples therapy, the inequality of power between the partners affects the victim's sense of internal safety to voice their concerns. In your case, your former husband may feel he has the support of the parenting coordinator, and he manipulates the process as a whole to make you feel more disempowered.

Some survivors have found relief with a shared babysitter as a go-between; only using email communication so all dialogue is documented; conducting all meetings in public places; and cultivating face to face relationships with important people in the child's life like teachers and doctors, for necessary support when needed. Another suggestion is "picking your battles" for the sake of the children. A Hope's Door counselor can help you come up with solutions best fitting your individual needs.

Acceptance is key. You may never have a co-parenting experience like you see among friends. That does not mean you cannot reach a good enough place to feel at peace with yourself and your decisions. Remember, ONLY HE has the power to change his behaviors, but, you always have the power to change yours. If you can do that, there is light at the end of the tunnel!

Yours,

Hope

E-MAIL DEAR HOPE AT: [DEARHOPE@HOPESDOORNY.ORG](mailto:DEARHOPE@HOPESDOORNY.ORG)



# HOPE'S DOOR

*Embracing Life Free  
From Domestic Abuse*

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Call our free and confidential 24/7 bilingual hotline 888.438.8700 – hablamos español.  
[www.HopesDoorNY.org](http://www.HopesDoorNY.org) Hope's Door Offices: 914.747.0828

Home. It's where you should feel safe and protected. Hope's Door. It's who you call if you're not.  
El Hogar. Es donde debes sentirse seguro y protegido. Hope's Door. Somos a quien llamar si no lo estas.

## 2015 ALLSTATE FOUNDATION PURPLE PURSE CHALLENGE

Thursday, October 1st at 12 noon to Tuesday, October 27th at 1:59 pm. [www.crowdrise.com/HopesDoor1](http://www.crowdrise.com/HopesDoor1)



Director of Development & Community Relations Jennifer Ryan Safsel and Executive Director CarlLa Horton.

The primary reason domestic violence survivors stay in or return to an abusive relationship is because they don't have the financial resources to break free and stay financially independent. "Economic empowerment is vital to living a life free of abuse. That is why Hope's Door is so pleased to partner again with the Allstate Foundation's Purple Purse Challenge," said Executive Director CarlLa Horton.

"This national campaign is a helpful way we can all get people talking about domestic abuse, and specifically financial abuse during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, as well as raise important funds for programs like the Next Step Economic Empowerment Program," states Jennifer Ryan Safsel, Director of Development and Community Relations.

### *How can I donate to or fundraise for Hope's Door?*

Visit Hope's Door's Purple Purse Challenge fundraising page at [www.crowdrise.com/HopesDoor1](http://www.crowdrise.com/HopesDoor1) to donate directly to our organization, become a fundraiser yourself, or share our page with others.

We will be giving away prizes throughout the challenge for fundraisers, so stay tuned!

If you have any questions, contact:

Jennifer Ryan Safsel

914-747-0828 x1005, [JRyanSafsel@HopesDoorNY.org](mailto:JRyanSafsel@HopesDoorNY.org)

Lindsay Amoroso

914-747-0828 x1009, [LAmoroso@HopesDoorNY.org](mailto:LAmoroso@HopesDoorNY.org)

## *Save the Date*

### 2015 ANNUAL FALL LUNCHEON

Friday, October 16, 2015

Mount Kisco Country Club

11:00 am – 2:00 pm

"We're thrilled that Emmy-Award winning Founder and Executive Producer of MAKERS, Dyllan McGee, joins us as our 2015 guest speaker. Focusing on women's economic empowerment, McGee, a dynamic storyteller, is sure to enlighten and entertain! Fundraising includes a Silent Auction, Buckets of Hope, and a Giving Tree," said Barbara Stewart, Chair of the Luncheon Committee.

[HopesDoorNY.org/events/2015-annual-fall-luncheon/](http://HopesDoorNY.org/events/2015-annual-fall-luncheon/)