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The senseless murder of 22-year-old Kasandra Perkins by her boyfriend, Kansas City Chief's linebacker Jovan Belcher, 25, and his subsequent suicide, is a double tragedy that highlights the degree to which domestic violence has permeated our culture. Perkins was also the mother of a three-month old daughter fathered by Belcher, and according to news reports, his mother and the child witnessed the murder. What is unique about this case is that most of the original media coverage focused on Belcher, the perpetrator—who, why, what? Questions about his motivations, state of mind, etc., pre-occupied the airways.

That is until some Black feminist women and (some feminist-leaning men) stepped in and said hey—this should not be about him, it should be about his victim. You haven't even mentioned her name. Thus began a campaign, in which I participated on Twitter, to say the name of Kasandra Perkins (https://crunkfeministcollective.wordpress.com/2012/12/03/remember-their-names-in-memory-of-kasandra-cherica-others/) (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-david-j-leonard/we-must-continue-to-say-h_b_2268699.html). The purpose was to remind people that because a killer is a high profile football star, and his victim was "just a girlfriend," that she is no less important.

Domestic violence, gender violence, and violence against women strikes at the heart of our society today. It is so pervasive that it has become expected, and predictable, and our societal response is often to blame the victim and ask, "what did she do to push him over the edge?"

What we don't ask is this: What causes a person to be so enraged that they would kill a woman who just bore their child, while the child and his own mother are present? What kind of a society have we become where our only viable response to anger and rage is killing?

Explanations began to surface; most speculated on what Kasandra had done to provoke such rage—she was hanging out with her girlfriends, she was drinking, she was hanging out with the girls and drinking, she arrived home at 1am. All of these, regardless of whether they were true, in themselves might be questionable behavior in some social circles for a new mother, but none of them alone, or in constellation with each other, warrants murder. Let's be real, part of the message behind such speculation suggests that boyfriend felt he was losing control over his girlfriend. And what most people fail to recognize is that most domestic violence incidents stem from the perpetrator demonstrating their power and control over the victim. Just like rape is not about sex but about power, domestic violence is not about love, but is also about power and control.

Sixteen years have passed since I wrote in my first anthropology book about the "culture of gender" that "Women who speak out about matters of domestic violence (often viewed as 'private' or 'family business') incur great personal and emotional risks." (from *Women of Belize: Gender and Change in Central America, 2000 [1996], p. 14]*
. From all the evidence, not much progress has been made in this area.

According to the website, http://domesticviolencestatistics.org/ , "every 9 seconds in the US a woman is assaulted or beaten." I add the emphasis because too often, as we are told stories of honor killings and bride burnings, we forget that domestic violence and abuse of women occurs with surprising frequency in our own backyard—next door and in our own families. And, all too often, we ignore the signs. How many people saw the signs that Kasandra was being abused—either physically or emotionally? They will have to live with the fact they did not speak up.
Did Kasandra feel trapped? A young girl of 22, just barely out of high school, and now a mother, and with a football superstar, was she being told by her friends and family how lucky she was to have hooked up with someone like him? Did she feel that she could not make it on her own since everything she had was given to her by Jovan? We may never know the answers to these questions, but they are questions that we can pose as we look at our neighbors, our daughters, our nieces and other relatives.

Are we cultivating a culture once again where women are not encouraged to be financially independent and are seduced by materiality such that they feel ill-equipped to respond to emotional and physical abuse? Who talks to young girls about the thin line that is easily crossed when a heated argument turns into abuse?

While we have seen a plethora of senseless killings, and most recently (December 14, 2012) the massacre of 20 children and eight adults in Newtown, CT, domestic violence, and more specifically violence against women, remains a pervasive problem in American culture that we have yet to make significant progress towards eradicating. Minneapolis residents may recall the horrific domestic violence death several years ago (2009) of a young woman (Brittany Givens-Copeland) from one of the city's notable African American families who was murdered

by a former boyfriend. Not only murdered, but also burned to death, in an effort to cover up the crime that was ultimately a murder-suicide. And here in Raleigh, NC, where I currently hang my hat, in September, we were reminded of how close domestic violence can be when a woman was shot to death by her ex-husband outside of the Pier I store where she worked. I shop at that store, and she may have waited on me.

Domestic violence is the 800 pound gorilla in most of our lives, in this society, and globally. If you reach out and tap the shoulder of someone standing next to you, they either have their own story of abuse (emotional and/or physical—and verbal abuse counts as well) or they know someone. Ironically, October was Domestic Violence Awareness month promoted by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Begun 25 years ago in 1987, the issue is still with us sufficiently today to suggest that everyday should be domestic violence awareness day.

Unfortunately, Jovan and other men who have murdered girlfriends, ex-wives, current wives, and domestic partners, didn't get that memo. Increasingly, domestic violence, in both heterosexual and in LGBT communities, is beginning earlier and earlier. For example, the domestic violence statistics website tells us that "Nearly 1 in 5 teenage girls who have been in a relationships said a boyfriend threatened violence or self-harm if presented with a breakup." Say what? What are we teaching, or not teaching, our sons, and what tools are we giving our daughters and women we know to recognize and resist domestic violence? There are always apologies and pledges that it will never happen again. The statistics speak to the lie within those words. And, all too frequently, the assaulted person doesn't press charges—out of fear, out of love, out of embarrassment, or all of the above.

Today in the United States, young girls especially, as well as individuals who are in the less powerful role in any partnered relationship (which in a gay relationship is assumed to be the femme) are being conditioned to believe that acts of violence in relationships are expressions of love. If a partner doesn't hit you, then it must not be love. Elementary and middle schools are now having to grapple with relationship violence among students—and we think all teachers have to worry about is homework!

Seven years ago, in 2005, I was invited to be a keynote at a conference entitled *Gendered Resistance: "Women Opposing Sexual and Economic Subjugation in Global, Historical and Contemporary Contexts"*
at Miami University in Oxford, OH. I was asked to speak to the future and envision the kind of world we would need to eradicate violence against women. I was also preceded by one of the most amazing quilt exhibits that visually represented the range of violence against women globally prepared by Quilter extraordinaire Carol Mazloomi. At the opening of the exhibition, she confessed that she had completed the exhibit in three months or so, which was amazing given the difficulty of the topic and complexity of her quilt making.

Just the Facts Please

In preparation for my talk, I asked the National Council for Research on Women (NCRW) to assist me with the research. The amount of data they provided me was staggering, and I struggled with how to convey to my potential audience the enormous sweep of the violent acts that women confronted each day globally simply because of their gender, simply because they

were born girls. In the end, I chose to write my talk as if it were a poem, and to use the "data" as refrains in a prose poem—in effect, to weave the data into a descriptive and narrative poem.

What follows is an excerpt from a larger work of the same title, (RE)Visioning a World Without Violence Against Women. I am honored that as a result of my talk, a group of women from some of the panels decided to compile an anthology that is forthcoming from the University of Illinois press; they chose to focus the anthology on the story of Margaret Garner, the slave whose narrative and trial were the inspiration for Toni Morrison's novel Beloved and later was turned into an opera of the same name, also by Morrison.

As the story goes, Garner was in route to freedom in Ohio when she was recaptured. Rather than have her children return to slavery, she slit the throat of her daughter and wounded her other two children with the intent to kill them and herself. Described at the time as a "Modern Madea," the Greek Goddess who murdered her own children, Garner's trial was notable because of her willingness to submit her children to death rather than a life of servitude. Sent back to slavery, and relocated by her master multiple times so she could not be found to be tried for murder and returned to Cincinnati, OH, Garner eventually died from typhoid, and is said on her deathbed to have instructed her husband never to marry again in slavery.

My concern in writing this work on "REVisioning" is the recognition, based on the ethnographic research I have conducted in Belize (see *Women of Belize: Gender and Change in Central America*) and in Surinam, that violence is too often a fact of life for women, and it begins very early. As an activist anthropologist, I seek to put my research to use, and in 1999, I drafted a significant policy document entitled the *National Plan for Family Violence* for the country of Belize—the first of its kind. That plan was recently revised, but I am proud that I had a hand in shaping the original that was implemented in 2000. Additionally, I have served as an expert witness on legal cases in which women seek immigration asylum on the basis of domestic violence. My testimony has helped one woman remain in the United States and escape domestic abuse in her own culture. What I have present below is intended to inform, and possibly to save lives, and to get us (our society) to think differently about the use of violence against women, and for all of us to engage in working to eradicate this problem, and

begin to (RE)Vision a world where violence against women simple doesn't exist—is a thing of the past.

We as a society, as a global society, must recognize that violence against women is not a private matter; it is a societal crisis that ultimately affects our social fabric. Albert Memmi in his seminal book The Colonizer and the Colonized, spoke of the linkage between the oppressor and the oppressed. He asserted that both are wounded in the playing out of the unequal relationship.

And talking about the problem is NOT enough. We must take action. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence has information on how you can be involved every month of the year. The life you save may be your own, your sister's, your daughter's, a friend's, a relative, or a stranger—regardless of the relationship, it will be a saved life.

The Difficult Dialog of Domestic Violence
Two Meditations on (RE)Visioning a World Without Violence Against Women (Excerpt)
Meditation I

All writing begins with a muse.
Whom shall I call upon to inspire me?
The voices,
remember the voices.
And so I shall begin with the voices: of women,
here,
and around the world.

The voices
of women,
to tell the story
of a world gone mad;
of a world where a segment
of one-half of the world's population
wakes up each morning
fearful,
simply because
they are
who they are—
Women.

They may experience an absence of security.
They may experience violence:
of the mind, of the emotions, of the body.
Just because
they are-- women,
and young girls.
Just because

they are gendered.
Just because
they are biologically female
in a world gone mad.

The voices:
Listen to the voices of the women, of the young girls,
of the gender called woman, of the body female.
Listen.

> Julie: ...If I'm going to stop him, it's got to be now. I say 'No' but he ignores it. I keep saying 'No' and holding tight to my undies and fighting against him trying to get out from under him...

More voices:
The *Girls Report* from the National Council on Research for Women (NCRW) tells us that girls and women often underreport violence.
It tells us that 'no' means no,
"...and nonconsensual sex,
with or without physical violence, is rape."

Listen to the research,
to these data:
In a 1997 survey,
conducted by the Commonwealth Fund,
> ...21 percent of a sample of 3,586 girls

in grades fifth through twelfth said they had been physically or sexually abused. ... Of those abused, 53 percent said the abuse took place in their homes, 65 percent said they had been abused by a family member, and 13 percent said the abuser was a family friend.

We are not safe!
Neither our daughters,
nor our sisters, nor our nieces,
nor our neighbors' daughters,
are safe
in this patriarchal world gone mad.

But what is abuse?
Really?
What is this danger that strikes us
in the very places we are supposed to be safe—
in our homes;
in our churches;
not just from strangers;
but from friends and relatives?

In her book, *The Dinah Project:*
A Handbook for Congregational Response to Sexual Violence,
Rev. Monica A. Coleman
tells us that "...sexual violence
s rarely discussed in church,
despite the rising incidents of rape,
sexual assault, molestation, and incest."

The *Girls Report* discloses that

> ...the high incidence of girls who are raped by family members and
> acquaintances speaks to a need to reconceptualize commonly held notions
> of rape
> as an act committed by a stranger,
> and involving extreme physical violence.

We teach "stranger danger."
We teach ourselves and our daughters
to fear the unknown; but there is danger
right next door, inside the home, with
relatives who are brothers, cousins, uncles, and fathers.
Men and older boys who prey on the young—boys and girls—
who prey on the vulnerable: women and children.
There are women abusers as well—
our gender does not
take us off the hook.

What is this thing we fear?
What is violence against women?
Against girls? Against young boys?

First and foremost
it is the assertion of **power--**
pure and simple.
It is about control, manipulation,
intimidation,
and threats.

It is about hierarchy
embodied in the concept of patriarchy.
According to Raquel Kennedy Bergen,
before the 1970s,
the concepts of "wife rape, courtship violence, and date rape"
did not exist.
Today we have come to recognize
that these exist
as serious social problems.

Since the 1960s, however,
child abuse and battered child syndrome
have been acknowledged
as serious social ills;
and while all children are vulnerable,
I would assert,
that our society, because of its gendered views,
and its undervaluation of women,
and what is female or feminine,
makes girls
the most vulnerable as a group.

Listen to the voices:

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines the term "violence against women" to mean

> ...any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Charlotte Bunch calls this situation "the intolerable status quo."
She counsels us that

> ...violence against women and girls is
> the most pervasive violation of human rights in the world today.
> ...It is so deeply embedded in cultures around the world
> that it is almost invisible.
> Their sufferings are compounded
> by systematic discrimination
> and humiliation in the home and workplace,
> in classrooms and courtrooms, at worship and at play.

What is gendered-based violence?
It targets women and girls as a group,
and violates their human rights.
Gender-based violence
is an international issue that

> ...encompasses a wide range
> of human rights violations
> including sexual abuse of children,
> rape, domestic violence, sexual assault
> and harassment, trafficking of women and girls
> and several harmful traditional practices.
> Any one of these abuses can leave deep
> psychological scars, damage the health
> of women and girls in general, including
> their reproductive and sexual health, and

in some instances, results in death.

Gender-based violence
and domestic violence
all carry within them fundamental beliefs—
that girls and women are property
to be bought, sold, and bartered;
that women are infantile
and need to have someone else
control their lives, manage their bodies,
their property, and, of course, their minds.

Within these prevailing views
behaviors emerge
that seek to control
and manage
the lives, bodies,
and minds of women
through brute force,
through manipulation and coercion,
through emotional battering,
through rape,
through threats to harm
children and other relatives,
through legislation
that decides women are
merely receptacles for a fetus;
that enact laws to save the fetus—
and imply: to hell with the girl, woman, mother
in whose body it resides.
They imply: to hell
with the circumstances
of abuse, incest, and rape
that gave rise to the fetus.
These laws imprison women
who take drugs during pregnancy,
but do not punish
fathers who are drug users.
These laws want to decide
which women are "fit"
to reproduce
and rear the species.
Women's bodies
are now contested receptacles
controlled
by the state

through legislation.
No one is safe.
No woman is safe.
No womb is safe.
No place is safe.

Listen to the voices, my own among them.
In 1996, I wrote the following about lives of women of Belize:

Domestic violence is one of the most pressing
issues for women in Belize. No ethnic group
seems to be immune to the practices of wife/partner beating, verbal abuse, and emotional abuse.

Further, occupation and educational levels
are not barriers to domestic violence—
It touches women of every ethnicity,
occupation, and social status,
and is generally perpetrated
by their partners or spouse.

No one is safe.
No woman is safe.
No womb is safe.
No place is safe.

Listen to the voices
from the women of Belize;
Listen to Zola's voice:

That is what you call rape—you has damaged that woman,
you has been so cruel to her and yet
want to use her as your partner or your wife,
which as you know it is your duty. But from the wayhe treated you and abused you, him lets you become
his enemy. So its just like someone walks in and wants
to abuse you and wants to have a sexual relationship
with you in the motion of a rape.
It's something like that.
And yet, in Belize they claims to say
that a husband cannot rape a wife!
These are the things we are trying to protect women against.

Listen to the voice of Intimate Violence scholars like Charlotte Bunch:

In the United States a woman is physically abused by her intimate partner every nine seconds.

In India, more than 5,000 women are killed each year because their dowries are inadequate according to their husbands.

Roughly 60 million women who should be alive today are 'missing' because of gender discrimination.

Rape as a weapon of war has been documented in seven countries recently, though its use has been widespread for centuries.

Throwing acid to disfigure a woman's face is so common in Bangladesh that it warrants its own section
of the penal code.

More than 1 million children, overwhelmingly female,
are forced into prostitution every year, the majority in Asia.

About 2 million girls each year (6,000 every day) are genitally mutilated—the female equivalent of amputation of all or part of the male penis.

Is it culture?
Anthropologists have grappled
with the tricky issue of how to evaluate
social practices in other parts of the world,
when one has not been socialized into the culture.
Do we take a cultural relativist stand on genital cutting?
Cultural relativism demands that we see the world
from the point of view of those who live in the culture,
those whom its rules and mores affect, and not as outsiders.

Listen to the voices
of U.S. Black Scholars like Stanlie M. James and Claire C. Robertson who assert:

> Whether through exaggeration, overgeneralization,
> stereotyping, inaccuracy, voyeurism, or misplaced militancy, the U.S. media has succeeded
> in portraying African women as victims
> of sensationalized FGM (female genital mutilation)
> in a manner that has eclipsed
> any reasoned consideration of historical contexts,
> contemporary experiences, and the agency
> of African women themselves.

And so, we must understand
that behavior occurs within cultural contexts,
and understanding the cultural environment,
and not assuming that because we (of the U.S.)
are not the agents of change,
that nothing is changing.
Our recognition that we have not been ordained
to save our sisters around the world,
but have a responsibility
to support their efforts to change their lives,
in their own ways,
within their own cultural contexts and histories, is imperative to the development
of what James and Robertson call

a "transnational sisterhood."

Really ***listen to the voices:***

Says Robertson,
The good news?
African societies are much more resilient,
creative, intelligent (which has nothing to do with level of formal education), and flexible
than U.S. popular media representations make them.

The magnitude of FGC [female genital cutting]
has been exaggerated,
and all forms are not severely mutilating.
In some areas FGC has diminished substantially
and continues to do so.
There are many activist African men and women
working to get rid of FGC in innovative ways,
and changes are occurring daily,
some of which include diminution in FGC.
...The bad news?
Some changes disempower women,
especially changes connected
to a rapacious world economy
that persists in incorporating African economies
as suppliers of cheap raw materials and labor....

Those who believe
that if they can control "Mother Nature,"
why not control the nation state,
which is often viewed as feminine.
And by extension, women's bodies
come to represent the nation.
There is now a prevailing militaristic belief:
If you want to destabilize a country,
rape the women—violate the nation's bodies.

Listen to the voices:

Rubina Saigol reminds us that
one's motherland or *'maadar-e-watan'*
as it comes to be called,
becomes invested with the kind
of erotic attraction felt towards women,
especially in the figure of the mother.

...The desire for this land/woman/*dharti*

is constructed as masculine desire;
the desire to possess it, see it, admire it,
love it, protect it and die fighting
for it against rivals.
Since the desire for women
gets transferred on to the nation
and women's bodies come to signify
the nation, communal, regional, national
and international conflicts
come to be played out on women's bodies.

We have witnessed this
military mentality
in Dafur
where, in March 2004 alone,
in a refugee camp
up to 16 women
were raped daily
as they went to collect
water.

We have witnessed this
in Latin America and in Eastern Europe.
Within these contexts of conflict,
the desecration of women,
especially in public places,
becomes the desecration of the nation,
of a people, of a culture.

In a significant analysis
of the implications of these acts,
Rubina Saigol warns us
that in a world of increased global conflict
weaker nations and those threatened by global powers
will come to see women's bodies more and more
as "signifiers of nation, home, and honor."
She prophesizes—
women's bodies will not merely be
the site of political, national, and armed struggles;
they will also become the major signifiers
in economic struggles and market conflicts.

Some Facts to Consider:

• It is not until 1996 that the International Criminal Tribunal of the United Nations indicts eight Bosnian Serb military and police officers on the charge of rapes of Muslim women during the Bosnian war.

This is the first official record of RAPE defined as a war crime.
• During the 100-day Rwanda genocide in 1994, one report "...says that some 50,000 women were systematically raped and many deliberately exposed to HIV as a 'slow poison.'" An estimated 50-70 percent are HIV-positive today.
• In 1998, after Bosnia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda recognized the rape and sexual violence against the women of Rwanda as "acts of genocide."
• The numbers have increased from the previous report of only 50,000.
• Today, it is acknowledged that during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, 250,000-500,000 women were raped.
• One third of these women were gang raped and 15,000+ raped as part of "ethnic cleansing."
• "Fewer than 100 rape cases have gone through ordinary courts...."
• 2000- The UN Security Council Adopts Resolution 1325 that urges member states to take into account the impact of war on women and to consider women's contributions in all stages of conflict, and calls for an end to impunity for gender-based abuses before and after conflict.

Listen to the voices:

UNIFEM reports in 2003
that globally one in three women
will be raped, beaten, coerced into sex
or otherwise abused in her lifetime.

But that is somewhere else
in the world,
and could not happen here.
Right?

Couldn't it?
Hasn't it?

Listen to the voices:

Gendered violence is not new;
The notion that women's bodies
represent a people
is not new.
We have heard this story before.
It is inscribed in our own nation's history—America's history
Remember our American Indian sisters.
What better way to understand
what is happening to our sisters
in the global south
than to remember our own history:
Remember....
Re
mem

ber.....
Remember slave women
whose bodies were viewed
as economic commodities
that could be bought/sold/violated
by whomever and whenever.

Remember the Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved*?
It was based on the true story of Margaret Garner,
a black woman, a black woman slave,
who gained notoriety
during one of "America's most notorious
and widely publicized fugitive slave trials..."
She dared dream freedom,
for herself and her children;
she dared free her children
by killing them,
rather than endure
their re-enslavement.
She dared.
And today,
Black women remain
in this country,
in this great democratic nation,
undervalued, scorned, and misrepresented.
We are described as "nappy headed ho-s;"
we are called b-tch-s in music videos and songs.
We are those whom men,
regardless of race,
feel comfortable denigrating.
I am a Black woman.
I see it, hear it, and feel it,
We are more frequently
subjected to greater amounts
of deadly gender violence
than other groups of women,
says the American Bar Association.

Sadly,
it is our history.

Listen to the voices:

of Angela Gilliam
as she reminds us,
"That Black women experience

[of]a life of servitude within the capitalist
world has historically affected our lives
through time and around the world.
...When Sarah Baartman [aka the 'Venus Hottentot']
was kidnapped for exhibition in Europe
in the early nineteenth century,
her body was placed
at the unsavory intersection of slavery,
an Enlightenment classificatory system,
and quasi-pornographic notions of medicine.
The Black woman's body
was both an instrument
of prurient fascination
and a historical symbol
of service-oriented labor."

And, Cheryl Mwaria about
"Biomedical Ethics, Gender, and Ethnicity."
She explains how some of the denigrating
views of women came to be:
"...The history of medical research
that uses women's bodies
dates back to the rise
of biological determinism
and scientific racism of the nineteenth century.
...It is against this background
that two of the best known
and medically significant series
of surgical experiments were performed
on slave women [without anesthesia]."

Given this history,
do I have a Right,
a Human Right,
to ask my country, America,
who will protect me
and my daughter, and my nieces?
Who will protect US
Black women?
Who will save US
from
those who prey
upon us.
Remember
Eldridge Cleaver, in *Soul on Ice*,
where he pridefully discussed how he "practiced"

the rape of white women on Black women first?
No matter that he was a proclaimed Revolutionary.
Cleaver demonstrated
his contempt for women,
especially Black women,
as equals.
He is not alone.

Witness the studies that show
Black women are less likely
to be believed by the police
and even their family and friends
when they report a rape;
Witness the cruelty of our justice system
that implies the rape of a Black woman
Is NOT equivalent
to the rape of a white woman.
And so perpetrators are punished less
harshly, sentenced to fewer years—
There is a strong social message here:
rape a Black woman and you will get a few years,
rape a white woman and you might get a life sentence
or the death penalty.

Factoid:
According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics
in 2002 in the United States
the rate of rape for Black women was 4.0 rapes per 1,000
while white women were victims at a rate of 1.5
and Hispanic women at a rate of 0.7 per 1000.

And so in this very gendered landscape,
of this great country,
of this United States of America,
"race matters," to coin a phrase.
And, age matters,
ethnicity matters,
class matters,
and, post 9/11,
religion definitely matters.

Is there any escape?
Are there any safe harbors, spaces, places?
Is anyone safe: women, girls, young boys?

Myth: If I love another woman, I will be safe.

If I am a lesbian, or a gay male,
I will be safe.
True or False?
False.
NO....
No....
No...
Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered relationships
offer no safety, if the partners are from this country/culture
we call the United States of America (and in the rest of the world as well).
Why?
Culture.
We operate mostly out of schema
according to anthropologists;
even new learning is processed
through what we already know.
Change is difficult...but not impossible.

Research completed over the last two decades
shows that

> ...violence in homosexual
> couples is in many ways similar
> to violence in heterosexual couples:
> both types of abusers
> are attempting to control their partners
> through manipulation, punishment,
> coercion, and so on.

We must recognize that sexual
orientation does not render people immune
from the effects of having been socialized
in a patriarchal environment,
in a gendered world
where girls and women
are undervalued.

Being lesbian does not
automatically mean you are safe.

Listen to the voices:

Charlotte Bunch reminds us:

> *"Gender violence, in all*
> *its varied manifestations,*
> *is not random and it is not about sex.*
> *It serves a deliberate social function;*

asserting control over
women's lives
and keeping them
second-class citizens..."

And so, I close
this first meditation now.
You have heard so many other voices,
past and present
on the facts, on experiences, on history, on memory.
Now listen to MY voice
as I meditate on my fears
and my hope for the future.
I invoke a future
in which we can imagine;
one in which we can **(RE)Vision**
a world without violence against women.

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