



SCREAM QUIETLY

PROTECTION FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

IN CONTEXT

PRIMARY QUOTE

Erin Pizzey, 1974

KEY FIGURES

**Erin Pizzey,
Anne Summers**

BEFORE

1878 British women are able to legally separate from their abusive husbands under the Matrimonial Causes Act.

1973 The modern term "domestic violence" is first used in the UK Parliament.

AFTER

1994 In the US, the Violence Against Women Act is ratified.

2012 The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme ("Clare's Law") gives police in the UK greater powers to reveal acts of violence in a person's past.

2017 Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ organization in the US, highlights domestic abuse in the LGBTQ community.

Until the 1970s, the plight of women facing violence from male partners was rarely discussed in public, although feminists had been fighting against domestic violence since at least the 1800s. In the UK, the 1937 Matrimonial Causes Act had included cruelty as grounds for divorce, but the process of proving this was difficult and expensive.

It was not until women began to share their personal experiences at consciousness-raising groups in the late 1960s and early '70s that

women began to realize that the abuse they faced was not an individual problem but a collective one demanding political redress.

Refuges for women

Erin Pizzey, an early member of the UK's Women's Liberation Movement, set up the first women's

Women and children crowd into the UK's first women's shelter in Chiswick, West London, in 1974. Following a public awareness campaign, the numbers seeking sanctuary rocketed.



See also: Rights for married women 72-75 • Consciousness-raising 134-135 • Rape as abuse of power 166-171 • Fighting campus sexual assault 320

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We have to foster the attitude that violence in the home is shameful and unmanly.
Anne Summers

shelter in Chiswick, London, in 1971. It was an important step in exposing the realities of what it meant to be a "battered wife," as survivors of domestic violence were then called. The shelter gave victims material and emotional support, and the publicity that it generated exposed a problem that had previously been viewed as a matter between husband and wife.

Pizzey's 1974 book *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear*, focusing on women's personal stories, further highlighted the issue. Pizzey's strategy of opening new shelters by squatting in abandoned buildings angered local authorities, but her work was also widely praised, including by members of parliament and Lord Hailsham, head of the judiciary, who said she was providing a unique service.

Further initiatives

In Australia, feminist writer Anne Summers, who had formed a Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) group in Adelaide in 1969, also established women's shelters. After moving to Sydney in 1970, she and other feminists occupied two abandoned buildings owned

by the Church of England and opened the Elsie Refuge there in 1974. They received government funding a year later.

In Canada, the National Action Committee (NAC), formed from a coalition of 23 feminist groups in 1972, pressed for explicit protection for women in law. The federal changes they demanded were finally included in the 1985 Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The White Ribbon Campaign, founded by Canadian men in 1991 to cultivate healthy masculinity free from misogyny, is now active in more than 60 countries. In 1993, the United Nations published *Strategies for Confronting Domestic Violence* in a bid to press countries around the world to rethink their approach to violence against women. New or updated laws in the US, Australia, and the UK have been passed to protect women from abuse. Domestic violence continues, but is a problem far fewer nations can now ignore. ■

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At least one in three women is beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused by an intimate partner in the course of her lifetime [globally].
United Nations
Department of Public
Information 2008 report



Erin Pizzey

Born in Qingdao, China, in 1939, Erin Pizzey was the daughter of Western diplomats and lived in many countries as a child, including South Africa, Lebanon, Canada, Iran, and the UK. She grew up in an emotionally and physically abusive household, in which both parents were bullies. She later upset radical feminists with her claim that women were just as likely as men to perpetuate violence.

Pizzey's controversial opinions provoked protests and death threats from militant feminists. She relocated to Santa Fe, New Mexico; the Cayman Islands; and Italy to write, before returning to London in the 1990s. Chiswick Women's Aid (now called Refuge), which Pizzey established in 1971, is the UK's largest domestic violence organization.

Key works

1974 *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear*
1998 *The Emotional Terrorist and the Violence-Prone*
2005 *Infernal Child: World Without Love*