

you don't you'll never be capable of extending love to others." Still, the process is difficult and can sometimes take years. It's why thousands of women find themselves stuck in unhealthy situations for long periods, unable to take control of their lives.

The following woman confronted adversity, found the strength to pull herself out of the dismal hole of self-blame, and emerged with a shared revelation: The key to turning your life around is learning love yourself. Despite this woman's hardships, she says her life is better and more hopeful than ever.

OVERCOMING PHYSICAL HURDLES—TAINA RODRIGUEZ, 21, CHICAGO

My wheelchair has been one of my accessories for 11 years now. We go everywhere together. The chair is as much a part of my life as the Marfan's syndrome that put me in it. This genetic disorder caused my spine to curve and damaged my corneas. As a child, I wore thick glasses, and my body was tall and lanky. I was a prime target for teasing. I remember being called everything from four eyes to banana back. For years I was ashamed of my appearance, my wheelchair, and my inability to do things for myself.

Then, in high school, I met Mari. She would do my hair, and she and I would go shopping together. We would even go to clubs, and I'd wiggle in my wheelchair while she danced next to me. My friend was never embarrassed by me, she didn't seem to care that I was stuck in a wheelchair, so why should I? Instead of feeling ugly, I felt lucky. Maybe I couldn't do everything Mari did, but I almost always found a way to participate, even if it had to be as a spectator at times. For the first time in my life, I felt like a normal teenager. Unfortunately, my health wasn't as resilient. Three years ago, a grueling 18-hour surgery to repair a ruptured heart valve left me in a coma for five days, near death. When I woke up and learned that I had almost died, I was shocked. I couldn't believe my body was strong enough to pull itself out of a coma. I realized what I had slowly been coming to terms with for the past two years: that I had great inner strength and that there was more to my body than its attachment to a wheelchair. Instead of hating my body for its weaknesses, I felt blessed to be alive and eager to get back to my new life.

I learned to drive and bought a car. I also got an internship at Access Living, a non-profit organization in Chicago that champions rights for the disabled. There, two women and I started the Empowered Fe-Fes, a group for young women with disabilities to talk about issues such as body image and sexuality. I later won a national award for my service to the disabled, and my internship led to a job as an assistant in the Chicago office of Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-Illinois).

I don't think my relationship with my wheelchair will ever be perfect. I still wish I could dance and drive with the full use of my legs, but I have made peace with that. My wheelchair is, after all, a source of mobility, and it doesn't hold me back from living the life I love.

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFINGS

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 7, 2002

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, The narrator in the PBS documentary written by Mary

Dickson, "No Safe Place—Violence Against Women," began by relating that:

In the early hours of a hot August morning, three men pulled a woman from her car after a minor traffic accident. The men threatened her with a crowbar, made her strip, then chased her until she jumped off a bridge to her death in the Detroit River. None of the 40 or so passers-by tried to help the 33-year-old woman. Some reports say onlookers cheered as the men taunted her.

A judge in New Bedford, MA, sentenced the confessed rapist of a 14-year-old girl to probation. He then said that the victim ". . . can't go through life as a victim. She's 14. She got raped. Tell her to get over it."

The San Francisco Chronicle reported that:

Cassandra Floyd was a respected physician, a single mother living in an affluent San Jose suburb, and ardent volunteer and a role model for young black women. The 35-year-old was also the victim of domestic violence . . . when her ex-husband shot and killed her as their 4-year-old daughter slept nearby and shot and wounded Floyd's mother. He then fled and killed himself.

These are not isolated incidents selected to cause sensationalism. Violence against women is a worldwide epidemic.

According to the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund,

Violence against women—rape, sexual assault and domestic violence—affects women worldwide, regardless of class or race. Violence not only affects women in the home, but in the workplace, school and every arena of life.

The Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health found that

Around the world at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Most often the abuser is a member of her own family. Increasingly, gender-based violence is recognized as a major public health concern and a violation of human rights.

The dimensions of this issue were illustrated in a joint study by the Jacobs Institute of Women's Health and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, which made the following conclusions:

In 1998 there were approximately 2.8 million assaults on women. The Journal of the American Women's Association reported that those most at risk are ". . . younger, separated or divorced, of lower socioeconomic status and unemployed." The risk of assault by an intimate partner increases when a woman is pregnant.

Just four in ten women who are physically injured by a partner seek professional medical treatment.

Women are more likely to be the victim of rape or sexual assaults by an intimate partner or acquaintance, rather than by a stranger.

The National Violence Against Women Survey found that one out of every 12 women, a total of 8.2 million women, has been stalked at some point in their lives.

Women are more likely than men to be killed by someone they know, and nearly one-third of women are killed by an intimate partner, compared to approximately four percent of men, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Black women are more likely than White or Hispanic women to be the victims of nonlethal violent crimes.

These statistics are appalling. Just as we have come together with our allies to declare

war against terrorism, so too must we unite and declare war against this form of terrorism—violence against women.

INTRODUCTION OF THE WORLD
WAR I VETERANS MEDAL OF
HONOR JUSTICE ACT

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 7, 2002

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce H.R. 3890, a bill to facilitate the posthumous awarding of a long overdue medal of honor to Sergeant Henry Johnson, of Albany, NY, for actions he performed in the First World War. Additionally, the legislation requests that the Secretary of the Army review the cases of other African-American veterans from World War I, who have had their accomplishments overlooked due to racism.

This legislation is not without precedent. During the 100th Congress, my former colleagues Joe Dioguardi and Mickey Leland first brought the issue of racism in the awarding of medals of honor to national prominence. In 1997, after years of study, the Secretary of the Army finally recommended that seven Black veterans from World War II have their prior Distinguished Service Cross Awards upgraded to Medals of Honor. Likewise, a similar decision was taken regarding Asian-American veterans from World War II, including that of our esteemed colleague in the Senate, DANIEL INOUE. Furthermore, last year, I joined my colleague from Florida, BOB WEXLER, in introducing legislation to reconsider the records of several prominent Jewish veterans from World War II and Korea, who had been previously denied Medals of Honor. I was gratified that this bill, H.R. 606, was included in the fiscal year 2002 Defense Authorization Act.

Yet, despite this important progress, Henry Johnson and his colleagues from the Great War still await due recognition for their service to their country. The sole exception to this shameful legacy was the example of Corporal Freddie Stowers, who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in 1991, in large part due to the tireless efforts of former Congressman Dioguardi in promoting his case to the Department of Defense from 1987–1991.

Unlike more recent conflicts, which have been promoted heavily through print and televised media, the First World War has largely receded into the mists of time. What was originally known as the Great War receives scant attention these days, primarily it has become viewed as a failure of sorts. It was, in the words of President Wilson, the "War to end all wars," yet tragically, it did nothing of the kind. World War I was the most widespread, destructive and costly conflict the world had ever seen up to that point, but it paled in comparison to the destruction of the Second World War.

Against this backdrop, the American public has, especially since 1945, forgotten the sacrifices of the generation that made the world "safe for democracy." This is no more true for the African-American veterans of World War I, and especially, for Sergeant Henry Johnson.

On May 14, 1918, Sergeant Johnson, an NCO with the 369th Infantry Regiment, a Black unit of New York National Guard troops,