

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN NC

Survivors correct misconceptions and call community to action at Domestic Violence Awareness Vigil

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The crowd sat silently, heads hung from overbearing anguish and communal guilt as the seemingly endless list of names of those lost, from newborns to the very elderly, was read aloud.

“...December 14, 2016, Phyllis Mansfield, age 73. March 25, 2017, Genesis Freeman, newborn. March 25 2017, Serenity Freeman, age 2. April 3, 2017, Abigail Jones, age 60...”

The list, compiled by the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence, is 71 names long and included every North Carolinian lost to domestic violence homicide from last October until this month. Following the list, a moment of silence was held to memorialize the victims and highlight the all too real loss to domestic violence many families suffer.

Reading the names was part of an annual Domestic Violence Awareness Vigil orchestrated by Helpmate, Buncombe county’s nonprofit domestic violence agency. The vigil was hosted at UNC Asheville and sponsored by the school’s Title IX Office.

Though the list of names captured the scope of the issue in North Carolina, numbers and names

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— Danielle Hall-White

are only half the story. That is why, in addition to the reading of the names, the vigil featured two speeches by domestic violence survivors.

Danielle Hall-White, an Asheville native and one of the survivors who spoke, told her story for the first time publicly at the vigil. With a confident demeanor, she described her six and a half years of abuse. Throughout her marriage, she said her husband dragged her down the hallway, threw her, squeezed her until her arms were blue:

her life and those of her loved ones were constantly threatened and she even nearly attempted to kill herself.

Hall-White said she told her story because it could help save someone else in danger of domestic homicide.

“I decided to share my story because I thought, ‘Maybe by sharing, it will help save someone else,’” Hall-White said. “I’m just thankful for the opportunity to be alive and to share my story because as we heard tonight, in 2017 alone, so many people have lost their lives due to domestic violence.”

Katherine Taylor, the second survivor who gave testimony, spoke of suffering frequent sexual abuse which arose late in her marriage. She also underwent tumultuous psychological torment by his threats of suicide when she expressed her desire to leave.

“‘It will be your fault if the kids grow up without a father. I will kill myself right now if you say you’ll leave me.’ It was at this point when the gun was pressed to his head where I didn’t know if I saw steely resolve in his eyes or malicious manipulation,” Taylor said. “But my three children were right across the hallway and I could hardly

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