

WITNEY'S LIGHTS

Bringing the issue of domestic violence from darkness to light
Quincy Lucas Keeps Her Sister's Spirit Alive

By Carol Child
Correspondent

Dr. Witney Holland Rose, a psychiatrist at the University of Maryland believed in reaching back as a successful doctor to her Baltimore community.

At the height of her career, on Martin Luther King Day, 2003, she was senselessly murdered by her ex-boyfriend. She was 34. She was a beautiful woman. Witney was a victim of intimate partner violence homicide. Prior to breaking up with her boyfriend, she had recommended to him that he get counseling. Instead, he stalked and controlled her, and in the end, he brutally extinguished her light. All that remained were the embers of love in her eyes glowing from her photographs. Then last year Quincy Lucas rekindled her sister Witney's flame.

In Witney's honor, Quincy Lucas, a fourth grade teacher at Silver Lake Elementary School in Middletown, founded Witney's Lights, a grassroots non-profit organization committed to eliminating domestic violence through awareness, education, prevention, advocacy, and a commitment to advancing the initiatives laid out in the landmark Violence Against Women Act of 1994 written by Sen. Joe Biden.

Even as recently as the early 1990s few protections and little funding existed for victims of intimate partner violence. Many communities lacked shelters while others found it difficult to adequately fund theirs. If a woman went to the police, often she was asked what she did to provoke the battering; in most instances, a witness was necessary for the case to be prosecuted. The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 changed all that. It cracked down on interstate stalking, established stricter standards, provided funding, set up a national domestic violence hotline and far more.

Ironic though it would seem, "When we were growing up in Baltimore," says Lucas, "our parents took us on regular trips into troubled neighborhoods to keep us humble and



Photo Courtesy of Witney's Lights
Quincy Lucas

aware." Quincy was 15 months older than Witney. "We were raised like twins," says Lucas. Their parents expected that the sisters would care and give back to those who may be less fortunate. As an adult, therefore, Witney seemed headed along a track parallel to that of Michelle Robinson Obama, using her advanced academic degree, despite more lucrative job offers, to give back to the community.

As one means of raising community awareness of intimate partner violence, this October 3 Witney's Lights is sponsoring its inaugural Domestic Violence Awareness Walk/5K Run at Silver Lake Park in Dover.

Meanwhile, Quincy Lucas, a Dover resident, has become a celebrity of sorts celebrating the life of Dr. Witney Rose. Lucas was chosen not only to ride – with her supportive husband, Kevin, and three children – the historic whistle-stop Inauguration train with President-elect Obama and Vice President-elect Biden, but also, earlier, to place Sen. Biden's name into nomination for United States Vice President at the Democratic National Convention August 27, 2008.

Lucas was standing in line at the Dover Wal-Mart when she got that call. The Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCADV) phoned asking Lucas if she would speak at the Convention. The Democrats needed someone from Delaware to introduce Sen. Biden based upon all that he has done for Delaware, and especially for his authoring The Violence Against Women Act and his unwavering pursuit in getting the bill signed into law.

Delaware State Attorney General Beau Biden told the Coalition, "You really should call Quincy."

The Coalition learned of Lucas in 2005 when Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority held a "Breaking the Cycle of Intimate Partner Violence" program at Delaware State University (DSU). Sorority members knew about Witney's murder and asked Lucas if she would be willing to share her story. It was the

first such workshop held at DESU and 150 attended.

Then in April 2008, Paulette Sullivan-Moore, DCADV policy coordinator said to Lucas, "Wow, your sister's story is really interesting." Knowing of her through Witney's Lights, DCADV informed the state attorney general's office who in turn asked Lucas to deliver the keynote speech, where she spoke in depth, at the 17th Annual Delaware Crime Victims' Tribute at Delaware State University on April 27, 2008, sponsored by the Delaware Victims' Rights Task Force. The tribute was held just six months before the Democratic National Convention and Beau Biden attended.

"The Attorney General said it's very hard getting victims and their families to talk," Lucas notes.

DCADV Executive Director Carol Post elaborates: "We had been working with Senator Biden's folks for years about a survivor speaking, highlighting Senator Biden's work. We had names of several survivors and Quincy was on the list to talk about her experiences as a sister of a victim."

The Violence Against Women Act has provided development funds for shelters and other initiatives, Post says. She emphasizes three factors important to breaking the cycle of domestic violence:

- For all of us who have been working professionally, we must have voices of survivors; their credibility of voice is very powerful. Delaware has a comprehensive network of survivors passionate about their work. We are all working and listening to survivors' voices, and it is incredibly important to inform that work on local, state and national levels: Witney's story gives the issue weight.



Photo Courtesy of Witney's Lights
Quincy Lucas speaking out against domestic violence at Democratic National Convention.

- Communities must engage against intimate partner violence. It happens to all kinds of folks in the community.
- Moreover, what elements in our society contribute to violence against women?

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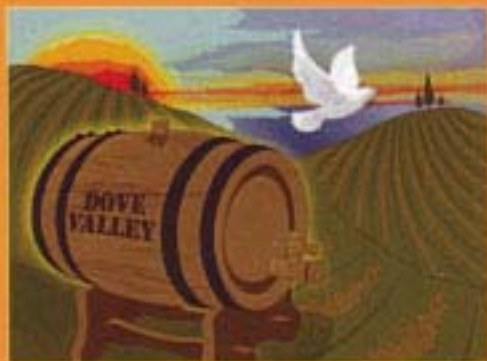
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Middletown Community Activism

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Domestic abuse, also called spousal abuse or intimate partner abuse, crosses all lines of gender, race and age, including same-sex relationships, and even arises from teen puppy love. It begins when one person in an intimate relationship or marriage tries to dominate or control the other, according to helpguide.org. The signs begin subtly, like "Where were you? Why are you wearing that dress?" The pattern beginning with subtlety escalates to violence. After the battering, the abuser brings her roses in the hospital. He says he loves her and he'll never do it again. She believes him thinking he has momentarily lost control. Over and over, she believes him. Reports helpguide.org, "An abuser doesn't 'play fair.' He or she uses fear, guilt, shame, and intimidation to wear you down and gain complete power over you. He or she may threaten you, hurt you, or hurt those around you. Domestic abuse that includes physical violence is called domestic violence." Violence is not due to the abuser's loss of behavioral control; it is a deliberate choice in order to take control of the partner.

These warning signs show up not only in teen dating but also in the families where children are growing up.

Tanya Brown, younger sister of Nicole Brown Simpson, wrote on an April 7, 2009 Larry King Live blog exclusive, "Domestic violence rarely begins with physical violence. It all begins with constant emails, calls and text messages. They check up on you, criticize, make threats, stalk, harass,

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Photo Courtesy of Witney's Lights
Quincy Lucas with President Barack Obama.

Bringing the issue of domestic violence from darkness to light:

WHERE TO FIND HELP

Contact Witney's Lights at:
www.witneyslights.com – Here are listed
Where to Find Help, Domestic Violence
Programs, Informational Resources, Witney's
Story, a Speaker Request Form, The Dr.
Witney H. Rose Memorial Fund and more.

Witney's Lights Inc.
P.O. Box 1609
Dover, DE 19903
(302) 363-4139
quincy@witneyslights.com
or kevin@witneyslights.com

Also —
Delaware Coalition for Domestic Violence:
www.dcadv.org; (302) 658-2958



The Nicole Brown Foundation:
www.nicolebrown.org

About Domestic Violence: U.S. Department of
Justice Office on Violence Against Women:
<http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/domviolence.htm>

Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence:
Informative flier online at the Delaware State
Attorney General's Office –
[http://attorneygeneral.delaware.gov/media/pdf/
domesticviolence.pdf](http://attorneygeneral.delaware.gov/media/pdf/domesticviolence.pdf)

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intimidate, manipulate and most of all CONTROL you. All of this makes the victim walk on eggshells. Nothing she does or says is right. Out of exhaustion, fear, guilt and shame she surrenders to the criticisms to keep the peace.

"Victims have to be ready to leave the relationship on their own time, AND, they should not just pick up and leave. They MUST call a shelter to construct a safety plan. It is very dangerous to just pick up and leave."

The Nicole Brown Foundation sends out informational packages upon request on a wide range of topics from warning signs of teen dating violence, cycles of violence with children, to batterer treatment programs.

So, how does our society work to create violence against women? While women are often socialized to be victims, men, on the other hand, are socialized to conquer and control. As Phil Donohue suggested on his early 1980s TV show about battered women, we live in a society that glorifies war; we get patriotic for winning, not for avoiding, war; we give our kids war toys; we reward toughness more than avoidance of conflict. Often, the female victim thinks she is doing something wrong – not cooking his favorite meals, not keeping the kids in line. So, she is afraid to tell anyone. Or she simply doesn't get to tell. He possesses her the same

way he possesses his golf clubs, hunting rifles and the family dog. If he cannot have her, then no one else can. That's how he thinks.

Lucas affirms: "Intimate partner violence is happening all around us. It could be happening to your next-door neighbor. The abuser takes care not to let the signs show outwardly. The victim doesn't want anybody to know."

Onboard the Inaugural train, Lucas spoke with President-elect Obama. It was a relaxed, comfortable conversation, she says. She talked about Witney and Witney's Lights and they discussed her potentially taking a position as a professional advisor. "Wow, you've got a lot on your mind," the president-elect told her.

Lucas would take hands down the opportunity to be a part of the Obama administration.

Presently, funding for Witney's Lights supports three primary programs:

- Workshop: A Youth Ambassador Program held at Delaware State University. High School juniors and seniors who are not victims are eager to enlighten other teens. (DESU is a partner with Witney's Lights.)

- Advocacy (as a part of the workshop): Held this summer by the Delaware State Police Domestic Violence Unit, Sergeant Randy Fisher, coordinator, and the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence (other Witney's Lights partners).



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• Knowledge basis: What is teen dating violence? —A police overview. Teens want to develop groups by school, Lucas explains: "Teens talking to teens has a greater impact than adults talking to teens." Teens hold mini-awareness workshops in the schools.

The WIT Kit

Lucas created a teen dating abuse kit.

She calls it the WIT Kit, WIT for "Well Informed Teen."

She has spoken to teen groups where she gives away the kit. It is a simple cosmetics bag. "You know, when you're in a domestic violence situation, the abuser won't let you use the phone," Lucas points out. Inside the cosmetics bag is an emergency alarm, a whistle, an emergency card and phone numbers. The card says: "You may be experiencing domestic violence/abuse if..."

All their programs and workshops come about from donations from a lot of thoughtful people, Lucas emphasizes. "We pay out of pocket for the WIT Kits whenever we deem it important and don't have the funding. Nevertheless, we have a good, steady base of funding, but we can use more."

Additionally, Witney's Lights has received recommendations and support via information packets Lucas has sent to state and U.S. senators.

On April 23, 2009 she served as the keynote speaker for the U.S. Department of Justice National Crime Victims

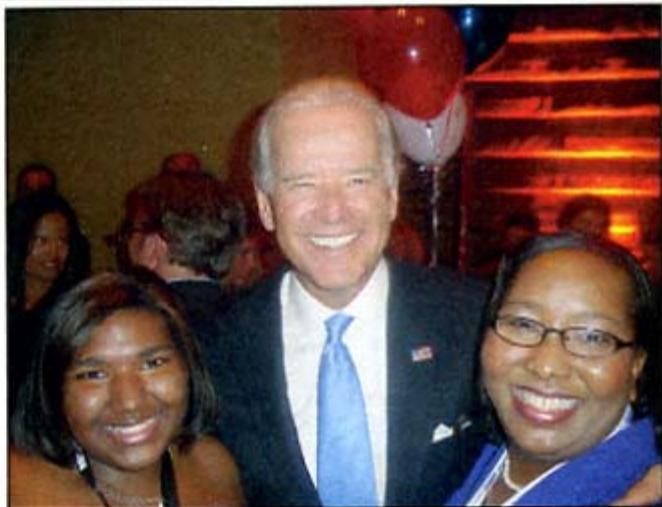


Photo Courtesy of Witney's Lights

Daughter Victoria Lucas, left, and Quincy Lucas, right, with V.P. Joe Biden.

Week 25th Anniversary Candlelight Ceremony held in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Hall of Flags, Washington, D.C. "For this event, we thank U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder," she asserts.

Most of us are unaware how many people we know are

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victims, Lucas says. "There are no outward signs. Abuse manifests in three ways: control, emotional and economic." The October 3 walk at Silver Lake in Dover is open to New Castle and Sussex County residents as well as those from Kent County. "This walk will send a powerful message to both advocates and victims," Lucas says. "We will send a powerful message as a state that these are issues that must be addressed."

Witney's light had been extinguished, the Witney's Lights Website articulates. The Baltimore community had lost a friend and a true gift. Hundreds of mourners braved a winter snow storm [sic] to attend her funeral; vowing to spread the news about Domestic Violence while committing to keep Witney's spirit alive and bright as a Beacon of Hope to all.

In 2003 Lucas established The Dr. Witney H. Rose Memorial Fund giving a \$1,000 scholarship annually to a high school senior exemplifying the characteristics of Dr. Witney Holland Rose, one who has a desire to continue to carry the light of service.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Lucas carries on teaching her fourth grade students at Silver Lake Elementary School every day about giving back to the community. "The parents are one hundred percent supportive," she says, her voice glowing, "to help with the 5K Walk, with what's going on with the organization, and



Photo Courtesy of Witney's Lights

Middletown Delaware Girl Scout Troop Parents Discuss Domestic Violence.

they send thank you notes."

Lucas shows her students that giving back to the community is not just some abstract idea lectured about in the classroom, but that going out, working hard and pursuing that idea brings help to others. Moreover, the kids, so interested in Lucas's community work, are more attentive towards their academics. Says Lucas, "The kids say, 'I want to be like Mrs. Lucas.'"

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