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George Town
Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands

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We all know someone who is experiencing violence.

Last weekend's situation at Coral Beach has attracted a great deal of attention on social media. As the Cayman Islands' only women's shelter, we are committed to combating any form of violence, especially to the most vulnerable amongst us. We share the concerns expressed by the community, especially as this is a violent act against a woman.

We welcome the open dialogue and understand the outrage that any act of violence against another person should evoke. The Cayman Islands, as every society in the world, has issues with violence. We are inundated by images of violence through entertainment, news and social media. Sometimes, it is fair to say, we have become anesthetised to it.

But the truth is, violence happens in hundreds, or perhaps even thousands of homes across these islands every year, in addition to incidents outside the home. Global estimates published by WHO indicate that about 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Here in Cayman, the RCIPS responded to 2,218 domestic violence-related calls and 747 calls related to child protection in 2018. There is no way of knowing how many other assaults took place that were not reported.

And when a situation like this happens, involving a public figure in a public place, the violence issue, way too long on the back burner, is brought into sharp relief. Perhaps this is what Malcolm Gladwell would call 'the tipping point'.

While we abhor violence against anyone and work every day with people who have been victimised by those they love and trust we also recognise that there may be a silver lining in this particular incident in that if we can get more people working, in whatever small way they can, towards eliminating gender-based violence, anger, hatred and even 'locker room talk' from our society, then all is not lost.

We encourage you to take the outrage you feel at this situation and channel it for good. Please visit our website at cicc.ky to see how you can get involved. With the high demand for our services, we are raising funds to build a bigger, purpose-built home of healing, that will accommodate both female and male victims of domestic violence. We have programs like the TAYA Lounge, where we focus on providing support and counselling to at-risk kids who have witnessed and experienced things you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy. We are showing them a different life and they are seeing what healthy relationships look like. We are in schools and workplaces, delivering training on how to keep



people, young and old, safe. We run a drop-in clinic for those who experience domestic violence but might not be ready for emergency shelter, or who have transitioned to a life free from violence and need ongoing support. To keep these programmes running and to build a new facility, we need funds. Think of donating to the Cayman Islands Crisis Centre in the name of that hard-to-buy-for person in your life, or when you are determining your corporate social responsibility strategy for the year. Our vision is that we might close our doors forever because our services are no longer required, and it will take this whole community to make that happen. We will not accomplish it on our own.

We also must remember that violence is a learned behavior. Perpetrators are solely responsible for their actions. Should they want to change and reform, the most important step is for them to acknowledge their abusive behaviours, be accountable for themselves and take responsibility for their actions. There are lots of ways to do this, for example reaching out to the Counseling Centre and/or the Department of Community Rehabilitation which provides rehabilitative services to adult offenders.

We encourage the survivor of last weekend's attack to call us if she needs anything at all – someone to talk to, or to just sit with people who have been there and understand. We encourage everyone to do the same for the person they know or suspect is being abused, whether physically, emotionally or financially, and support them as they make some of the hardest decisions they will ever make.

It is okay to feel the outrage. We simply implore you to put that energy to good use.

#sheissupported

Board of Directors

Cayman Islands Crisis Centre