

the end of the trial, the judge agreed with the reasoning of a juror that believed, "If a man hits a woman once, it is his fault. If a man hits a woman a second time, it is her fault."

I nearly fell over. To hear this from a judge was alarming and disgusting. I could not believe the ferocity of such a statement. I was sentenced to 7-17 years.

In prison, I found a sea of illiterate women. Not just a fissure of illiteracy, like the one I fell into as a child, but a Grand Canyon that thousands had fallen into. Literacy for women prisoners is so low that I find it hard to believe that most of them can understand the plea agreement they signed. The general feel of the women here is that there is nothing they can do about how they are treated. It is just the way it is and always will be. The continuous violence, abuse,

neglect, and unfair treatment that they have been subjected to has eroded their ability to stand up for themselves.

I do not believe there is nothing we can do. We should start by addressing the judicial system—the whole network from the police to the courts. The law books may have page upon page about equality and they may stress women's parity with men, but police officers and the courts do not enforce the rules.

Women's literacy would be best described as the ability to not only read, but to put what you read into *action*. Without action, equality can't exist. It is just a fairy tale.

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*Monica Nowos was raised in Rochester Hills, Michigan, the fifth of six daughters. She is currently in prison.*

## Education Helps Women by Idalina Barbosa

It is very difficult to believe that for many years, and even still in some countries today, the education of women is not perceived as important. Women are responsible for taking care of their families by cooking, washing, raising children, and caring for their husbands.

In the mid-twentieth century, women in the U.S. organized for access to education. Women realized education would help them to make significant contributions to their society as well to their families. Women entered colleges and pursued careers that were once exclusively held by men. Some of these professions are medicine, law, science, and even operation of high power equipment. Today it is very difficult to find a job that is still exclusively for men.

Education does three major things for women. It opens up opportunities in the work place, gives more freedoms, and instills a new sense of confidence to enable women to take risks.

Women no longer only see themselves as homemakers. Women who were unhappily married have found the confidence to be single parents. They are still able to take care of their children because they have become financially independent.

Women now have the freedom to express themselves. Women make choices about their bodies, their finances, and every other aspect of their lives. Education gives women the confidence to take risks because they know that if they fail they have the tools or could acquire the tools to help them succeed. Although women have accomplished a lot in the past century, there is still a lot more to do.

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