

Many Kinds of Violence against Women

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BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Study the words *femicide* and *feminism*. What root do they share? What do they mean?
2. What is sexism? Share examples of sexism.
3. Note that this is an important article about a disturbing topic. Set up a way to debrief with others about the emotions this article may bring up.

I Left Mexico Because of the Violence

Why leave from a country that has the best tacos in the world? Why move to another country where you still drink tequila and margaritas, but they just cost more? Why play the migration game, which requires as much endurance as an Olympic sport?

I left Mexico because of the violence, specifically, the violence against women. According to *Forbes*, violence affects 7 of 10 women in Mexico.

There can be many kinds of violence against women. The worst is femicide, which is the killing of women and girls simply because they are female. In 2021, more than 1000 Mexican women were victims of femicide. Most of the time, the aggressor is someone they know – their husbands, boyfriends, relatives, friends, or colleagues.

One thousand femicides a year is a lot, but this is just the number of bodies that were found. According to an article in *Forbes*, the number of femicides is much higher. More than 2500 women are missing, and many of them could be dead.

Was this information hard to read? Let me give you another fact: only 5% of the men who committed these murders have been convicted. These numbers are only the official numbers. Many more femicides have not been reported.

There exist two kinds of victims: 1) the ones who experienced the crime, and 2) their loved



A protest against violence against women in Argentina, 2017. Photo: TitiNicola from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>

ones. Think of all the children who lose their mothers, and all the people who lose their sisters, daughters, partners, and friends.

Sexism Makes Violence Possible

I'm lucky. I have not been a victim of extreme violence. But I have experienced the kind of sexism that makes it possible for this violence to exist. I was ten years old when I was first harassed by a man. I was walking from school to my grandmother's house. I was wearing my school uniform and carrying my backpack. A man started touching himself. I crossed the street to avoid him, but he followed me. He got very close to me and lifted up my skirt. Then he just left. I arrived at my grandmother's house crying. After that, she made sure that one of my cousins would walk with me on my way home from school.

As I grew up, I experienced other kinds of harassment. When I was 22 years old, I worked in a company that was 90% men. My job was to inspect the work of the mechanics. The mechanics did not like having a woman inspect their work. They told me it was not my place. One man threatened to hit me, and then he did it. My boss and my colleagues, they did nothing. I was alone there. It was easier for me to quit my job than to try to make a formal complaint.

Not Our Fault

One year later, on March 6, 2020, I was part of a feminist march in Mexico to reclaim justice. Feminism has taught me that violence against women is not women's fault. And I can see now that violence against women has many different faces.

When individual men or the society in general try to control us or threaten us, when they harass us at work, at school, on the street, or even in our houses, these are forms of violence. When men or the society demean us or treat us like we are not valuable, when we can't get a job or when we have to earn less money just because we are women, when we don't have the same opportunities as men, these are all forms of violence.

I love my country and my culture. I miss my

Support and Resources

Visit <https://rainn.org/> (Eng. or Sp.) or call 800.656.HOPE. For self-defense training, visit <https://esdglobalselfdefense.org/>.

grandmother and the delicious food she made. I miss the way I feel when I meet my friends for coffee. I miss buying \$2 beers on Thursdays.

But I don't miss using my cell phone to send my location to friends just in case I disappear. I don't miss the fear of being the last one on the bus. I don't miss feeling like it was unsafe to walk outside in a skirt or dress.

Sharing My Story

Being an immigrant in the U.S. has not been easy. It is hard to adapt to a new country and culture. However, I feel lucky to be in the U.S. because here I feel a little safer. I can find more support and learn more about movements for civil rights. I know that violence against women exists here, too. We must fight against this violence everywhere. I will start by sharing my story. I know there are thousands of others like mine. I want women to know that we are not alone.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. According to the author, what are the different kinds of violence against women?
2. Do you think it helps other women to share these kinds of stories? If so, how does it help?

Sources: 1. <https://www.forbes.com.mx/noticias-ola-de-feminicidios-en-mexico-continua-imparable-con-1004-muertes-en-2021/> 2. <https://www.forbes.com.mx/mas-de-10-mujeres-al-dia-son-asesinadas-en-mexico/> 3. <https://www.forbes.com.mx/politica-impunidad-en-mexico-es-de-94-8-segun-un-informe/> 4. <https://www.latimes.com/espanol/california/articulo/2020-10-25/llevo-a-la-policia-al-asesino-de-su-hija-el-hombre-fue-perdonado-y-termino-matandola-tambien-la-historia-de-marisela-escobedo>

