

As I approach the one-year anniversary of the day that changed my life forever, memories of November 13, 2015 flood my mind. They start with good memories of beginning the day by giving two wiggly girls their baths. I dressed them in long sleeve white onesies because the crisp November air was filling the house through the open windows. Bath time was followed with playtime and Sesame Street. This seemingly simple routine is now a precious and sacred memory.

I live every day with a longing for my babies that does not go away. There are the days I find the odd little sock that once was worn by a tiny foot and I feel like the tears will never stop. Losing your children and father in such a tragic, senseless, and brutal way just can't be described. Even having lived it, I'm at a loss for words of how to describe it. There are all these thoughts of the I would have, should have and could have that flood my mind on a daily basis.

I wasn't the only surviving victim that day. My father was more than a best friend to me, he was also my twin's father. That day made my brother a victim as well; he lost his father, and both his nieces, whom he adored so much. My mother and stepfather lost their grandchildren and have taken on the huge responsibility of my care; physically, emotionally and physiologically. There are aunts, uncles, cousins and other extended family that all became victims that day. There are friends and strangers traumatized by the events of that day. A community left to wonder if this could happen to them or their loved ones.

Then there are all the unanswered questions. How could someone do this to the people they claimed to love? Will I, my family, my friends, my community ever truly feel safe again? Will my injuries ever heal? Will my heart, my mind, my soul ever be restored?

You see, I have come to understand that the person being abused is never the only victim of domestic violence. My family has been living it right along with me, mourning with me, crying with me, supporting me, and even pushing me when needed. Its impact ripples out to family, friends and the community at large... we all became victims that day. That reality is harsh, this terrible thing happened to all of us.

I call upon you to not allow anyone else to become a victim. Know the warning signs of domestic abuse. Know the warning signs for your children. Help your friends and family that are stuck in these situations. They are in danger, even if they have never been physically harmed. Report it! Make sure there is a record of the violence. I say this to anyone who is in a relationship where they are being abused or controlled with the threat of violence. It is possible to leave. It is possible to have a life again... you just have to leave. You will survive the pain and heartache. I am surviving, even through all of this.

I look at myself now scarred and broken and without those sweet baby sounds and smells but there is a comfort, a precious comfort, that comes in knowing my daughters are in Heaven with my Heavenly Father, right along with my father. This has sustained me in those most private moments that only he and I know about. Know this, I have no doubt

Heavenly Father knows each and every one of us, he loves us, and he cares about what happens to each one of us. I feel his comfort and love each day.

I know that it was God's grace that spared me that day. I was spared because I have a purpose. That purpose in part is to become a voice of victim's of domestic abuse. I have to be a voice or everything I have gone through and continue to go through will have been in vain.

I know I will never be the woman I was on November 13th, 2015 again or recover what was lost, but I move forward with the knowledge that there is hope and just because you have been a victim, doesn't mean you have to stay a victim.

With love and gratitude,

Megan