



Why Don't the Presidential Candidates Talk about Domestic Violence? Who Will Ask Them the Important Questions?

In the last seven days, there have been 12 murder-suicides in the US (Alliance for HOPE International, 2016). More than one per day. All but one were related to domestic violence. There have been three mass shootings - all related to domestic violence. There have been 29 domestic violence related homicides in the last week. There has been no national news coverage. More significantly, Alliance for HOPE International has analyzed the Democratic and Republican Presidential debates and found no questions or related post-debate stories about the candidates discussing murder-suicides, domestic violence homicides, or domestic violence in America in general. No Republican or Democratic presidential candidate has voluntarily raised any topic related to domestic violence in any debate or major forum. No question has even been asked in a single debate. No post-debate tweet, Facebook post, or press release has been issued on any of these domestic violence-related topics. Why?

Every year in the US more than 1,200 Americans die in murder-suicides (Violence Policy Center, 2015). Nine out of 10 of these incidents involve a gun, and 72 percent involve an intimate partner. There will be more than 300 domestic violence-related murder-suicides before the November election. More than 900 women, men, and children will die in domestic violence-related murders between now and election day based on current daily averages. But not a single speech on the topic by a Presidential candidate. Why?

The most recent national study on murder-suicides was published last fall by the Violence Policy Center. The study found:

- Of the 282 murder-suicide events in the first half of 2014, 261 (93 percent) were known to involve a firearm.
- Of the 72 percent of murder-suicides that involved an intimate partner, 93 percent were females killed by their intimate partners.
- Most of the killers in murder-suicides were men. Of the 285 suicides, 254 (89 percent) were male, 30 (11 percent) were female.
- Most of the murder-suicide victims were women. Of the 332 homicide victims, 252 (76 percent) were female, 79 (24 percent) were male.
- Forty-five of the homicide victims were children and teens less than 18 years of age.

Yet nothing has been heard on the campaign trail and no national news outlet has even framed a question to a Presidential candidate about this pandemic. Why?

If not murder-suicides, what about talking about the broader topic of domestic violence homicides? Domestic violence causes far more deaths in the US each year than the underfunding of social security, national tax policy, or terrorism. Since 2003, 18,000 women and 4,000 men have been killed in domestic violence-related homicides. And even while major media outlets like *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Huffington*

Post, USA Today, and others have consistently done national stories on these topics, none of it is being talked about by the candidates for President of the United States. Why?

Primaries or caucuses have now been held in a host of states that have the highest rates of women murder by intimate partners in the country including Nevada (#1), Alaska (#2), and South Carolina (#3). But not a single question has been asked. Not a single ad has touched on the topic. The voters in other states too have weighed in on who should be President without a question being asked including Vermont, Tennessee, Georgia, Oklahoma, and Texas. Why?

If we don't ask about murder-suicides or domestic violence homicides, why can't we talk with the candidates about the broader topic of all types of domestic violence. Domestic violence impacts millions of Americans. It has far more impact on the daily lives and pocketbooks of Americans than most of the topics and questions in the Presidential race. 1 out of 4 women (38 million) and 1 out of 7 men (17 million) will be a victim of intimate partner violence in their lifetime.

Beyond Obamacare, the war on terror, social security, economic strategies, and foreign relationships there has been nothing asked or offered in any of the debates or major forums on the general topic of domestic violence -- not by a media editorial board, not by audience members at major presidential election town halls, not by anybody. Why?

Does the media not care? Is the public not paying attention even after so much public awareness and outreach in the past two years on domestic violence issues through the NFL scandal, the national NO MORE campaign, and high profile mass shootings and mass murders related to domestic violence? Who will hold the media accountable? Who will start asking the candidates the important questions on a topic that impacts more than 50 million Americans?

Anyone who aspires to be President of the United States should be asked these questions in televised debates. What will you do as President to take guns away from violent abusive men? What laws have you supported to hold abusive intimate partners accountable for their violence? Have you ever participated in a task force, coordinating council, or local, state, or national effort to help stop gender-based violence in America? Do you believe those who use violence and abuse against their partners and family members should be held criminally accountable? What prevention initiatives do you support to break the generational cycle of family violence? What is your plan to reduce domestic violence by helping children exposed to trauma and abuse? Do you personally support local, state, or national organizations working to reduce gender-based violence in America? Who have you financially supported? As President, will you commit to regularly speak on issues connected to domestic violence and killing of intimate partners in this country? Will you support a national data base to track murder-suicides in America? Will you support efforts such as coordinated community responses, community-based domestic violence agencies, Family Justice Centers, high risk teams, and other programs designed to prevent murder-suicides and domestic violence homicides in America? Do you support the fully funded reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act?

I do believe most Americans care about the issue of domestic violence I believe most members of the media care about the issues as well. Let's start acting on those beliefs. Let's start asking every candidate Republican and Democrat some of these key questions. Perhaps asking the questions will lead to greater focus on the devastating impacts and the promising solutions to reduce intimate partner violence across the United States.

– From the Desk of Casey Gwinn and Gael Strack, March 4, 2016