



## **Jovan Belcher Murder-Suicide an Act of Men's Violence Against Women ~ A joint statement by Jane Doe Inc. and Sport in Society**

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Jovan Belcher's murder of Kasandra Perkins places the spotlight on the problem of domestic violence in our society. While concussions, performance enhancing drugs and football are being cited as possible reasons for Mr. Belcher's actions, there is one indisputable fact: Jovan Belcher's decision to acquire a gun and then murder his girlfriend, the mother of his child, was an act of domestic violence.

Domestic violence is the ultimate expression of power and control of one person over the other, regardless of socio-economic, ethnic, racial, gender identity, sexual orientation and educational backgrounds and professions – anyone can be a victim or a perpetrator. On average, every day in the United States, three women are killed by their intimate partners. In Massachusetts since 2003, domestic violence homicide perpetrators have killed 261 people - 60% of whom were female domestic violence victims killed by male partners and 29% are friends and family members of the domestic violence victim. In 28% of these incidents, the domestic violence homicide perpetrator also committed suicide. As this incident shows, the presence of firearms increases the risk for more deadly violence.

If we are serious about preventing similar tragedies, like the murder of Ms. Perkins, we also need to address the gendered nature of domestic violence: 1) why men disproportionately commit violence against women; and 2) why women who are killed in the U.S. are more at risk of being murdered by a current or former partner than by a stranger. The sad reality is that the actions of Mr. Belcher are far too common and not an isolated event. A National Institute of Justice study found that 91% of murder-suicides are committed by men and that 88% use a firearm. Men commit 90% of all violent crime in our society, including battery, rape, and murder. So while many people think the NFL has a serious problem with domestic violence and point to numerous high-profile cases, that assumption does not bear out. In fact, when you look at how many NFL players commit gender violence in proportion to the overall number of NFL players, the percentage is consistent with that of the population in general (around 3-5%). We must recognize that this is an issue of gender, not athletics or football. This is an issue of men's violence against women, not of football players being too violent.

The homicide of Kasandra Perkins in Kansas City is a reminder of the dangers victims face in their own homes. It's also a wake up call to facilitate conversations about healthy relationships in our homes, in our neighborhoods, in our workplaces and with our teams. We must engage in a broad discussion about the issue of domestic violence and what we can do to prevent it, from limiting gun access and ensuring access to services for victims and ways to hold perpetrators accountable as well to transforming the social norms to support healthy masculinity.

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For more information or to schedule an interview, contact Toni Troop at Jane Doe Inc. at (617)212-7571 or Jarrod Chin at Sport in Society at (617)373-4025.