

## Blaming the victim

Blaming the victim - "... survivors of severe trauma--combat soldiers, prisoners of war, rape victims, disaster victims, hostages, battered women---universally attribute their survival to largely to good luck. But who wants to believe that our well-being hinges upon chance? Instead we trace the root of trouble from where it flowers. ... we search the victim for those peculiarities of psyche and circumstance that made the life give way, or, worse, impelled the victim to step across the line herself, deliberate and heedless .... we try 'to account for the victim's behavior by seeking flaws in her personality or moral character' because, having no knowledge of terror or coercion, we presume that in similar circumstances we 'would show greater courage and resistance than the victim.'" From Next Time She'll Be Dead, pg. 174

"...[T]he battered woman whom we think of as 'staying' with a batterer, or returning to him, is usually a woman held captive by the force of separation assault. And as we have seen time and time again, when a woman perseveres in her struggle to get free, the grand finale of separation assault is often her own death." From Next Time She'll Be Dead, pg 150.

Why didn't she leave?

This common question assumes that the woman's life is entirely in her own hands, that his violence is her problem and her responsibility, that she has somewhere to go, that the police and courts will do their job in protecting her rights to safety, and that she has not already left or tried to leave.

This question "transforms an immense social problem into a personal transaction, and at the same time pins responsibility squarely on the victim. It obliterates both the terrible magnitude of violence against women and the great achievements of the movements against it. It simultaneously suggests two ideas, both of them false: that help is readily available to all worthy victims (which is to say, victims who leave), and that this victim is not one of them. From Next Time She'll Be Dead, pg. 131-2