

# The Rhode Island Clothesline Project

June 11th, 1999, 6-10pm, June 13th, 3-7pm

The Clothesline Project is the first:

- Tribute to millions of women who have been attacked by their partners or simply because they are women.
- Visual display by survivors about violence against women and the impact it has on women and their friends and families.

The purpose of the Clothesline is to bear witness to the victims and survivors of the war against women, both the casualties as well as the wounded. While many people are aware of the extreme violence that is being directed toward women on a daily basis, the Clothesline demonstrates that extent of the problem with a visual impact similar to the AIDS quilt or the Vietnam War Memorial.

Few people have acknowledged the war against women, but the statistics are clear. During the Vietnam era alone, 51,000 women were killed by men who supposedly loved them during the same time that 58,000 American soldiers were killed in Vietnam. These statistics in particular prompted the organizers of the Clothesline Project to create a tribute to women.

By displaying the shirts for the general public, we can finally expose the devastating



consequences of the war against women. Statistics alone cannot communicate the lifelong scars that some women bear from being survivors of violent crime.

Women often communicated with one another as they stood outside hanging their clothes. Women have been hanging out their laundry for centuries - to dry and to expose it to the air and sun as a means of further cleansing and refreshing the clothes. Using shirts as a medium of expression, the Clothesline seeks to hang society's dirty laundry out for all to see. The shirts display a range of emotion, from pain to celebration, as they tell the story of violence against women.

Although it is intense, viewing this display is not always a painful experience. The Clothesline Project is meant to be an educational tool that is often the surest way to understand the extent of violence against women. Visitors to our display have called it “riveting”, “courageous”, “necessary”, and “ an experience that changed my life”. Seeing the shirts hanging shoulder to shoulder, in all their pain and celebration, is the quickest way to the soul.

The Rhode Island Project is one of approximately 350 such lines throughout the world. The first Clothesline Project was started on Cape Cod, Massachusetts by the Cape Cod Women’s Agenda in 1990.