One Billion Rising

On St. Valentine’s Day love, romance and relationships are celebrated - a day of champagne, roses, chocolates and intimate dinners. Sadly, it is also the day when people gather to protest, drum, dance, rise and focus attention on the one in three women who are raped and beaten in their lifetime - more than a billion women and girls. “One Billion Rising” is a global call to action to end violence, rise up for justice and promote gender equality. The founders of the campaign describe the One Billion Rising Revolution as an energy, a platform, a global movement, a catalyst, a worldwide decision to end violence against women, a demand for justice, a paradigm shift, an invitation, a gathering of the ready, housed everywhere, housed in our hearts, you, us REVOLUTION. This year from Swaziland to Sudan, Afghanistan to Andorra and the Philippines to Patagonia women and men will “rise for the raise” and call for an end to gender violence and for the right of women to be paid a just wage. Attention will be drawn to labour trafficking, to the plight of domestic workers around the world, to garment workers in Bangladesh and immigrant women workers in the USA.

Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, on the day her son was murdered by his father on a dusty cricket pitch in rural Victoria said to the press gathered outside her home I want to tell everybody that family violence happens to everyone. No matter how nice your house is, how intelligent you are. It can happen to anyone and everyone. This has been an 11 year battle. You do the best you can. You’re a victim and you’re helpless. An intervention order doesn’t stop anything like this from happening. Rosie Batty calls for a reform of the way the police and judiciary handle domestic violence and respond to the half a million Australian women physically or sexually abused each year. These institutions, she says forget the victim who is doubted until she can prove otherwise.

For over 400 years the Loreto Sisters and their colleagues have been engaged in the education and support of women and girls – how could we not rise up against gender violence and the exploitation of women workers? So on St Valentine’s day perhaps we could forgo the roses while we dance, drum and shout from the rooftops that women can and will do much if they are allowed to live free from fear and exploitation. Let’s join the “one billion rising.”

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