



Adolf Hitler is perhaps one of the most widely despised world leaders in history. This fuhrer from Germany is considered a slaughterer because he planned the genocide of more than six million Jews in what is known today as the Holocaust. While he is famous for his terrible crimes and being racial bias, very few acknowledge that Hitler was the product of a broken family. His father was a very violent and sadistic man who would rage and offer one tirade after the other to his wife and children. Adolf Hitler's father Alois, had suffered a troubled childhood. He was the product of an illegitimate relationship between a maid and the son of a wealthy family. He grew up poor and socially rejected, and became an emotionally broken man who later had three broken families. Adolf's mother Klara was Alois' third wife. Adolf Hitler was the product of an emotionally unhealthy family. His sister, Paula, in her diaries confesses that Adolf bullied other kids and beat her often. At age eight Paula wrote: "Once again I feel my brother's loose hand across my face." Hitler was the product of a broken family and his brokenness, influenced his horrific rampage on Jews, German society, and the world, more than his political beliefs.

The pattern of emotional and physical abuse was a cycle that began in the life of Hitler's father. Adolf Hitler simply went on to re-create and re-live what he had been taught at home. This is the most dangerous aspect of abuse. It creates a cycle of pain and destruction that goes beyond the walls of the family unit. Often times, women or mothers caught up in an abusive relationship decide to hide it from others and pretend that everything is OK. Many women do this out of fear of exposure or of being further abused. However, they do not realize that their silence is just as deadly. Their silence guarantees the perpetuation of pain.

Like Adolf Hitler, emotionally broken people more often than not come from emotionally broken families. Emotionally broken people who don't get help for their brokenness will in turn hurt others. Violence in any form is learned behavior. Violence is learned through the interaction and observation of those close to us. Emotionally broken people carry their

brokenness into other relationships and often form broken families. And, these broken families impact our societies. Their brokenness affects everyone that comes in contact with them outside of their family.

The effect of family violence on children

Family violence creates a home environment where children live in constant fear and anxiety. Experts believe that children who witness family violence are affected in ways similar to children who are themselves physically abused. They are often unable to establish nurturing and healthy bonds with either parents. Contrary to what some mothers in abusive relationships might chose to believe, children are at greater risk for abuse and neglect if they continue to live in a violent home. Over 3 million children in America witness violence in their home each year. Those who see and hear violence in the home suffer physically and emotionally. Recent research indicates that children who witness domestic violence show more anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, and anger and temperament problems than children who do not witness violence in the home. The trauma these children experience can show up in emotional, behavioral, social and physical disturbances that affect their development and can continue into adulthood. (For more information visit: www.acdv.org)

The effect of family violence on the women who are victims

Domestic violence can severely impair a parent's ability to nurture the healthy development of her children. Mothers who are abused may be depressed or preoccupied with the violence. This causes them to sometimes become impaired when having to take decision regarding their children and their own safety. These women may be emotionally withdrawn, numb, and irritable or bear feelings of hopelessness. The result can be a parent who is less emotionally available to her children or unable to care for her children's basic needs. This poses a problem in several areas of healthy childhood development. When children cannot depend on their parents or caregivers - for emotional support and for practical support - their development can be seriously delayed or, in severe cases, permanently distorted. (For more information visit: www.findcounseling.com).

The effect of family violence on the men who are batterers

Men who are batterers also suffer adverse effects. These men tend to be very insecure, have very few strong relationships in the community or with other men. These men sometimes seem to be successful yet they lack the social skills to develop long-term friendships. They are also threatened by any relationships, sometimes even with family, that the women in their lives might have. Extreme jealousy and control is their way of dealing with their insecurity. Battering fathers also pose a threat to the proper development of their children, even if they do not physically harm their children. The fact that they are the perpetrators of family violence can often cause children to live in resentment, fear and hatred of their fathers. Battering fathers are less affectionate, less available, and less rational in dealing with their children and have very poor

relationships with them.

Domestic violence impacts us all; whether it occurs in our own homes or not. Just as the case of Adolf Hitler, children who are products of domestic violence are taught that aggression is the only way to solve problems. To begin to resolve this social crisis we must begin with the family:

1. We need to inculcate in our boys and girls that violence is never the solution to problems.
2. We need to empower our women to feel safe enough to look for help.
3. We need to teach our men how to end the cycle of violence.

Norka Blackman-Richards, is an adjunct lecturer for CUNY, a writer, a minister's wife, and an empowerment speaker on women, education, family and cultural issues. Norka is also the president of 4 Real Women International, Inc. You may visit her site at www.4realwomen.com