

## That Can't Be True

April 2021

### Paradigm

My paradigm was woven with the same strings of the women before me,  
It was embellished with their warnings  
their tips on how to stay *alive*.

As if, the greatest achievement a woman can have is to say she survived

As if I climbed on the broken backs of my ancestors,  
The ones you so easily pushed aside - the ones that didn't fall as easy,  
Just to stay submissive.

I was born to thrive in this beautifully broken world  
I was born to do the very thing they couldn't  
*because you thought placing obstacles in our way would stop us*

*Because you silenced their cries with a maddening blow-*

I am what is left, **we** are what is left,  
these warnings are what is left:

Rule 1. Don't walk late at night

Rule 2. If a man is making you uncomfortable, smile, stay polite as to not provoke him

Rule 3. Wear clothes that don't distract, arouse, or anger anyone

Rule 4. Make sure someone knows where you are  
*always.*

Rule 5+. Clutch your keys, always be on high alert, smile, check your backseat as you enter the car, wear running shoes, walk on a well-lit street, don't go in a taxi alone, don't be too bossy as to not sound rude, don't be too kind as to not give the wrong impression, always do more than what anyone is doing as to show you are capable - prove it.

Their rules caught fire a while ago -

And now,  
Their embers and ashes are preserved,

*Waiting.*

Daring you to find them  
So in one final blow,  
They rise.

They rise like phoenixes and conquer the skies  
And express their anger, the injustice,

*The pain.*

The least I can do is fuel their fire.

Remember their names:

WarKeisha Renata Caddell Sarah Cooper Amber Lee Gattis Jameria Howard Natasha M. Arredondo Chanell Brown Stacey Guzman Sabrina Rosario Enzi Valdivia Ezekiel Valdivia Zeth Valdivia Zuriel Valdivia Theresa Bagwell Kelsey Berreth Alexis Bush Emily Butler Brianna Carpenter Gloria Casias Jacquelyn Coleman Michelle Jacobson Kate McDowell Kathleen Petrocco Tia White Kiara Alleyne Olga Alvarez Lynn M. Bender Shayla Chambers Olivia Colon Sandra Colon Samantha Feliciano Rivera Lisa Marie Ferraro Yeykenia Garcia-Broche Lorrice Harris Nicole Montalvo Nancy Russo Eads La'Meya Mitchell Ranie A. Overman Tia Alohilani Obrero CaLove Lynn Sackman Heidi RaNae De Leon Jose De Leon Sherry Billups Jacquelon S. Gaskin Gianna Lee Giovanni Lee Brittney Long Colton Miller Gabriel A. Petsche Demetrius Gordon Chloe R. Randolph Abdikadir Jamee Maddrey-Ammons Alexis Zaccardi Deirdre Zaccardi Kathryn Zaccardi Nathaniel Zaccardi Allison Parker Melissa Sousa India Mackey Moeneisha Elizabeth Sheeler Cecilia Ochoa Haney Kelly Mervine Deborah L. Delzell Ty Matthew Michael Dodson Taylor Miles Temptress Peebles Jamar Pillow Tiffany S. Redmon Maria Flor Salvador Leigh Shea-Majors Kaylin Smith LaTarica Stripling Ashley Yarbrough Alicia Wills LeAnn Michelle Comstock Cranston Mary Hoffer Kaylie Juga Trinity Ann McCallister **and thousands more.\***

*And don't you forget them*

*For they will emerge when you least expect it*

*And maybe one day -  
Their dreams will come true  
To be recognized, heard, remembered, and empathized with.  
Remember,  
We're human too.*

Nearly 30% of women have experienced physical/sexual violence. Intimate partner and sexual violence are mostly perpetrated by men against women. Health consequences of such violence include fatal outcomes, injuries, unintended pregnancies, trauma, and so much more. It's heartbreaking to still be hearing stories about women being murdered, at the same time, however, it feels like it's normal. It's normal to hear news like this - why? Why, after everything women have gone, why are we still doubting a woman's right to life? This poem is an ode to all the women in the world. I hear you, I stand with you, we are stronger together.

Via who.int

Ways you can help:

Raise your voice

Educate the next generation

Join the conversation

Give to the cause - [DONATE](#)

- Avni Rao

\* These names were submitted by families who lost a loved one to domestic violence. The list is compiled from The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence's annual pdf and can be found by clicking this link [2019 NCADV](#) - The list is from 2019.

These names are also not the names of every single woman who was killed by domestic violence, as some families chose not to report them. The Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence compiles a list of reported fatalities by county, which can be found by clicking this link: [Washington State Domestic Violence Fatalities by County January 1, 1997 - June 30, 2020](#) \* as of June 30

