

STAND BY YOUR MAN
Thursday
February 7, 2013

Recently, Rihanna's taken a great deal of criticism for her decision to reunite with Chris Brown. Her critics sound like a broken record, repeatedly pointing to Chris' conviction for beating on Rihanna in a fit of rage. While there's certainly no excuse for his behavior, does this mean that he should be treated like a pariah for the remainder of his life? He's working to complete his punishment, and more importantly, he's trying to rehabilitate himself, dealing with his anger issues and making amends to Rihanna. Certainly, his positive adjustment should be taken into consideration, and it would appear that this is exactly what Rihanna has done with her decision to allow him to reenter her life.

The issue of domestic violence has a special significance for me. As a child, I often witnessed my step-father beating on my mother. In fact, I had to deal with this outside the home as well, as the closest friends of my mother and step-father beat on each other just as frequently. And as anyone who's grown up in this sort of environment can tell you, this sort of thing has a tendency to roll downhill. My step-father would beat my mother, and they'd both beat us kids. At the time, the law rarely, if ever, did anything to put a stop to it, so I learned to deal with it by running away.

Looking back[!] I can't honestly say that things would have changed if he would have been taken out of the home the first time he beat my mother. The simple fact is that, by that time, she was an established co-dependent, and seemed to thrive on the drama she allowed others, sometimes intentionally, to inflict upon her. Having lived through it, I can, however, say that Rihanna handled the situation perfectly, with grace and dignity. She didn't just contact the authorities the first time it happened, she left her boyfriend, running to safe place. At the same time, she didn't completely turn her back on Chris. She gave him the time he needed to put his life back together, and once he did so, she allowed him the opportunity he needed to make his amends, deciding afterwards that what they had was worth saving. Hopefully, her actions can serve as an example to others in her situation, showing them how to balance their need for safety and protection with their desire to stand by their loved ones. Contrary to popular opinion, you **don't** have to choose between one or the other. Now if we could just allow everyone the opportunity they need to make amends for their mistakes and go on with their life, we might just find our world a better place.

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