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### LOVE IS GREATER THAN HATE

A guest speaker came to Stanley in April to tell about the tragedy of his daughter's death. She had been raped and killed in her bedroom by a guy she knew. She was a phenomenal person and a gifted musician. She was the kind of person everyone loved. She was full of the joy of life and shared it with everyone she met. The killer became obsessed with her and waited for his chance to strike. The parents were grief-stricken at the senseless loss of their only child. I forget how old she was - around 19 or 20.

Rather than sink into anger and bitterness they chose to create something to honor their daughter's loss. They created "The Love > hate project". Their website is the acronym: lighth.org. At first I thought they meant "light" but transposed the letters. Then he explained it was an acronym for "love is greater than hate." At each presentation he asks listeners to take "THE REAL MAN PLEDGE":

I PROMISE...

to NEVER, EVER

hit, hurt, or otherwise harm

a woman, girl, or child.

I understand ...

that I am bigger and stronger

than many women, girls

and children.

Therefore it is my DUTY

to never harm them,

but to always Protect, Respect,

Honor, and LOVE them.

No matter what!

It's a great pledge and seems obvious to me. But there are so many men who believe otherwise. They will batter anyone weaker than them whenever they choose. They are the ones most in need of taking the pledge and the ones least likely to do so. I hear conversations frequently in here where the phrase "I'm gonna beat that bitch's ass" is used in reference to some guy's wife or girlfriend. I always wonder why a woman would stay with a man who thinks it's okay to hit her when she does something he doesn't like. How can you justify hurting someone you love? I would feel my loved one's pain if she was hurt by anyone. I can't imagine what it would be like to hurt her. But I must confess that before I did any emotional healing I didn't have much compassion or empathy. Perhaps those guys who have no reluctance to hurt the ones they love lack compassion and empathy because of emotional abuse they experienced and until they address that in themselves, the cycle of abuse will continue.

I am glad the parents were able to heal after the loss of their daughter and to turn her loss into a force for doing something positive. They have forgiven the man who raped and killed their daughter but that doesn't mean they ever want him to get out of his prison. Some people who commit heinous, senseless crimes are too dangerous to be trusted back in society and they feel that he is one of those who should

never be released from prison. I believe there should be redemption for everybody but in a case like this, how can you be sure he won't rape and kill again? Historically, people were given life sentences with automatic parole eligibility after 11 years 3 months. Those who turned their lives around were given a second chance. Nowadays, life without parole is often given for offenses which a person would previously only served 15 or 20 years. To the best of my knowledge, only one person paroled with a life sentence ever committed another murder. James Schultz was given life for murdering his wife. After he was released he married a second time and received a second life sentence for murdering his second wife. He claims he didn't do it, that her death was an accident. He is still in a Wisconsin prison and I can't see him ever getting released. Of the hundreds (or thousands) of lifers released, he is the only two- time murderer. That would imply that our previous system for paroling lifers worked quite well and that life without parole is unwarranted. Regardless, I agree that love is greater than hate and I wish them well with their project.