

KEYNOTE LECTURE: NAZIR AFZAL

Nazfir Afzal: Thank you very much. Good afternoon. I'm delighted to be here. Those were kind words. Thank you for making me very welcome in the 36 hours I'm in NYC. When I was asked to be here I said initially I had to be here by video. So actually, right now I am a hologram. [Joke/joking.]

Some people know it's my daughter's birthday today. I had to leave her in London to attend this conference today. She expressed, "why are you coming to NY? We gave them Shakespeare and the Queen and they give us Charlie Sheen!" I'll be back in her good graces in 24 hours when I'm home.

I'm delighted to be here. This subject is close to my heart. My journey is not what you would anticipate because of the color of my skin, and where I'm originally from and the fact that I'm a man. It needs to be said that we're merely touching the top of the surface here. You're merely skimming the surface. If anyone thinks that this hasn't affected you, it's not true. We have to come to terms with it. We're at the beginning.

In my personal journey, I'm a lawyer. Most people don't like lawyers. My father said, "You only need lawyers to protect you from other lawyers." He was right. I became a prosecutor 20 years ago and I work in London. I've worked on high profile cases, and you can read about them later.

About 7- 8 years ago, I was organizing conferences on criminal justice issues, like gang crimes, etc. Victims and witnesses came to me and asked me to talk about this subject of honor violence. So I organized a conference. I was blown away by the reaction to that conference. That same day I had 31 interviews on international television.

[Knocking sound/construction work going on.]

Is that clapping? Why thank you! [Joking.]

I had a tremendous amount of interest. I got a lot of, "this is exotic, isn't it? This doesn't happen here!" But it DOES happen here.

This is an area that I feel passionate about. Many women in the work field say there are few men speaking about this issue.

I want to do something about it, it's not enough to talk, we need to try to do something about it. In my family, they came from Pakistan before I was born. They're from a town you would not know. They moved to the U.K. right before I was born. But in my community, the men in my family never experienced this issue. I've been married 3 times. So I will admit some failure there. My first wife was Catholic. My second was Hindu and my third was Sikh. In every situation, my former wife would say, "there he goes again."

But seriously, the reality is that in some marriages, women will experience honor violence on a day-to-day basis. It's important to raise the profile of these issues. You heard the international definition of violence. But when I speak, what I tend to say is that this is simple. This is about male power. This is about men thinking they can control every aspect of women's behavior. The women bear the consequences of the shame of the family. It may be the man is responsible, but "it is your fault." When you talk about power and control, this is what you reflect upon. These are behaviors and crimes in the name of the father and son and the blessed male members of the family. This is about men and their power.

When you appreciate that, you get a better feel of what we're talking about.

Victims tell you what they need. This is how we'll make a difference.

Our police forces flag this on their cases. We flag it in our systems. In the U.K. there are 12 honor killings a year. That's once every month. Is that shocking?

People are taken abroad and killed abroad too. That's a headline for you. If you want to look at it in your districts, like in Queens, you don't know how frequently this is happening until you start looking.

Then, with the other types of behavior that are honor related there's forced marriage and forced imprisonments, forced assaults and sexual assaults, etc. Now there are thousands of these! You are talking about thousands of victims and these people are being harmed by the people who are supposed to love them. So that's the picture about your communities. This is not isolated. It's in greater numbers than you anticipate. Then there's the BBC survey five years ago. There were young Indian, or Pakistani, or Afghani, etc. men surveyed and all lived in England. They were asked, would they do this? A large

number said yes! 1/10! That's 80,000-100,000 men in the U.K alone! Think about that wide support in the communities.

It's necessary as I indicated to have a perspective about your safety. I have had death threats and there was even a petition out for MY death! I signed it!

[Audience laughing.]

I think they are a minority but they are an allowed minority. Recognize if you are involved in this area there's personal cost. The women in this field suffer already. In the U.K. there's abuse, violence, threats, etc. and that's just because they are the victims! So you are just touching the subject. There's a cost. It's not just about women's rights but it's about human rights. You agree? It's about if you have the right to live your life as you want and choose. It's in that context we should address our failings.

I didn't know it was so huge. These victims are usually between 15-24. The youngest protection we have done from a forced marriage was 8 years old but the oldest was 55. So it's beyond that 15-24 span. Then 80% of the perpetrators were men. These fathers, or husbands harm or kill their own daughters or wives. Then others murders and abuses were carried out by hit-men. These people do this without money! They do it for kudos or statements. I mentioned two individuals were celebrated for what they did. Honor killings are a big issue.

We also recognize that 1/3 of our killings we could have prevented. A 3rd of those people who died could have been saved.

Then there's the hidden nature: Suicide. That's the "get-out" for the women who think that's the only way to prevent the suffering and the shaming of their families.

In one year in 2007, there were 240 rail suicides. That is where women jump in front of moving trains. These were mostly from the South Asian communities. Some of these women were ALSO holding their children when they jumped. This suicide rate was 3 times more likely to occur with South Asian women than with their white counterparts.

There were people who returned from war in our country with the same suicide rate. That's the only comparison that we have in terms of statistics.

Also, if you force someone to commit suicide then that's manslaughter. That's new. That's just an act passed of 5 years ago. So that's a small thing to tackle this issue.

Forced marriage is recognized. And it's where the violence is applied, or where emotional blackmail is applied. That's probably the most common. You are made to think that you must do what the family says. There's instances of the women who run away then the families communicate for example, that their mother had a heart attack! Come back! But it's a lie. They did what they had to do to get you back and into the marriage. There's all these pressures and delusions. Like they will show you a picture of Tom Cruise that you are to marry, then the guy actually looks like me! [Joke/joking.]

But the forced marriage is the beginning of something. After that, you have suicide, self-harm, you have children protection issues, and abuse. There's the forced marriage that's the earthquake, then after that is the tsunami. We know how harmful the tsunami is. So we must prevent the forced marriage in the first place.

There are triggers. There are school girls just disappearing. These children must go to school until the age of 16 in the U.K. But then they just disappear! That was what was happening. There was a survey and hundreds of girls were just gone. So now they are treated as slaves awaiting the forced marriage but others are already suffering harm.

There were two people murdered. There was a Turkish girl in North London. She wanted her own partner then we never heard from her again. We managed to convict her father years later but we still didn't find her body!

When a child goes missing who reports it!? The family! So if the family is responsible, they won't report it! So that's where the local people come into play. Everyone should ask questions. You are not just being a busybody when you do it. If you don't ask questions, then young girls will continue to disappear. For these homicides, it took years to get answers. We have these police going in and making these investigations. It took the mother coming forth to even say what happened. We managed to get her justice on the backs of the loyalties of her family. So we must go back years later and see if people can eventually change their view.

Then there was a murder of Sergei Hathwell. She wanted a divorce in the U.K. But she was persuaded to go to a different country for a family member's wedding. Then she disappeared.

Do you really think she would just run off like that? It took us a decade to find out what happened to her. A daughter-in-law was finally able to disclose what happened. They never found her body however.

In that case, a year after the murder, I went to a prison where the victim's mother was being held. She made a point of blaming me. She's now 74 years old! She now will spend the rest of her life in prison. When people talk about honor, surely someone of my mother's age in that position is the most dishonorable person.

Then you need to look at disability and forced marriage. This is another subject. We are talking particularly about children with learning disabilities. There's a case of a woman who was 24, and we had a call. The person who called was concerned because she was on her 4th marriage. When we investigated, we found that each marriage was costing the husband several thousand dollars! This woman was mentally disabled and she was being treated as the family's cash cow. Be aware of people who are disabled, because they are often forced into marriage.

We also have gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people who are abused. This is when a child comes out as gay, lesbian or bisexual to their families. Then his or her family says, "We're glad you came out. Now you are getting married tomorrow." Homosexuality and forced marriage is a trigger.

I say that all assumptions need to be left at the door. Let's say a young lady walks in and says, "my mom and dad want to kill me." Don't start with disbelief. No matter the situation, and especially if she's at a police station, you need to believe her. Believe what they say. If you start with a lack of belief, you're putting the woman at risk.

Take Samara's case for example: She's a graduate. Her family was wealthy, they owned property in London. At 10 AM she was taken to her boyfriend by her mother. She was taken to him and asked to let her go. He said, "I will not let her go. I love her." At 12 PM, just 2 hours later she was stabbed 18 times. From my perspective, it was easy to prosecute her 16 year old cousin. I

authorized listening devices. I would use these mafia types of devices. I also built a case against her brother and father. No one spoke, but they WERE speaking to each other.

Another area is the organized nature of it. I can't even think, in the 20 odd cases, I can't think of a case that wasn't organized, or didn't involve planning. It's important to be aware of all the techniques out there. We don't want ANYONE to think they can get away with it.

Another case to consider: A woman was forced into a marriage. She came to us battered and abused. She was seen on a subway kissing her boyfriend outside of her marriage. A member of the community saw them kissing, and told her father. The father told her uncle, and 6 men of the family decided the girl must die. One of the men raped her, and then she was killed and buried in a suitcase 100 miles away. We built a strong case and prosecuted the father and uncle. They both received long sentences.

[APPLAUSE.]

The other men who committed this crime came back to England from other countries to which they fled and they were also prosecuted. We now have 2 men in prison for the rest of their lives. It's terrible that they think they can get away with it. Anyone involved, even on the fringes, in our opinion needs to be brought to justice. The women were saying, "I have been told that I'll be the next to die." These women were being told this by the men in their own family!

So when it came to the media, we make sure there's a lot of media, mass communication, so that we send out the message, "if you're involved you'll pay the penalty." Don't just go for the easy target, it's too easy. Everyone needs to be brought to justice.

The youngest victim in a case I dealt with was 6 years old. Her name was Alicia and we'll never know why she was burned to death. 12 members in the house fire did escape. The home was set alight because her older brother was SMSing a girl from a different family. That's enough to kill a 6 year old girl I guess. That's just to show you how far these people will go.

A Sikh man's daughter had run away with her boyfriend. He wanted to kill the boyfriend's father to flush out his daughter and her boyfriend in order to

murder them too. He showed up to the boyfriend's father's funeral to confront his daughter's boyfriend. He got an undercover police officer instead. But that's how far he tried to go to kill his daughter and her boyfriend. Logic doesn't apply to these people. They go down these routes that you can't even imagine, let alone understand why.

There are male victims. Back in 2004 these all revolved around the perceived behavior of a daughter. So this still goes around the perception of a woman's behavior.

Two more examples. There was a murder of a woman from Pakistan. She was content to be married to a family in Europe but didn't speak the language. She was beaten everyday by her husband so severely that years later when she finally did die from the abuse, the coroner thought she had been in a car accident.

I don't know about U.S. law but with the U.K. we used the legislation to prosecute the WHOLE family for just standing by. Mother in law, sister in law, AND the brother in law are all in prison now. It's a message. You must prevent these tragic deaths from happening.

The most recent murder I dealt with was 3 months ago. A woman named Gita wanted a divorce. She was on her way to pick up her two children and as she walked she was attacked by a man with a machete. Her arm was chopped off and she died. These men escaped. But we found out it was the husband. He was in a pub to watch television. That was his "alibi." But we built a case against him and the 16 year old boy who committed the actual act in addition to a few other people who were conspirators.

Why didn't these people just allow the divorce? These are about weak individuals. This husband couldn't be seen to lose face with the community because she wanted to let him go. This 16 year old was only in the country a few months before the murder and was hired by this husband to kill his wife. The 16 year old brought all these old views and culture to his home in the U.K. to commit this crime. People use faith as a justification. You learn faith from parents. You just believe them! Unless there is more information to tell you differently.

There's a Muslim actress in the Harry Potter films and her brother discovered her talking on the phone to her boyfriend. He attacked her! Her brother said

he "didn't remember anything," as he was drunk. What part of his faith allows him to do that!? They use whatever they can to justify behavior. This is gender terrorism. It's about creating a climate of fear to make others conform. You must know that's what we are dealing with. It's not dying out. I thought it would die out with my generation but I spoke with a 40 year old man recently. He said man is a piece of gold. Woman is a piece of silk. If you drop silk in mud it's stained forever, unlike gold. You could talk to him about dry cleaning but that attitude about women belongs to him.

Education is at the heart of this, and you must get education early. When you are 18, you are set in your views and ways. It's a lot to change after that. But in kindergarten, and early school years, that's when you talk about the rights of men and women and human rights. That's when you share these things.

Last time I talked about *Oliver*, a school production in London -- do you know it? -- Nancy gets murdered, but in this newer production, it didn't happen! The view was that we don't want to talk to the children about this! But 1/4 children will experience this at home! Use that as an opportunity! Hope that there's something that needs to be done about it! Don't pretend it doesn't happen! That *Oliver* production won't go anywhere anytime soon. I think Nancy must die. That's my view.

We work with all agencies and we must do that, with the NGO,s and the Women's Sector and our role is in prevention with education, and national police guidance.

If you look at the U.K. website of the police you will see that we have the first standards in the world. The Forced Marriage Act is the first of its kind in the world. I have 30 prosecutors around the world and they were trained by the NGO sector. There's a national hotline and it's not just a call center. It's a specific thing. These people are available on a rotary system and they support individuals. We find this hotline had 3000 calls in just the first month! Think like that in order to proceed.

People will say it is all in place now, so why do people still die?! You are right. It's a journey. That means we'll make mistakes. Some will get away with it. Internationally we get support and prospects and evidence but that's just the beginning. We work across Europe and what you are doing is great with raising awareness for the first time in the U.S. And that's a testament. You are doing something that will save lives! I save lives every day and that's

reason to get optimistic.

However you also get people who pay lip-service or who are two faced. I can't tell you how many hours I've wasted, by people saying they believe in what I do, and then seconds after talking to me they turn around and are not supportive.

Children don't listen to adults anymore. But young people listen to young people. Build champions of young people. Then you raise the expectations. People will then listen. You have to identify those champions and challenge people. You have to challenge day in and day out.

They are the silent majority. You have to win them over. You do that by support, by giving awareness. We have a large group of people who speak out about the subject. We have many challenges. We have a satellite generation, the iPod generation, who listens to other people of that generation and we have to reach these people. You have to give them messages they will listen to. You have to give young people the opportunity to speak out.

We have governments who need to do something about this subject. Once you have the laws in place, and you can do this easily by building a business case. The business is that you save lives on a daily basis. There is no left wing or right wing. There are only open minds and closed minds. We work with children, with communities. We know our people are properly trained. I give my respect to every one who works in this field, and especially the women who work in this field. They have taught me everything I know!

We have women who are valued less, who are subjected to violence on a daily basis. The potential of our society will never be realized as long as this goes on. I say this: I know that individuals make the world better. Each one of you is now tasked to make this better. Thank you very much!

[APPLAUSE.]

Executive Director: We can open the floor for questions. I want to ask, can you speak a little more about the hotline and the statistics and how you go about rescuing a girl if she calls your hotline?

Nazir Afzal: There is a national hotline and there are on average 4,000 calls to it a year. You can do this yourself. There are county police forces and they

-- for example, in the northwest of England there's a hotline, and there were 350 calls to that hotline in the first month alone.

In terms of how we rescue people: A decade ago, the government of the state department decided there was a need for a forced marriage unit to be staffed by case workers. There's a hotline that's dedicated to this. This is for women who are in danger.

In some cases, they'll alert the officials in the country they're going to. They will give you a password, for example. If I ring you up, and I ask if you're ok, and you say you are, how do I know there's not someone on the other end holding a gun to your head? So we give victims passwords.

We also have a dedicated rescue team. When you become aware that someone's in risk we'll rescue that person. This involves the police going into the village, taking you out of the house, and getting you back to the U.K. as soon as possible. We do this 450 times a year, so that's a lot of people. It's the nearest thing to James Bond that we have. [Joke/joking.] The coordination of the response is crucial.

If people are doing good work for us, I don't care if the agenda is financial, or political, as long as we save lives. We use people abroad to take on the responsibility of helping people in forced marriage. Questions?

Female Speaker: Thank you so much for coming. With the families that are a threat, do many women say they want to go to another country entirely that's separate from their family?

Nazir Afzal: If they're at great risk, then we can give them a new identity, take them to a new part of the country. Rarely do we take these victims abroad. If we take them to Germany, how do you get back? We sent one lady to Scotland and she wanted to come back. She didn't like it there. So we find someplace that's safe for them. There are officials and we will have police officers who have access to databases. We also have nationals come in. We have bounty hunters who trace activity. So we have databases in these cases. If you don't have databases then you're at risk.

Police put them in taxis to get them to the shelters. But then the taxi drivers give the families information as if on a plate. So sometimes we give these people new identities or just whatever protection they need.

Female Speaker: Hi. I was involved in New York City in sex trafficking. There was a parallel that the training is scattered of the police officers with how to identify people and what to do. So I was trying to enforce information on this. Do you have suggestions to get more active enforcement?

Nazir Afzal: The first contact is the most important. That person needs it. In the U.K. I ask if the person on reception knows what they are looking at. The women will go to somewhere as long as they look authoritative. But if a woman were to just walk in here, they don't know how to help her. It's about contact. What the police do in the U.K. is show DVDs for training. There's a association of the police officers in 2008, a 20 minute DVD where all the police officers must view in the first week. The reality is if they see it, and it's based on a case scenario, they get that information.

They all must have this in development.

Then there's more surreptitious means. There's case studies that we give as training to the police officers and we are sure one of those cases is a forced marriage case. So all these police officers are trained in this field. There's all these means, for example there's a documentary on the BBC that's going to be broadcast in August. We'll do joint training and it's important with all these that they involve the mental sector and get these people to collaborate and raise awareness. It's relentless and persistent. You need everyone to get it, but I hope those that don't are in the minority.

Female Speaker: With the men as gold and women as silk, what do you say to statements like that? How do you get people to question their values?

Nazir Afzal: I just laughed at that man. He's not gold. [laughing.]

I spoke with a father who said his son went to prison for 6 years for dealing crack, but he was hung up on his daughter for marrying a person who was not in their religion! You must expose these people! I would go to where they work, or just see what they think is important and tell them what you think. It's ignorance. You must tell them that you can't say that. You must have that conversation on a one-to-one basis. If you do that every day with just 1 person it adds up at the end of the year!

Female Speaker: You mentioned that about the shooter, then you target the

family too for the crime --

Nazir Afzal: In Sergei's case, and you will hear from a victim later. There was a murder of a girl because she had a boyfriend. The judge actually said to the father, I feel for you. I should give you life but I won't. There was an outcry. It's not mitigating circumstances! Who was the child supposed to turn to if not her parents!? Men will only go to prison for 28 years! In some cases on the periphery it depends on the involvement and how much time they get in prison. But the husband in that Sergei case, he got others to do it and tried to seem so far away.

Female Speaker: Can you talk about Sharia law. Does that come into play in the faith?

Nazir Afzal: As I said, people will justify anything they can. I can't do that! [Referring to the Sign Language Interpreters signing.] There was a lot of opinion a few years ago that we should deal with this issue. We made it clear as prosecutors that that's not an excuse. And it's a police matter. At the highest levels of the Sharia Councils they accept it, but I can't guarantee that there are places where it's enforced. If there's a child at risk, there are these people who will say anything to get her back! But once they get her back they want to harm her. We must expose this.

Any questions?

Female Speaker: I'm Indian myself. I think one of the largest barriers working in domestic violence is the idea of karma. These women feel that this forced marriage and abuse is due to karma, etc. It's like, "This is what I have to deal with in life." Do you see that as well? That it is the victim feeling that way?

Nazir Afzal: I accept that. They were taught that way. They were raised to believe there's only one way to live, and that is to be forced into marriage and to live with it.

In those cases, I think once you have a conversation with them, they realize it is wrong. They don't want to cause ill to their families. We have lots of protection available. But they don't want to get their parents into prison if it turns into a criminal case. We have many people coming to us and talking to us, and we can't let these people get away with these terrible acts. The whole

community suffers. Why would you not allow your children to go to school? Why would you allow that to happen! You have to win them over in terms of getting the community on your side.

Anyone else?

Female Speaker: I wonder if you have any ideas about how to change mind sets in this country so we can have legislation? How do you begin that dialogue?

Nazir Afzal: One by one.

You need to identify representatives, people in government, who work on this. This is what we do in the U.K. Once we identify what we can do, we have government on our side. Some give them credit for it because they need to be re-elected. You can win them over sometimes. The ultimate answer is the business case. You don't want this in your area. Once you identify your champions in your community this can happen. The Forced Marriage Act, that was us! We're happy to share our practice. You don't need to start from scratch.

Female Speaker: there's a shift when citizens begin seeing this slavery. How is this comparable in the 21st century to sex trafficking?

Nazir Afzal: My experience is that it's FEAR that drives legislation. I remember when I first went to Parliament, I mentioned kids going missing from school. In the same week we had that Austrian guy that had all those bodies under his house. You put a thought in their head, that you want this impact to happen and slowly they begin to understand. One case at a time, milk it for all it's worth.

The victims need to be protected. We have to make people understand how important this is, use the media! Dan Rather, for example. This is much easier to do now. There's a film now. I'm an advisor on the show Law and Order. Just put it in people's faces. Eventually there's going to be something done about it.

I think I said to Amanda last night, sometimes you need to keep the information back. The news was running wild about a case and I kept some information back. Then I worked on the BBC, but you just keep doing it,

exposing it to the public. Eventually things will happen.

[APPLAUSE.]