



From NFL Defender to Women's Protector

Troy Vincent calls on men to join the defense of women from domestic and sexual violence.

You may know of Troy Vincent as a football star. The former defensive back for the Miami Dolphins, Philadelphia Eagles, Washington Redskins and Buffalo Bills, he could just sit back and enjoy fame. Instead, he uses his platform to encourage men to take a stand against domestic violence.

Vincent, the NFL's vice president of football operations, grew up in Trenton, New Jersey, in a home where domestic violence was a constant. When he found football, he found a way, as he puts it, to turn his pain into progress.

He's traveled the country for 25 years, meeting with organizations dedicated to serving the survivors of domestic violence, such as The Shelter for Abused Women & Children in Naples, where he spoke at the Gentle'men Against Domestic Violence Tailgate event earlier this year.

It differed from other domestic violence charity events, as its audience was mostly comprised of men, an element Vincent thinks is key to solving the issue.

"Typically, in this space, the audience is mostly women," Vincent said. "And the numbers haven't changed. When you look at the statistics ... every nine seconds a woman is assaulted or abused in our country. Unacceptable. One out of every three women will experience some form of assault or violence. Unacceptable. And 10 million children — I was one of those 10 million — witness some sort of domestic



Troy Vincent, former defensive back for the Miami Dolphins, uses his position to help victims of domestic violence.

violence every year. Unacceptable," Vincent said.

Vincent calls men to action

with his speeches, creating a personal challenge for each man in the room, asking them to not only drive awareness, but to be the change in their daily lives.

"Look at the environment that we're in where women are having the courage to come out. But, where are we as men?" Vincent said. "What does our silence actually imply? Where are we as it pertains to leading these organizations, volunteering our time, being on the front line of policy change, being on the front line of this social culture of inappropriate behavior? We have to begin and leverage our voice, and who we are, to protect women and young girls."

If there's one message this lifelong defender wants to share about domestic

violence, it's this: "Some people say it's not a man's issue, and I say, it is a man's issue. Women have been fighting this fight for centuries, and it's time for us men to take a stance." ❁



Gentle'men Against Domestic Violence

The eight-week "Raising Gentle'men Program" prepares boys and men to be equal partners with women and girls to end domestic violence and promote nonviolence as a desirable masculine trait. Contact The Shelter for Abused Women & Children, 239-775-3862 or rthompson@naplesshelter.org.

COURTESY OF MICHELE WILCHEK